

rience goes, the Natives really know little or nothing of that part of the country. A few of the older men can identify the hills and streams when they see them, but cannot tell what lies on either side of them but out of sight; and everything in the way of information or description I have ever got from them, except on the spot, has proved so incorrect that I now attach very little weight to their words. Their statement that a war-party once reached Te Pukohu from the plains in less than two days may be perfectly correct, but it by no means follows that this could be done now, or that a road could be taken that way. The circumstance, if it happened, occurred fifty years ago, before pigs were introduced, and when large tracts of country were covered with fern (which, of course, would be burned off, or have tracks broken through it, preparatory to such an onslaught), which are now entirely overgrown with scrub and scrubby bush.

The Wangaehu, as a rule, has too deep fords to be crossed by pack-horses. A prospecting party, in September, 1869, tried to reach Kainanawa by following its valley, but had to turn back, on account of its unfordable character, when they had got a very little way above its junction with the Mangawhero, and long before reaching the bush; and, as you will see by my report of 31st December, 1869, Mr. Pilmer and myself reached it a few miles higher up, and then returned to Mangawhero, deterred by its apparent impracticability. My son and I found a good ford, on 24th September, between the Parakariki and Otumauma Plains, but it lay so much out of our course, and there was such a deep descent to it and ascent from it, that I decided not to use it unless compelled; and on describing it to an Otumairi Native, who is part owner of the locality, a few days ago, he evidently knew the place, and called it by a name—Te Onepu—which so exactly expresses a large bank of volcanic sand on the western bank, that I have little doubt he was correct in saying that it cannot be depended on, for that often, after a heavy flood, it washes out so as to be quite impassable; in short, I am quite certain that if at first the road should be taken any other way, Mangawhero must ultimately form the main line of communication between Wanganui and the interior. The only difficulty, as I said from the first, consists in the selection of the line, and this solely because the hummocky nature of the ground, and the bush and scrub which cover it, render it very troublesome and tedious to ascertain its exact formation, and the country affords no food for an engineer party, except a few pigs, birds, and eels.

There are two streams—Kiwitahi and Huripari—which will require to be bridged at a high level, and two others—Otutapu and Wetaweta—which it would be desirable to deal with in a similar manner; but beyond these, there will be no difficulty worthy of notice in constructing a good cart road to the plains. There are, in fact, only two or three points where there would be such an amount of judgment required in laying out the line, as to make the work interesting to an engineer fit to be entrusted with it. Of course, from the very nature of the ground, more side-cutting would be required in proportion to the length of the road than in a level region, but all of it would be in short lengths, and the bulk of it very easy. Such long and heavy cuttings as are to be met with on most of the roads hereabouts, would be utterly wanting on the Mangawhero line, the earthworks on which will look ridiculous after the three side cuttings between the town and where we turn off from the Wanganui River.

As a conclusive answer to the assertions that have been made, to the effect that the pack line was impracticable, and that a good road could not be formed in the same direction, I may mention that when Mr. Booth and I went up the other day, we found that the Mangawhero settlers had actually begun widening the pack-road, so as to make it passable for drays. I do hope, therefore, that the Government will lose no more time in pushing on with the work.

The Hon. W. Gisborne, Minister for Public Works.

I have, &c.,
H. C. FIELD.

No. 26.

Mr. COOPER to Mr. FIELD.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 12th January, 1871.

I have the honor, by direction of Mr. Gisborne, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 2nd instant, and to inform you that the Government do not at present intend to incur any further expense on account of your line of road from Wanganui to Taupo.

I have, &c.,
G. S. COOPER,
Under Secretary.

H. C. Field, Esq., Wanganui.

No. 27.

Mr. BOOTH to Mr. COOPER.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 24th January, 1871.

In reference to the Ranana-Taupo Road, I have the honor to report that, last week, as soon as I had received the requisite authority to obtain tools from the Government store, I started from Ranana, at which place, on my arrival, I held a meeting with the Ngatirangi hapu, owners of the country through which the road is to pass. I explained to them the specifications as supplied to me by Mr. Blackett, Engineer-in-Chief, and which I have the honor to enclose. It was impossible to get the Natives to contract for the work by the piece, excepting at the exorbitant rate of £3 a chain.

I told them that this road had been asked for by the Natives themselves; that the making of it would not be of any present advantage to the Government; but, on the other hand, the opening of this road would not only facilitate their communication with Murimotu and Taupo, but would render their land, which is now valueless, of great value. They said they were anxious to have a road, but that they did not understand taking work by the chain or piece; that they were willing to work by the day, and that they wanted 5s. a day; but that if I offered them 4s. a day they would take it, and at that rate 100 young men would be ready to commence work on the morrow. (I was told privately