

You were working for the Government then, Mr. Tregear?"

"Yes, at that time there was considerable talk about the confiscated land, and I was acting as surveyor for the Native Lands Court, my work often taking me far beyond the confiscation line into the King Country."

"Did you ever have any trouble with the Natives?"

"With the Hau Hau, yes, they seemed to be in a perpetual pickle with the whites, and as you probably know the numerous petty skirmishes, finally grew into a racial war."

"You were mixed up in most of the differences between the natives and the Government, were you not, Mr. Tregear?"

"Yes, as one of the early pioneers and a servant of the Government I did not escape the experience similar to others in those days, and having had considerable experience with the natives and come out of one or two engagements with some credit to myself, I was placed in command of the Waikato Native Contingent. There was very little fighting done however, after the regiment had been raised, as most of our work consisted in picketing or policing the district where we had been stationed."

"Were you working for the Government continuously in the early day, Mr. Tregear?"

"No, not right along, I might say my work was to a certain extent intermittent. When the goldfields were discovered on the Thames I, with many others, went there, and for some time acted as goldfield surveyor on my own account in the district; as a matter of fact I also worked as an ordinary miner."

"But you were doing work for the Government on the Coromandel Peninsula, were you not?"

"Yes, I did considerable surveying work there, especially in the neighbourhood of Mercury Bay, as a matter of fact I was always off and on with the Government during the first 15 years of my stay in New Zealand, and many of my present friends were comrades in the old days. Mr. Ernest Bell and Mr. Harry Hadfield, a son of the bishop, were working with me when I was acting as draughtsman in the Government office."

"But weren't you connected with the Royal Commission which decided on the question of the confiscated native lands, Mr. Tregear?"

"Yes, I was the official surveyor for the Government at the time and most of the work, if not all of it, passed through my hands."

"When did you join the Government service permanently?"

"About 18 years ago, and then to a certain extent through the influence of Sir William Fox and Sir Francis Dillon Bell. The work that I had done was approved of, and my experience with the Maoris and topographical knowledge of the country made me (if I may say so for myself) a desirable addition to the Government staff."

"And since then, Mr. Tregear?"

"Since then I have done various Government work until the Labour Bureau was started about three years ago. Mr. Ballance and Mr. Reeves, both personal friends of mine, thought that I was the best suited man in the service to fill the position of chief, and I was consequently transferred to Wellington and given control of the department."

"Ah! that brings us to the subject that I want to talk to you about particularly, Mr. Tregear. Is the unemployed question in New Zealand, one which you find it difficult to deal with?"

"Well, it takes a great deal of consideration to deal with it equitably and properly, but things are not quite as bad as the newspapers would make the public believe. There are certainly a number of unemployed in New Zealand, but when we compare the population of the colony with New South Wales and Victoria, the proportion is all in our favour. If a man is willing to work there is generally an opening for him here."

"But to classify the subject. Mr. Tregear, don't you think that in contrasting New Zealand with the other colonies there is less chance for a man to make his living by his brains here than on the other side?"

"Well, perhaps you are right in that particular. There is not much of an opening for professional men in the colony, in fact I may go further and say that there is not as good a chance here for skilled labour as there is on the other side, but for the man who is healthy and strong and willing to work there is

generally a pretty good opportunity, if not in the town pretty surely in the country."

"I suppose in the course of a month or so you have a great many apply to you for work?"

"Yes, we have applications from people of all grades and conditions, but the great fault is that they defer their applications until the very last minute, and then expect us to give them work at once, this, of course, is impossible, as in justice to ourselves and the applicant, it is necessary to make inquiries, and in addition it is necessary to know if we can send an applicant direct either to Government or private employment. When I first took charge of the department I used to endeavour to find work at once for every applicant, and if 10 or 12 came I shipped them to some town or district where I had been informed labour was wanted, but I soon found that that would not do. Complaints come to the bureau from the different towns and districts, that we were flooding them with loafers and men who would not work. Since then we have been more careful and the results have been more satisfactory."

"What is the system, if I may ask, that you pursue in dealing with the ordinary applicant?"

"In the first place we always give married men, wherever they come from, the preference. In dealing with single men we generally give New Zealanders, who are on our books, a chance for employment in advance of strangers from other colonies. We never send a man into the country on the chance of his getting work when he arrives, our system is to send a man to some definite place where the work is ready for him, and he can commence at it at once. To carry out this plan you can easily see that time for inquiries is required and it is naturally impossible to find work for every applicant at once."

"In sending men up the country to work, does the Government pay their fares?"

"Well they do and they don't; if we have a billet for a man a hundred miles or so out of town we pay his fare to his destination, but it is on the understanding that it is only a loan, and that as soon as he can he will pay it back. We find that this system works much better than any other. For the sake of illustration, a man comes to me wanting employment, I am perhaps able to find him a place. He has not enough money to carry him there, under those circumstances, I say 'you represent supply, I represent demand, your work is wanted at a certain place, I will forward you there, and you will pay me as soon as you can out of your earnings, the expense I have been put to in placing you in a position whereby you can get a return for your labour.' The beauty of this system is that the applicant need in no way feel that he is accepting charity, he merely comes to the Government as an intermediary for work, and we, as agents, endeavour to find it for him, the expense incurred in forwarding him to the market where his labour will sell to advantage is a loan which is almost invariably repaid."

"But don't you often have applicants who forget to repay?"

"At first we did, but there are very few now who neglect to remunerate us for our outlay out of their first earnings. You see we have some 200 agencies throughout the colony, and if we keep a man and he deliberately attempts to defraud the Government by neglecting to pay, he is soon known and loses his employment; furthermore, he stands a very poor chance of getting other work either from private individuals or from the Government."

"I suppose you have sent a great many people up country during the last 12 months?"

"Yes a great many have passed through the Bureau and been sent away. Our idea is to relieve the congestion in the cities as much as possible."

"Notwithstanding the fact that in proportion we have less unemployed than the other colonies, don't you think that New Zealand is overrated?"

"To a certain extent, perhaps yes. For professional men New Zealand is hardly the "Promised Land," but for manual labourers, farmers, &c., it is in all probability the best colony in the group. The country is even a better one for ordinary than skilled labour at present. There is not the room for brain workers or artisans that there is elsewhere, but for the man who is able and willing to work with his hands New Zealand offers a field."