

by the Premier to lighten the burdens of the struggling toilers and to permanently improve the existing circumstances. The visit and investigations were by no means of a superficial character; every opportunity was availed of to glean the fullest and most accurate information, and the honourable gentleman underwent a great deal of fatigue and labour in his determination to make his knowledge as complete as possible. He was everywhere enthusiastically received by the residents and settlers, who exhibited their delight at the visit of the Prime Minister in every possible way. Mr. Seddon is now thoroughly conversant with the needs of the North, and the position as regards Native lands, the locking up of which has so greatly retarded the settlement and prosperity of the country, and accentuated the hardships of the pioneers. The gum industry was not neglected, and the Premier's suggestions for solving the difficulty in connection with the present crisis, and to meet any future contingencies, have almost without exception been heartily indorsed by gumdiggers and others interested in this valuable trade. The tour concluded on Tuesday evening, and, although it is premature to predict, we are pretty safe in saying that next session will see most of the proposals framed in definite terms.

"On Tuesday night, the 13th instant, the Hon. R. J. Seddon left Auckland, in pursuance of the visit which was promised last session to the country comprising the extreme northern portion of the North Island of New Zealand. The party, numbering altogether seven persons, included the Hon. J. Carroll, the representative of the Native race in the Cabinet, and Messrs. Gerhard Mueller (Commissioner of Crown Lands), T. H. Hamer (Private Secretary to the Premier), J. F. Andrews (official reporter), and the representatives of the *New Zealand Times* and *Auckland Star*. The trip by the steamer 'Wellington' to Whangarei initiated the journey into the northern wilderness, and the party made Marsden Point and steamed up the tortuous though pretty arm of the sea that leads to the jetty and railway on the following morning. The sea jaunt had proved a delightful inauguration of the tour, and no one had had any cause to bemoan unruliness or insubordination in the gastric regions. On the landing-stage, cordial, and his jolly countenance wreathed in welcoming smiles, stood Mr. Robert Thompson, member for the Marsden electorate, and with him was Mr. Dobbie, well known to Aucklanders as the most successful orange cultivator in the district, and who is also manager of the railway traffic in this particular portion of the colony. Under the care of these willing gentlemen the run to the township was quickly accomplished, and the travellers at once adjourned to the Commercial Hotel, where host Bunyard had thoughtfully prepared a most excellent breakfast. The wants of the inner man had scarcely been satisfied, and a few telegraph messages received, considered, and the answers despatched, when the Premier was under weigh to fulfil the objects of his tour—to visit the toiler for kauri-gum in his lonely desolate haunts, and the Maoris in their most retired villages. Comfortably ensconced in a capacious brake, a start was made for Poroti, a settlement lying some seventeen miles almost due west of Whangarei, the centre of one of the best gumfields in the North and of the Urirois, a tribe holding some 50,000 acres of first-class land. The road was of a very circuitous nature at the commencement of the journey, leading over a low range of hills. Once these were negotiated some very pleasant level country was traversed, the good metalled road being skirted on either side by thriving homesteads. A prolific crop of maize and a miscellaneous profusion of vegetable growth were eloquent testimonies to the rich productive quality of the soil, and their contemplation almost forced one into a state of dreamy reverie—to forget the present unnatural state of affairs, and picture the North a happy prosperous country with all the magnificent gifts and resources of a bountiful nature being similarly availed of and developed. Alas! this ideal was soon rudely disturbed and dispelled, not only by a complete change in the aspect of the land, but also by the most unceremonious jolting of our devoted vehicle. We had parted company with the settlers' best friend, Macadam, and, leaving behind the evidences of man's civilising hand for the nonce, had plunged into a region still clothed in all the glory and beauty of nature's original garments.

"Down the winding mountain-path on the far side of the range we were soon enjoying a scene which dwellers in the towns are seldom privileged to witness. The hills, thickly wooded with virgin bush, rose abruptly on our right, a fern-clad valley followed us on the left, and far away, restricting the vision, was the horizon of ranges—the eternal ranges. Small homesteads cosily nestled in the forest by the wayside were passed at long intervals, and blackened smouldering stumps and partially-cleared plots showed what a courageous and successful fight the lonely settler was waging with almost overwhelming forces. Several bullock-wagons, conveying kauri timber from a stretch of bush in the vicinity of Maungatapere, were quickly lost in the rear, and then we were left to ourselves and nature. But no more ruminating on the country as it ought to be was possible; all one's thoughts and energies were concentrated in devising the best and safest means of alighting from the coach the moment before it capsized or rolled over the embankment. That precious vehicle, however, seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in anticipating your decisions, and unless the calculations were carried on with both arms glued tightly round the rail you were in imminent danger of pitching headlong into space. These sensations were rendered doubly acute at times by the coach foolishly endeavouring (so it appeared to the occupants) to travel along the side of a house—the road would suddenly slope right away and form a very obtuse angle, along which the conveyance careered at a reckless pace, while its valuable freight looked anxiously into emptiness and pondered on the uncertainty of human life and the particular law of gravitation that kept the machine from rolling wildly into a stream some half-mile below. However, as nothing serious occurred, and as we continued to pass safely over many another murderous stretch of road, we concluded that a kindly Providence had extended us its protection, and therefore we once more turned our attentions to the wondrous beauties of nature. The road we were traversing was simply villainous in midsummer; its state during the winter months would defy adequate description by the most eloquent of writers—it could not be expressed in writing. Fancy that hilly, uneven, and, at places, precipitous surface made soapy by rains, and hundreds of the awful ruts and holes com-