

APPENDIX D.

NORTH AUCKLAND SCENIC RESERVES.

THERE are some sixty-five scenic reserves scattered throughout this district on the mainland, containing an area of some 9,870 acres; and in addition there are the Poor Knights Islands, Hen and Chicken Islands, Motukaraka, and Little Barrier Islands for scenery and bird-sanctuaries; and, most important of all, the famous Tounson Kauri Park, whose value will probably run into six figures, and which contains some of the finest kauri-trees in existence to-day.

During the summer I was enabled to visit this magnificent gift to the people. The caretaker's house, a nice comfortable little bungalow, had just been completed, and we are installing a telephone to the outer world, and a connection through the forest to the honorary ranger's home (Mr. Mudford) as a protection against fire.

As it is difficult for strangers to know exactly when they have arrived at the park I am having notice-boards erected. Surrounding the bush on the north there is a great deal of very tall fern, dead logs, stumps, &c., and, as this menace extends right through private lands to the main road, there is great danger of loss by fire in a dry summer, consequently I have asked for sufficient funds to clear a 3-chain barrier around this part of the bush; and in order to keep down the fern permanently I propose to sow some grass, and let the caretaker run a few dry sheep; while Mr. Mudford has undertaken to keep down the fern on the southern boundary, as every endeavour must be made to protect this valuable bush. Another danger is the loss of trees by gales, each falling tree making the rest less secure; and something must be done to militate against this possible destruction.

I also inspected the Kauri Gully Reserve at Northcote, and found that the lessee of the open portion, our honorary caretaker, was doing good work there and improving and protecting this reserve, and I hope he may long continue to do so. Some extra expenditure upon fencing and track-improvement is required.

The other reserves are supposed to be inspected by our own rangers and the officials of the Forest Service, who are honorary rangers. Now that the soldier settlement is getting on a firmer basis our rangers will have more time to attend to these reserves, and with the inspections that I or the Chief Draughtsman can give them I consider they can now be satisfactorily looked after.

Negotiations are taking place to acquire the Hunua Falls and 178 acres nearby, and also several other beautiful bits of bush at present included in soldier farms (and mortgaged to the State), as well as several exchanges, &c.

H. J. LOWE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

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