



NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY. KAKAHI RIVER BRIDGE, 125 MILES 64 CHAINS FROM MARTON, FIVE STEEL GIRDER SPANS OF 44 FT., ONE OF 22 FT.; HEIGHT, 62 FT. FROM CREEK TO RAIL LEVEL.

for nearly thirty-six hours, when they were rescued and liberated by a party of the Maniapoto tribe headed by Kahu, brother of the chief Wahanui, and Huirangi, eldest daughter of Wetere te Rungaranga. Te Kooti, of evil reputation, was at the time on his way from Te Kuiti to rescue the men, and took charge of them immediately afterwards and escorted them to Te Kuiti, where they received every possible kindness. Messages reporting the circumstances were despatched to Mr. Bryce and the public mind was somewhat relieved. Mahuki was something of a religious fanatic, and at a large meeting at Te Kuiti, announced his intention of making a raid on Alexandra the following week. He claimed to have received from Jehovah power to render the pakehas incapable of offering resistance, and although some of the chiefs endeavoured to dissuade him, with twenty odd followers he made an abortive attempt on the promised day; but, with most of his men was arrested by a party of armed constabulary, who had been in waiting. He, with several of his followers, was tried at Auckland for the assault on the surveyors and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. He fell into the clutches of the law for several offences later, and spent a considerable time in gaol.

Messrs. Hursthouse and Newsham resumed their exploration a week later and completed their work without interruption. The Native Minister himself, with a party which included two ladies also went through the same country from Alexandra to New Plymouth shortly afterwards without molestation.

#### SELECTION OF THE ROUTE.

In 1884 the preliminary surveys were brought to a conclusion, and a Parliamentary Committee, consisting of seven members, all representing South Island constituencies, carefully enquired into the relative merits of the rival routes. The report of the Committee states that they had held nineteen meetings, and had examined thirty-four witnesses, and had arrived at the following resolution: "That in the opinion of this Committee the best route for the North Island Main Trunk Railway is that from Marton, *via* Murimotu to Te Awamutu." This resolution was approved by six out of the seven members of the Committee, and was afterwards endorsed by the House of Representatives, and the construction of the railway, by the route referred to, was a little later formally sanctioned by both Houses of Parliament in the Railways Authorisation Act of the same year. In October of that year detailed surveys were commenced at Te Awamutu by Messrs. R. W. Holmes, Jas. Blackett and C. W. Hursthouse, and later on carried by Mr. Holmes as far as Mokau. At the Marton end similar survey work was being done under the direction of Mr. D. Ross, who carried it as far as the present Tahape station. From this point Mr. Holmes again took charge, and completed the survey, with a little assistance from Mr. J. D. Louch, to its junction with his previous work at the north end.

#### CONSTRUCTION WORK.

By this time the natives had been won over to a more friendly attitude towards the projected railway, and the practical work of construction was taken in hand at both ends. The turning of the first sod at the northern starting point on 15th April, 1885, was made the occasion of a picturesque ceremony on the bank of the Punu river, which had long formed the frontier line between the Waikato and the King Country. The then Premier of the colony, Sir Robert Stout, was present, together with a representative party of officials, settlers and citizens from Auckland, while the Maoris were represented by the famous chiefs Wahanui and Rewi Maniapoto about fifty natives of rank, and some hundred of others. In all, about 1500 people were present, and a brass band enlivened the proceedings at intervals. The spot selected for the ceremony was on the Maori side of the river, only about four miles distant from the battlefield of Orakau, where Rewi had twenty years before distinguished himself at the head of his tribe. This day Rewi, wearing a black velvet coat and a tall hat, stood before the gathering as a friend of the Europeans—his old hatred of the race exchanged for a feeling of brotherly companionship. At the request of the natives Wahanui dug the first three sods, which were wheeled some distance by the Premier and deposited on the ground; later on most of the earth so dealt with was carried away by the spectators as mementos of the occasion. There were, of course, many speeches. Sir Robert Stout addressed some words of good advice to the Maoris exhorting them to cultivate their lands, educate

their children and refrain from the use of strong drink. Wahanui replied on behalf of the native race in a peaceful and dignified speech, approving the restrictions on the sale of liquor in the natives' country, and with characteristic Maori eloquence urged that the clear water of the Punu should be the boundary across which liquor should not be carried. The natives requested that a section of the Line should be reserved for construction by them and their wish was acceded to—about six miles of construction being carried out entirely by Maoris on a system of piecemeal. Later on many of their race were employed by contractors in the construction of further lengths of the Line, and the work done by them was to the entire satisfaction of the authorities.

Construction work at the north end under contract progressed steadily for the next three years, fifteen miles being contracted for in 1885, nearly twenty miles more in 1886, besides the long Poro-o-tarao tunnel, a tender for the construction of which was accepted in 1885. At about this period the revenue of the country fell off considerably, and the financial outlook became less satisfactory. One of the earliest consequences of the resulting depression was the diminution in expenditure on public works, and the idea of carrying the Line to completion in a few years, which invested the work with some enthusiasm at the beginning, seems to have been abandoned. It became evident, also, that the early estimates of cost would be considerably exceeded, and it is perhaps not surprising, in the face of such discouraging circumstances, that no further work was undertaken for some time, although of course the contracts already let were being steadily pushed on to completion. In 1889, therefore, we find the line completed to the Mokau valley, 34 miles south of Te Awamutu, and work at the northern end in progress only at the Poro-o-tarao tunnel, an isolated spot 10 miles lower down.

Meanwhile construction works at the southern end of the Line were also in progress. Eighteen miles of comparatively easy work carried out by contract took the Line as far as Rangatira, and a contract had also been entered into for the Mangaonoho section, comprising nearly four miles of heavier work, when, for the reasons already mentioned, progress came practical to a stop.

Changes of Government brought new ideas and policy; the co-operative system was evolved, and work resumed at both ends on this principle, under which it has been since carried out.

The section at the north end between Mokau and the Poro-o-tarao tunnel was taken in hand and completed and opened for traffic in 1896. Steady progress southwards continued, and in 1903 the Ongarue section, terminating at Taurarunui, within a mile of the Wanganui river, was also opened. A handsome road and railway



NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY OHINEMOA SECTION—BANK FORMED OF RHYOLITE DEBRIS.