

You will be good enough also to report whether, in your opinion, the cutting of the line for a distance of some thirteen and a half miles was a fair and reasonable amount of work for the time bestowed on it—a period of nine weeks.

Alfred Edgcombe, Mr. Field's assistant, has been ordered to accompany you, to point out the work, and to render all the information in his power.

Mr. Field has been apprised of the intended inspection, in order to give him an opportunity of being present if he should desire it.

W. H. Hales, Esq., C.E., Wanganui.

I have, &c.,
W. BULLER, R.M.

No. 4.

Mr. BULLER, R.M., to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Wanganui, 27th July, 1870.

I have the honor to forward, for your information, further correspondence received from Mr. H. C. Field on the subject of the Mangawhero-Taupo Road.

It may be true that Mr. Field had "for some years the reputation of being the second fastest leveller in England," and that he was celebrated for the "rapidity of his field-work and the accuracy of his estimates." Unfortunately for the Government, however, in the present case he has given no proof either of rapidity of work or of accuracy of estimate.

With regard to Mr. Field's objection to Mr. Hales as not being professionally competent to make the required inspection, I would simply observe that Mr. Hales has, for several years past, held an important official post with satisfaction to the Government and with credit to himself. He has been called on by the General Government to inspect far more important works than Mr. Field's bridle track; and he is at present engaged, on behalf of the Provincial Government, in superintending the erection of the Wanganui Bridge, the largest engineering work of the kind ever undertaken in the Colony.

It is unnecessary for me to comment on Mr. Field's denial of any promise made to Mr. Fox; but I would call attention to one of Mr. Field's reports (already forwarded), in which, if I remember aright, he admits having told Mr. Fox that the whole work would not occupy more than six or eight weeks.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
W. BULLER, R.M.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

Mr. FIELD to Mr. BULLER, R.M.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 23rd July, 1870.

I duly received your favour of yesterday's date, and fully acquit you of any personal ill-feeling towards me in the matter of the road. I should be sorry indeed if you should for one moment suppose that I considered you had exceeded your duty. I am quite aware that, after the infamous slanders that have been circulated respecting me and my work, while I was enduring hardship and privation in the prosecution of the latter, the Government, or you as their representative, could hardly, in justice to themselves or to me, do otherwise than cause the line to be inspected and reported upon; and I am so far from objecting to such an inspection, that I only regret that it has not been entrusted to some one who had been brought up as an engineer. I have personally no objection to Mr. Hales, and have no doubt that he will give a just report, to the utmost of his ability; but I think professional questions should be judged by professional men, and that it would have been more satisfactory to the Government as well as to myself that the inspector should be some one who could show, if necessary, that he was duly qualified and entitled to call himself a Civil Engineer.

As regards what you express as your opinion or impression, only a professional man, fully informed as to all the circumstances of the case, could properly say whether the Government had or had not got an adequate return for the time and money expended.

It was as a business or professional matter that I felt hurt at your letter. I have always prided myself on my rapidity at field work and the accuracy of my estimates. For some years before I left home I had the reputation of being the second fastest leveller in England; and during the eight years that I have been Town Surveyor, the price at which a contract has been let has never exceeded my estimate, excepting in a single instance, and then it was for one length only out of four into which Ingestre Street was divided, and to the extent of 2s. 6d. per chain.

It was no fault of mine if you or Mr. Fox supposed my estimate to cover a number of things never included in an engineering estimate. Nothing transpired at the time to show that you had so misunderstood it; and the smallness of the sum named, and my reply to Mr. Fox when he asked me how I arrived at it, would, I should have thought, have dissipated any such erroneous impression. The time occupied by the work was prolonged through circumstances utterly beyond my power to foresee or control, and of course the cost was somewhat increased thereby; but the substantial accuracy of my estimate, (which, from its having been formed merely by overlooking the line from a distance often of several miles, was necessarily a rough one,) is proved by the fact that, in spite of all drawbacks arising out of the employment of Native labour and other matters, out of thirty-four miles of continuous track which had to be formed, and which I estimated at £350, eighteen (besides the repairs at Huripau, and some bits of extra work) were actually completed for less than £220, and that in such a manner that Mr. Booth blamed me for allowing so much pains to be taken with the line, and compared it to "a road through a gentleman's park."

Edgcombe was only taken on a few days before the Natives were discharged, and as a mere field