

In answer to your inquiry whether the Government would accept, in payment of the notes above referred to, your draft at sixty days on the Corporation in England, I am to inform you that the Government would prefer that you should negotiate your drafts through your own bankers.

I have, &c.,

C. T. BARKIN,

Secretary to the Treasury.

A. F. Halcombe, Esq., Wellington.

No. 14.

Mr. HALCOMBE to the Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION.

REPORT by Mr. HALCOMBE on the progress made by the Emigrant and Colonist's Aid Corporation in the Colonization of the Manchester Block, Manawatu.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1874.

I have the honor to forward, for your information, a report of the progress made by the Emigrant and Colonist's Aid Corporation in the colonization of the Manchester Block, Manawatu, under the terms of the agreement with the Colonial Government generally known as the "Feilding Contract."

Having already fully reported to His Honor the Superintendent of Wellington at a somewhat earlier date, the report now presented will differ little from that, excepting that it brings up information to the 30th June, 1874.

It may assist, perhaps, in making the report more intelligible to the members of the General Assembly if I briefly recapitulate the origin and terms of the contract referred to.

During the period, some seven years ago, when an agitation in favour of emigration to the colonies was going on in England, a society called "The Emigrant and Colonist's Aid Corporation" was formed by a number of noblemen and other influential men, headed by His Grace the Duke of Manchester.

The title of the Corporation sufficiently explains the object of its formation, but no practical effect seems to have been given to the intentions of its members until, at the close of the year 1871, the Hon. Colonel Feilding, after visiting the Australian colonies, came to New Zealand, commissioned by the directory to find a suitable field for colonizing operations.

The result of Colonel Feilding's negotiations with the New Zealand Government was the purchase by the Corporation he represented of the 106,000 acres of the Manawatu district now known as the Manchester Block.

The price agreed to be given by the Corporation for this block was £75,000, being at the rate of 15s. per acre for 100,000 acres, the remaining 6,000 acres being allowed for roads and reserves. Under the terms of Colonel Feilding's original contract and subsequent modifications, bills were given for this amount, bearing interest at 5 per cent., and maturing at different periods up to the year 1882. The Corporation agreed to execute all internal surveys at its own cost, and undertook, under heavy money penalties, to introduce 2,000 immigrants into the colony, and to settle upon its land 2,000 statute adults before the 1st April, 1877.

The Colonial Government, on its part, undertook to provide free passages from England to the settlement for the Corporation's immigrants, and to employ a current 200 men on railway formation, or other public works, within ten miles of the block. The Provincial Government of Wellington also agreed to recommend to the Council annually a grant in aid, up to £2,000 per annum, as an equivalent contribution to an expenditure, by the Corporation, up to that amount, on road works within the Corporation's boundaries.

Owing chiefly to the great change which has taken place in the last eighteen months in the position of the English labourer, and also to the difficulties naturally attendant on starting in England an undertaking to be carried out at the other side of the world, active colonizing operations under the contract cannot be said to have commenced until the month of September, 1873, although a surveyor had been employed for more than a twelvemonth previously in doing preliminary work; and as agent to the Corporation, I had erected in the town of Palmerston a substantial building as a depôt, for the reception from time to time of immigrants *in transitu*.

The pioneer party of immigrants sent out under the Corporation's auspices arrived in the Colony by the "Duke of Edinburgh" early in January of this year, and up to the present date the following shipments have been made:—

Arrived—

Per "Duke of Edinburgh"	23½	statute adults.
" "Salisbury"	45½	"
" "Ocean Mail"	79	"
" s.s. "Mongol"	14½	"
" "Woodlark"	52	"
" "Golden Sea"	50	"
" "La Hogue"	60	"
" "Waikato"	16	"

En route—

Per "Euterpe"	89	"
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Making a total of 429½ statute adults, numbering 614 souls.

Before touching upon operations in the colony, it may be well to describe the position and character of the land which is the field of operations.

The Manchester Block extends from the Rangitikei River to the Ruahine Ranges by the gorge of the Manawatu River. It is twenty miles in length by an average breadth of eight miles. With the exception of about 12,000 acres of open land, the block is covered with bush. Much of this bush is tawa forest, very light, and easily cleared; but there are also large blocks covered with very valuable