

make up the number from distant tribes, and latterly by pressing into the service a white man connected with a woman of the tribe. My power to discharge any of the hands was disputed, and it was by no means clear that I possessed any except through the chief, who was rarely on the spot. This, and the uncertainty when I should get others in their place, and even whether I could get them at all, prevented my discharging hands whose work was not equivalent to their pay, and put me completely in their power. The rate of pay was the same for the idle and industrious, the ablest or most inefficient, and, there being little or no fear of discharge, there was no inducement to exertion, and the modicum of work done by the laziest became more or less a standard for the whole. The only hands to whom the 5s. rate of pay did not apply were the very young boys, whom I refused to accept on those terms. These were engaged at 3s. per day, with the proviso that, if they worked well, their pay should be raised to 3s. 6d. or 4s. per day. In every case, they either at once or in a few days at farthest entitled themselves to the highest of the above rates: in fact, they did more work, not only than most of the bigger lads who were getting 5s. per day, but than several of the grown-up men. Finding this, I, in an interim report sent to Mr. Buller early in March, suggested that I should be authorized to offer increased pay, to the extent of 1s. per day, to the 5s. hands, but was afterwards told by Mr. Buller that the Government would not sanction it. I had nothing for it, therefore, but to make the best of a bad bargain, and trust to the overseers to get as much work out of the Natives as they could.

On one occasion we had for a few days twenty-one labourers. On my mentioning this to Mr. Buller, he said that as this was in excess of the number authorized by the Government, one must be discharged. I explained this to the chief, and suggested a very idle big boy as the one who had better be got rid of. Very naturally, however, one of our best hands, who belonged to another tribe, left instead.

I mentioned that lately six men did as much as twenty had done previously. This arose partly from a change of overseers, and partly from a sort of piece-work arrangement. While I was myself in charge of the hands for a few days, in the absence of the overseer (who had gone to attend a cavalry training), I took advantage of their being engaged in building an eel-weir in their spare time, to try the effect of marking out a little more work than they would ordinarily have done during the day, and letting them go as soon as it was finished. Having thus an inducement to work, they completed the job by about 2 p.m.; and having, after some days, got them thus into the way of working faster, I was able gradually to increase the daily quantity and still get it done early.

I think you will now be able to understand exactly the nature and difficulties I had to contend with in carrying out the road; and to see how the cost, actual and incidental, was increased by the summer being wasted, and the latter portion of the leading line having to be selected and cut through in the winter.

In order to expedite this last work, and prevent the Government time being trenched upon through the necessity of getting back to camp by daylight, I got my assistants to dispense with the dinner hour and make 4 p.m. the time for leaving off work.

The Hon. W. Fox, Premier.

I have, &c.,
H. C. FIELD.

No. 9.

MR. FIELD to the Hon. D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 3rd August, 1870.

As I am informed that, notwithstanding the fact that I was engaged by the Premier to take charge of the Mangawhero-Taupo Road, and that, throughout, his name and that of the Hon. the Colonial Secretary have been those constantly associated with the work, you are, nevertheless, the officer within whose department roads are included, I have the honor to lay before you the following statement of the difficulties under which the work has been executed, and which have increased its cost to a considerable extent, and added very largely to the incidental expenses arising out of it.

As there is said to have been some misunderstanding respecting my original estimate of £350 as the cost at which a practicable pack-horse track could be cut through from Wanganui to the Taupo Plains, it may be well at the outset to explain that that estimate, like all engineering estimates, was for the work, and the work only. In my reports of November 13th and December 31st, respecting the practicability of the road, I described very minutely the route which, from my examination of the country, I considered it should take. I did this in order that the Government Engineer who might be charged with the selection and laying off of the track might be able readily to find and follow the apparently most practicable line; but I never dreamed of including his salary and that of his assistants for the time to be occupied either in that way or in superintending the work, nor did anything transpire at the time to lead me to suppose that my estimate was understood to cover such unusual items. Still less did it include the pay of overseers to take charge of gangs of Native labourers, or *douceurs* to Native chiefs for supplying such labourers; since, at the time it was written, such an idea as employing Natives on road work had never occurred to me. I simply stated what I considered would be about a fair price for the actual work if done by European labour, whether by the day or contract. Had I had the slightest reason to suppose that my estimate was misunderstood as including matters like the above, I should at once have corrected the mistake; and can hardly conceive how my conversation with Mr. Fox, early in January,—in which I explained that my estimate was based on the belief that a dozen good men, accustomed to bush and spade work, and backed by a small commissariat organization, could in fair summer weather cut the track through in about eight weeks,—should have failed to remove the erroneous impression, if he really entertained it.

The first intimation I had of the employment of Natives was, when Mr. Buller asked me if I would be willing to act as engineer to the work. On my replying that if the "Town Board would spare me I would do either that, or contract for the whole work, selection and all;" Mr. B. rejoined that "The work could not be let in that manner, as the Government were bound to have it done by Natives." I said