

manifest that they were there with a purpose, and not for the mere sake of being present. The settlers interviewed the Premier on local matters, and the gumdiggers' business was almost identical with that of the previous day. One suggestion was made by a digger to the effect that the Government in settling diggers on the land should reserve a piece of gum-country exclusively for those settlers. This would keep the field from ever being flooded, and would enable the settlers to make a little capital when required. Mr. Seddon thought this idea was worth consideration, although it received scanty consideration at the hands of his fellow-diggers.

"The wants of the inner man having once more been satisfied, Mr. Seddon and party bade farewell to Hikurangi, amidst ringing cheers from the settlers and gumdiggers. The conveyance that did duty on the previous day was again utilised, but it proved rather unwieldy and cumbersome. We were traversing the main trunk road of the North Island, and, to use a mild expression, its condition was deplorable.

"Our experience to Poroti had been bad enough in all conscience, but this trip was destined to be worse—very much worse. A slight hill was first ascended, and then the coach travelled through several miles of swamp, which was encompassed as far as the eye could reach by bush-covered ranges. Even at this early stage of the journey ruts and cavities drew attention to their existence in the most forcible manner, tossing one about in every conceivable and inconceivable direction, and causing our staid equipage to cavort and frisk to an unbecoming and painful degree. The surrounding high land gradually converged, and we were soon carefully picking our way through valleys and along mountain-sides in the midst of dense bush. Great boulders were strewn over the track at regular intervals, and always at places where ruts were absent; and, when both these failed, wooden culverts and bridges, rising perpendicularly from the road to a height of a foot or more, served to remind us of the joys of a settler's life in that particular locality. In crossing a culvert or bridge, the horses unconcernedly banged the front wheels against the wooden wall, then pulled altogether and surmounted the obstruction, walked to the other side, stepped down, and quietly waited while the attachment behind fell with an awful thump on to the road beyond. This exhilarating experience became frequent, then familiar, and finally monotonous, before the drive ended, and set one speculating if any portion of the body would possibly escape dislocation. But this was not the only diversion. In one or two hollows the wheels actually disappeared up to the axle even at that time of the year, and our Jehu entertained us with reminiscences of his experiences in the winter months. At one spot his horse had had to swim, while the driver and passengers climbed to the uppermost seat, and prayed that the wheels would not wander from the road into the adjacent swamp-land. Again, a piece of ground some chains from the road would be scanned with interest, because it was there some unfortunate horseman discovered himself, after an ineffectual attempt to guide his steed through the waste of muddy waters. In the bush the land seemed good enough, but once clear of timber the country looked very barren and desolate. A settler's home with a small cleared plot was met with now and again, but habitations were very sparse. Fern and tea-tree scrub alternated with luxuriant bush growth, and occasionally large clumps of kahikatea would be encountered, keeping the interest ever sustained.

"At Hukuranui a short stoppage was made for refreshments, and we left considerably enlivened by the intelligence that several culverts were perforated with large holes, and an accompanying admonition to the driver to be very careful. Once more the road lay over mountain-ranges, at times winding along the edge of a steep timbered precipice. Some stately kauris were passed on the upper land, but forest quickly disappeared when the descent began. Another tract of uninviting country met the gaze, and continued to Towai, where the Premier was interviewed with regard to some local matters. There were about a dozen houses at this place, and in either direction the road was in as dilapidated a condition as was possible. Yet at the settlement was a carefully laid-out racecourse, with miniature grandstand, judge's box, and saddling-paddock. The anomaly was startling, and could not escape notice. Kawakawa was not very distant now, and soon was passed a cleared knoll, which was the scene of the famous Ruapekapeka fight during the Hone Heke war. A couple of the guns still lie embedded at the place, and there are also the remains of the old pa. The shades of night were rapidly enveloping the road and country by this time, and the uneven state of the track rendered a walking-pace imperative. Very little persuasion was required to induce the horses to adopt this rate of speed, and the drive at once began to get tedious in the extreme. The driver was also a cautious man, and, when informed that the coach *might* arrive at its destination before morning, but not possibly prior to midnight, sagely remarked, 'It is slow, but sure. I don't care how long I take, provided I get there.' We said no more after that, but fervently hoped that the vehicle would not develop a propensity to pick out the deepest ruts or skate down the mountain-sides. Once the coach violently canted to an angle of forty-five degrees from the perpendicular, and its devoted freight thought the end had come. The driver was calmly assuring, but, after getting his charge out of the dangerous predicament, admitted that he thought 'she was going.' She did go, but at something slower than the proverbial snail's pace, and thankful indeed were the passengers when the Native settlement at Waioimio was reached.

"This lies three miles outside of Kawakawa, and as it was late, the Premier, through the Hon. J. Carroll, informed the Maoris that he would come out and hold a meeting the following forenoon. The party then pushed on, arriving at Mr. Stewart's hotel about 8 o'clock. Mr. R. M. Houston, M.H.R. for Bay of Islands, was present to welcome the Premier and his colleague, who immediately proceeded to Stewart's Hall, where a banquet had been prepared in honour of the visit. Over fifty residents attended, and the proceedings were characterized by the greatest good feeling and cordiality. Considering the brief notice given, Mr. Stewart had accomplished wonders in providing good things, and making the table attractive, and, as the honourable guest said, 'If such excellent results attended a short notice, it would be impossible to imagine what kind of a feast would follow an extended intimation.' The healths of the Hon. R. J. Seddon and the Hon. J. Carroll were toasted with great enthusiasm, and 'The Government' was also warmly received.