

instead of one only, as they stated. As it evidently would not do to descend upon Matahitira, I continued to cut along the dividing ridge to the low saddle near Mekemeke, over which it is evident the permanent road must pass. This saddle is about 200 feet below the general level of the dividing ridge, where we follow it, and fully 500 feet lower than the high, broken bush land called "Kaharoa," or "Maungarea," over which the tracks from Karatia and Ranana run. Beyond the saddle, I did not think it wise to traverse the ridge, as it rises to Mekemeke (a high, wooded hill), and then trends towards the north-west till it reaches the Kaharoa, so that the only possible inducement to follow it farther would be to effect a junction with the proposed Ranana line, if the latter had passed near to Mekemeke, which, however, I find it does not, but keeps to the northward of Kaharoa altogether.

Beyond the saddle, the line can be taken in several ways, each offering certain advantages, and attended with certain drawbacks:—

1. It could run from the saddle along the gully which descends from it towards the Wangaehu, and then follow up the actual valley of the river to Kerioi. On this line there would be easy gradients and abundance of gravel, but it seems to go too much to the eastward and to descend to a needlessly low level, and may necessitate fording the Wangaehu twice or more.
2. It might cross the river and pass through the Murimotu Bush to a part of the main plain which seems nearer than Kerioi. This, however, would take us still farther to the eastward, and probably over ground where no gravel could be obtained.
3. And probably the best the line could apparently be taken so as to wind round Mekemeke, and then crossing a gully and the ridge beyond it, strike the river at the lower bend, and follow it to Kerioi.

This is by far the most direct route, and is free from the objections to which the others are liable, but it would be necessary to ascertain if it is practicable before beginning to cut it.

In fact, all three routes ought to be traversed before deciding on the one to be adopted, but as I had to return to make up the town accounts to the end of the year, I could not stay to examine them. I, however, cut a track down to the river to see what it and its valley were like. The river is a comparatively insignificant stream (40 or 50 feet wide, and mostly only knee deep), but runs with enormous velocity, the fall being evidently considerably more than 100 feet per mile; and is evidently liable to high floods. It must diminish in size very rapidly as we ascend it, owing to the large amount of water flowing into it from both sides, so that if we have to ford it, it will be no serious drawback (except, of course, as regards the floods), the bed being shingly, with large boulders at the actual rapids. The gully is wooded throughout, a large proportion of the timber apparently being totara, growing on level or tolerably level ground, at a moderate height only above the river. Epiha, whom I met at Georgetti's on my way down, and who seems to be one of the chief owners of the Otumauma Plain, a little above the present end of the line, told me that from here the road could keep on the west side of the river through open, level bush, right up to Kerioi. If he is right, it will only take a few days to run the line through when I go up again (which I shall do as soon as the weather is favourable and I can spare time); but I find the Natives really know the ground so imperfectly, that I place very little reliance on their statements respecting it.

By watching my opportunities, I succeeded, during my stay, in getting such bearings of the principal points as will enable me to construct a nearly accurate map of all the part of the country traversed by the road. I have not had time to plot the work off yet, but on trying the bearings on my sketch map, I was surprised to find the latter so correct. Mekemeke, the farthest point I have yet been able to fix exactly, is only about a quarter of a mile further from town and about half a mile more to the eastward than I have shown it on the sketch map, showing that my guessed distances are not much astray.

I have, &c.,

H. C. FIELD.

W. L. Buller, Esq., R.M., Wanganui.

No. 13.

Mr. BROWN to Mr. FIELD.

SIR,—

Government Buildings, Wellington, 29th July, 1870.

I am requested by the Hon. Mr. Fox to return you your letter of the 26th instant, and to inform you that Mr. Fox declines to receive a letter containing the insulting insinuation underlined in it; that Mr. Fox neither knows nor cares what your political opinions may be; and that you will be so good as to confine your correspondence with the Government, for the future, to official matters, and address it to the official department under which you are employed.

I have, &c.,

W. R. E. BROWN.

H. C. Field, Esq., Wanganui.

No. 14.

Mr. BROWN to Mr. FIELD.

SIR,—

Wellington, 16th August, 1870.

I have been requested by the Hon. Mr. Fox to return to you your letter of the 9th instant. I am unable to treat correspondence sent to me in my official capacity, and in reply to letters sent by me officially, otherwise than from an official point of view.

I have, &c.,

W. R. E. BROWN.

H. C. Field, Esq., Wanganui.