

and Under-Secretaries to share it with him, he should have a minute, almost parochial, acquaintance with the needs and resources of every part of his dominions. Of course such an acquaintance could only be found in an ideal Premier. We must be well content with approximations to it. To gain such an approximation in regard to the North Island is the object of Mr. Seddon's present visit. In regard to the South Island he already possessed it, partly as an inheritance from his predecessors in office and partly through his own researches. Prior to this journey of his, it has been somewhat fashionable in the Wellington House to be ignorant of the greater portion of this Island. The King-country has been a sort of 'misty mid-region of Weir' in the minds of nine-tenths of the members, and as for the country north of Auckland, it might be compared to the famous 'Isle of Wind' on which Pantagruel and his companions landed in their search for the Holy Bottle, and where the inhabitants are described by Rabelais as living on promises, flattery, and hope. With the Premier's advent a new epoch has dawned for both the King-country and the North, we hope. We have now the perfect assurance that in the future sessions of Parliament these long-neglected portions of the colony will have the attention which they merit. When discussion arises in future debates on questions relating to the settlement of Native lands in the centre or northern portion of this Island, or to the development of settlement in the peninsula north of Auckland, there will be found on the Government benches, in the person of the Premier, a willing and discriminating listener, to whom Northern members can address their grievances with the certainty of having them considered with that impartiality which only comes from perfect practical knowledge. In the future, recalcitrant Maoris meditating foolish and misjudged opposition to the march of civilisation will remember the practical Premier who travelled open-eyed through their land, and think twice before they venture on a 'humbugging' policy. And in the future the struggling Northern settler, and the equally struggling gumdigger, will feel that they have a friend at Court indeed. The former, toiling with his produce through roads deep in mire, will not despair of some amelioration of his hard lot when he considers that the Premier understands his difficulties, while the knights of the spear and spade will feel a firm confidence in the man who entered so fully into their difficulties in the most familiar spirit without designing to flatter them for one moment."

"NEW ZEALAND HERALD."

The Premier's visit to the picturesque district and township of Whangarei is thus recorded by a special reporter of the *New Zealand Herald*. The report appeared in that journal on the 17th March:—

"I omitted in my last to pay a tribute of praise to the Northern Steamship Company for their excellent steamer arrangements. The Premier and party found the s.s. "Wellington" a most comfortable boat. Under Mr. Ransom's management the company have gained a reputation for the comfort and punctuality of their boats.

"Taurau Kukupa, a leading chief of the Parawhau Tribe, had an interview with the Premier this morning. He claims to be the principal owner of the Whatitiri Block, in which the Urirotoi Tribe are also claimants. He wanted the Native Land Court for the investigation of title to sit at Whangarei. He also wanted his application for a rehearing in the Omiru Block, which comprise the Wairua Falls, heard as soon as possible.

"The Premier replied that he had already promised that the Court for Whatitiri should sit at Poroti. The application for a rehearing could not be considered until a successor to the Chief Judge was appointed.

"The Premier, Mr. Carroll, and party, accompanied by Mr. R. Thompson, M.H.R., and others, left Whangarei by special train at 10 a.m. to-day for Hikurangi. At Mairtown two of Mr. Dobie's little girls were at the station and presented the Premier with a magnificent bouquet and a basket of locally-grown oranges. The party went on to the terminus of the railway at the new coalfield, a mile beyond Hikurangi, and inspected the place. On returning to the township the Premier received telegrams apprising him of a banquet in his honour at Kawakawa in the evening, and asking him to meet the Natives at Waioio in passing through, and to have another meeting at Waimate to-morrow.

"Various deputations were awaiting the Premier on his arrival at Hikurangi Township, and they were duly received in the billiard-room at Rolleston's Hotel. Mr. J. W. Kerr acted as spokesman for a deputation appointed at a public meeting on the previous evening to urge on the Premier the necessity of immediately pushing on railway extension to Whakapara, three miles and a half beyond the present terminus. He pointed out that it would there tap the river, which had a drainage-area of something like seventy square miles, and a large extent of valuable timbered country, comprising the Puhipuhi Forest and Crown land to the eastward of it. The railway-works would also afford employment to a large number of men who could not now make a living at gumdigging. Coal and manganese deposits would also be tapped.

"The Premier said it was a waste of time to talk of starting works merely to give employment to gumdiggers. The Government could not exceed the parliamentary appropriations. The extension of the railway to Whakapara was a matter deserving consideration when passing next year's estimates. The deputation had made out a good case, and if the statements as to the extent and quality of timber, and coal, *et cetera*, it would bring to the market were verified by official investigations the matter would receive the favourable consideration of the Government.

"Mr. W. G. Barker presented a petition, signed by forty settlers, urging the formation of a road between Hikurangi and Whananaki, on the East Coast. Messrs. J. W. Kerr and H. Hawken also spoke.

"The Premier said the Government had given assistance to settlers in respect to these matters last session—first, by making Native lands chargeable for half rates, and, second, authorising the imposition of a vehicle-tax. Settlers must be self-reliant, and a vehicle-tax ought to be imposed on those who used the road. He could make no promise.