

## No. 15.

Mr. BOOTH to the Hon. D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 8th October, 1870.

I have the honor to report that on the 16th ultimo I started from Ranana to explore the country between that place and Murimotu, for the purpose of finding an available horse-track from Ranana to Taupo. I was accompanied by Captain Wirihana and twenty-two men, as also by Mr. Halcombe and Mr. J. Buller, who went to see the country.

On entering the bush about two miles from Ranana, we commenced cutting a track to the left of the one at present in use, which leads over the Paraheka Range. By cutting a siding for about five miles a great deal of high ground is avoided, after which, by an easy gradient, the road ascends a ridge which it follows for about two miles, and then descends, by a siding, to a flat of considerable extent, crossing which, we come to a steep hill called the "Ngaihinekohara." Our guides were at a loss here for a long time, but eventually we cut through two gullies which fortunately led in the right direction and parallel with the path over the spur. We then ascended and kept along a ridge until we came to an old camping ground above the Mangaeturoa River; cut a siding down the face of the hill, and approached the river through a swampy flat; found a good ford—across a slab of a kind of coarse limestone—very wide, not much more than ankle deep. On the left bank of the river is a large block of splendid land called Tupapanui. Came on another camping place. Wanganui Natives very frequently visit this place to shoot pigeons.

After crossing the flat we again ascended a ridge, along which we kept for a considerable distance, and then ascended a higher hill called the Puketoi, from which we got our first view of Tongariro and the plains. We succeeded, after a long search, in finding a suitable descent to a lower level; which took us without further difficulty to the Mangawhero River. The ford here was very good and the approaches easy. After leaving the Mangawhero we found the country much flatter, and had no difficulty in finding a track, and at length, eleven days after leaving Ranana, we reached the Murimotu Plain, at a place called the Tomokanga. Our general course since leaving Ranana had been about N.E. by E. About three miles from the Tomokanga is Karioi, the place where Mr. Field says his road is to enter the plains. From the Tomokanga there is a good bridle track to Taupo: Natives say it takes them seven or eight hours to ride.

We stayed one day at Murimotu for the purpose of obtaining a supply of food, and then started homeward. We now cut the track throughout, clearing on an average about eight feet in width, and there is no portion of the line which has not been thus cleared.

I estimate the distance from Ranana to the plains, by the track we have cut, to be about twenty miles. The Native track at present in use is estimated at thirty-five miles. The time occupied in this work was three weeks, or eighteen working days; number of men, twenty-two. It will be remembered that the whole distance is through forest, and the line of road goes through country, parts of which were entirely unknown excepting to one old man, who had only been on one or two hunting expeditions.

I am very well satisfied with the amount of work done by the men. I found an excellent assistant in Captain Wirihana. No time was lost through bad weather, as, when we were once wet through from the dripping of the leaves, it was better to go on than stay. Each man, besides his daily work, had to carry his swag, as we never stayed two nights at the same camp.

The work still required to be done before the road will be available for pack-horses will be very considerable, namely, to cross-cut and remove all the large timber trees at present lying across the path: to cut away the large roots; to make side cuttings, and to bridge the small streams.

The average cost for this work, at per chain, I estimate at 5s. through the whole line of road. Some portions will not cost more than 1s. 6d. or 2s. a chain, whilst others will cost 15s. to 20s. a chain. If, therefore, my estimate of the distance (twenty miles) be correct, the cost for the work to be done will be £400. The whole cost of the road, including tools, will be about £500. At the same time, it is my duty to point out to Government one great drawback to the construction of this road, and that is the want of metal:—with the exception of boulders in the valley of the Mangawhero, there is not a pebble to be found on the line of road.

By clearing the underscrub half a chain on either side of the road, light and heat might be let in, which would be an immense improvement, but would add very considerably to the expense.

The opening up of this road will be one of the greatest boons ever conferred on the Wanganui Natives, as they will be able to make use of land which has hitherto been locked up, or has been used only very rarely for hunting purposes.

I have, &amp;c.,

JAMES BOOTH,  
Resident Magistrate.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.

## No. 16.

The Hon. D. McLEAN to Mr. BOOTH.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 10th October, 1870.

MAJOR KEMP has written about a road from Ranana to Murimotu, and says that Wirihana and you have found one. Report on the road, where it leads to besides Murimotu, and probable expense, by contract with Natives, of clearing trees to make it passable for horse traffic; distance from Ranana to Murimotu, and full particulars.

J. Booth, Esq., Wanganui.

DONALD McLEAN.