

our products, so long as our trade and produce be conveyed at railway cost, and we be restricted to one market, or be subjected, as we now are, to a loss of from £2 to £3 per ton on imports and exports, so long will we remain as we are—a poor, depressed community, without inducement to produce beyond our own requirements, excluded, unheeded, and unknown to men of capital and enterprise, and debarred the trade of the world. Nothing less than a harbour can obviate this repression. The distance from this district is too great, either to Auckland or Wellington, to meet railway charges on all marketable products and yet compete with people of other districts which have a harbour, and who are not restricted to one market, but can choose throughout every port in this and the Australian Colonies, and other parts of the world, where they can best trade and exchange to advantage. Hence, from this cause, and from what I have stated, do what you will, people the district as you may, let the resources of the country be developed as much as you like, yet, nevertheless, we cannot thrive as this garden Province warrants we ought to do. And why? Because we have not a harbour.

To me it is a source of anxiety that the good people of this Province have, through the want of harbour facilities, been debarred from voyaging, and seeing for themselves other parts of the world, in order that they might know, from observation and comparison, that the innate dormant wealth of Taranaki requires but little beyond a combined effort on their part to bring that wealth into use, and raise this Province to a position second to no other in New Zealand.

The geographical position of this place (in regard to intercolonial trade, and the special trade to be had with the Australian Colonies) is most commanding, which, together with the advantages we possess in soil, wood, water, water-power, and minerals, are such that one cannot but express surprise that our great desideratum should have been neglected for so many years; and persons are naturally led to believe, consequent from such neglect, that a difficulty or unwarrantable cost bars the making of a harbour at Taranaki. So far from this being the case, I know, of my own knowledge, from long years of professional experience, and observation on this coast regarding the winds, tides, currents, drifts, and seas, &c., that the opposite is the fact, and that great facilities exist for constructing a first-class harbour off the town of New Plymouth, which would give protection to maritime life and property, and be a means of peopling this Province to a large extent, without cost to the Colony.* Moreover, it would add immensely to our trade, encourage cultivation and factories, enhance the value of land, and increase the revenue. All this could be effected at a cost less than our present restrictive system and boating establishment entails upon the community. In this opinion I am fully borne out in the report made on this New Plymouth harbour question by Messrs. Doyne and Balfour, Marine Engineers.

I will here briefly extract a few statements made in their report, viz. :—

“That, in our opinion, the most suitable site for the proposed harbour is that opposite the town of New Plymouth.

“Our examination of the locality, and the evidence we have collected on the spot, have satisfied us that there are not only no insurmountable difficulties in the way of constructing a first-class harbour at New Plymouth; but, on the contrary, remarkable and rare facilities, which promise to reduce very considerably the cost of the work.

“The direct pecuniary loss to the community, resulting from the want of a proper harbour, is estimated by Mr. Chilman, the Collector of Customs, to have been upwards of £15,000 during the year 1864.”

Looking at the harbour question in a common-sense and business point of view, one is naturally led to ask, “Will it pay, if it be constructed?” My reply is, that it will pay progressively and immensely; and to those who have travelled and observed, and who have knowledge of such matters, I will add that they cannot but have noticed the marvellous activity and busy life which is always to be seen in a harbour community (where the harbour is environed with good land, as is New Plymouth), when compared with other coastal towns, where the dull trade is carried on at broken and uncertain intervals, attended with risk, loss, and additional cost to the mercantile community.

If, for the carrying on of our now small trade without a harbour (and while we have but a fractional portion of our land occupied) we sink and sacrifice yearly an amount of money sufficient to pay interest and sinking fund for a sum that would enable us to construct so desirable a work, is it not right to direct attention to what most assuredly will be our returns if the salubrious, beautiful, and fertile district of Taranaki be peopled and brought into use. Truly our harbour returns would be immense, and for the following reasons, as well as for that which I have already adduced:—The town of New Plymouth is located in a position most commanding and convenient for trading with the Australian Colonies without the inconvenience of going north or south about, or making the passage through Cook’s Strait; it has a good roadstead, perfectly free from shoals, with remarkable barrier landmarks, which bound the anchorage to the west, and a convenient depth of water near shore, with a 14 feet rise of tide at “full and change,” and no impediment exists for shipping or landing passengers and cargo at any time of tide save in stormy weather; and as “remarkable and rare facilities exist for the constructing of a first-class harbour at New Plymouth,” would it not be politic and wise to have it made at once, seeing that to the windward and exposed part of the town a reef of unquestionable strength and durability exists for the foundation and basis of the said harbour, “which promise to reduce very considerably the cost of the work.” Moreover, the proposed harbour and town of New Plymouth are so centrally situated with regard to the whole of this Province, that it would be impossible to select a more judicious position for carrying on the trade of the country; added to which, there is not another place upon the coast of Taranaki (or, indeed, upon this west coast for hundreds of miles) where a like harbour can be made to rival it. And as the Province of Taranaki is larger, by sixty thousand acres, than the four English counties of Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, and Hertford, and, with the exception of the snow-capped heights of the beautiful and far-famed Mount Egmont, and other small amount of picturesque ranges, the whole of the land of the Province is available for either agricultural or pastoral farms of a first-class order, which being brought into use and fructified will necessarily create

* I have good and reliable authority for stating that if a harbour were made at Taranaki, there are a large number of people and families, with means varying from £300 or £400 to £3,000 or £4,000 each, who would at once come and settle here; but without a harbour they will not venture, as they object to the landing as now carried on, and the want of facilities for trading.—F. A. C.