

From my own observation in various parts of America, I must say that I fully concur in many of the points he has brought under notice.

I shall lay the letter before the Provincial Council.

I have, &c.,

FRED. A. CARRINGTON,  
Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

No. 10.

His Honor W. ROLLESTON to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

Superintendent's Office,  
Christchurch, 20th July, 1871.

SIR,—

Referring to your circular letter 21, dated 5th May, 1871, transmitting copy of a letter from Mr. Vogel, on the subject of Railways in America, I have the honor herewith to enclose a memorandum by Mr. Marshman, containing some remarks upon Mr. Vogel's letter.

I have, &c.,

W. ROLLESTON,  
Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 10.

MEMORANDUM by Mr. MARSHMAN on Mr. VOGEL's Letter on Railways in America.

RAILWAYS on the Canterbury plains cost now about £5,000 a mile for a full power line, metals say 70 lbs. to the yard, and bridges and stations included; considering the labor here is three times as expensive as in England, and materials (iron) costs 20 per cent. more here than it does there, this sum can scarcely be considered excessive, nor does it leave room for any material diminution. The Government may, if they please, use somewhat lighter metals than are now used and so lessen the present cost per mile (and lessen of course the life of the metal correspondingly), but with that exception I do not see how it is possible to lessen it materially, that is if the lines are to be "Railways" and capable of carrying traffic at the rate of say 20 or 25 miles an hour, any trunk here ought to be good enough for that at least. Branch lines may be tramways worked by horse power and may cost anything from £300 to £400 a mile for a wooden rail, to £1,000 a mile for a light iron one. I do not think it would be expedient to omit fencing for the railways; the horse tramways would of course not require it. In the peopled districts, where the lines are carried across fields and enclosures, it would unquestionably be indispensable, and it can hardly be dispensed with in the pastoral country outside unless the Legislative chooses to say that the railway shall not be liable for the value of cattle or sheep that might be run over, or the damage that may accrue to travellers through running over them.

Mr. Vogel's observations about ferries do not apply here, because there is scarcely a river on which a ferry could be worked. I agree that more is done now than is necessary in the matter of level crossings. People would, if they were let alone, take care of themselves when crossing a railway, as they do when crossing a street. I believe that the present elaborate arrangement of gates across the line, and the like, are wholly unnecessary as far as the safety of the public are concerned; and it is certainly very objectionable as respects the working of the traffic. At one of the level crossings on the south line, about 10 miles from Christchurch, a couple of pits were put in across the line, about two years ago, one on each side of the public road, and in about six months I had the same thing done at the crossing next beyond Addington. This last is on a road leading to Riccarton sale yards, and cattle and sheep are driven along it frequently. It answers perfectly. The sketch annexed explains the two modes. No. 1., the form of the present crossing, and No. 2., the form adopted in these two instances, and recommended to be used generally. In No. 1, the present mode, the gates are shut across the railway, except when a train is passing, and then they are shut across the public road, as shown by the dotted lines. The normal condition of the railway is "blocked" as a special train cannot be sent over the line unless previous intimation of its coming has been first made to the gate-keeper. In No. 2., the proposed mode, the gates are closed across the public road when a train is passing. That is if there is a gate-keeper living there, and opened outwards at all other times, as shown by the dotted lines. The normal condition of the railway is "clear." The pit on each side of the crossing about 9 feet wide, and 6 feet deep, or thereabouts, serves to prevent animals from straying on to the line. If the gate-keeper should omit to close the gate, there can be no harm done, unless some person or some animal persists on the line regardless of the whistle of engine, and getting run over. I do not think gate-houses and gate-keepers could be in all cases dispensed with at those crossings; but they need not be in constant attendance as they are now, and would, therefore, be paid less than at present.

14th June, 1871.

JOHN MARSHMAN.