

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

Mr. E. BUCK to the AGENT-GENERAL for NEW ZEALAND.

SIR,—

I have the honor to place before you for consideration a question which occurred to me during a visit which I paid to New Zealand in 1875, and I trust that in doing so I may be acquitted of committing an unwarrantable intrusion upon your time.

2. I must preface my remarks by referring to my official position, in holding which I have been (and shall continue to be) brought specially in contact with the subject which I wish to bring to your notice. My appointment (of which the official title is given at the head of the accompanying letter) involves the control of agricultural experiments, undertaken with the view of developing the natural resources of the N.W. Provinces.

3. Among other enterprises which have been initiated since I received charge of my present office has been that of the cultivation, curing, and manufacture of tobacco for the European markets. A Calcutta firm (Messrs. Begg Dunlop), which have been exclusively concerned in the development of tea-production in India, have, under terms arranged by myself, undertaken to give the experiment a full trial, and, with some assistance from Government, afforded through the agency of my department, have for the last eighteen months been at work, and they have, under the conditions of their contract with Government, procured the services of a thoroughly skilled Virginian curer and manufacturer, selected by Messrs. Campbell and Co., of Virginia, one of the largest tobacco-exporting firms in America. The enterprise, so far, promises well. The firm have obtained in England and Australia a valuation for their cured leaf three times as large as any price hitherto obtained for Indian tobacco, and have, on the strength of their success, imported a second Virginian, and are now building a factory.

4. On my way to New Zealand in 1875 I made the acquaintance of Mr. Cameron, the managing proprietor of the Virginian Tobacco Factory at Sydney, to which leaf is exported for manufacture from Virginia. I visited his factory, and learned something of the conditions of the tobacco trade in the colonies. I have lately heard from Mr. Cameron that experiments are being made in tobacco-culture in New South Wales.

5. I have, both from Mr. Cameron and the Virginian curer in this country, who has travelled with me over a great part of these provinces, become informed of the character of the climate and soil required for the successful cultivation of tobacco, and I am convinced that no country could be more suitable for it than certain parts of the North Island of New Zealand. I may mention here that I travelled across the Island from Auckland to Tauranga on horseback, and thence to Napier by coach, in the company of some southern colonists, who were anxious to ascertain the character of the North Island land. Aided by their local knowledge and experience, and guided by my own acquaintance with the character of soils (derived from the duties which I have had for several years to perform, in classifying in very great detail soils in this country for the assessment of land revenue, which is here proportional to the value of soils), I was able to form what I believe to be a tolerably fair estimate of its capabilities.

6. I doubt, however, whether tobacco cultivation, which requires a great deal of petty manipulation, and constant care and attention, would, in New Zealand, give a remunerative return to European labour. But the thought occurred to me during my travels that its cultivation might be undertaken with great advantages by Indian coolie labour, under proper superintendence.

7. This involves the question whether coolie labour will be allowed in the Island by the New Zealand Government.* I addressed a letter in 1875 to Sir Donald McLean, in which I represented that many Indian officers were anxious to settle, with their families and pensions, in New Zealand, and in which I also mentioned that nothing would be easier than to import coolie labour with them. Sir Donald McLean's successor (then Superintendent of Hawke's Bay) expressed to me his opinion that Indian officers of both services would be desirable settlers; and I was encouraged to believe, by the official answer which I received from Sir Donald McLean, that some consideration would be paid to my suggestions when the questions then pending between the Central and Provincial Governments as to the control of administration were settled. I have, however, as yet received no definite answer.

8. I reckon that coolie labour, allowing for everything (comparative physical weakness included) would not, at the utmost, exceed one-third of the cost of European labour. There is no difficulty in obtaining coolies from these provinces, whence they go in hundreds every year to Demerara and French Guiana and the Mauritius; and the climate of the North Island (which in the lower levels is never so cold as are the north-west plains of India in the winter months, when we often get severe frosts) would suit them admirably. There remains, however, the objection of colonists to their introduction.

9. I am not quite sure whether their objections have received any distinct expression in the absence of any definite proposal on the subject, but I believe that the New Zealand labouring classes have a general impression that they would be undersold by the Indian coolie. This might be the case if Indians went in crowds to settle in the Island, and performed work which was now done or could be done by Englishmen. But, in the first case, an Indian coolie never

* The consent of a foreign Government to the terms of the Indian Emigration Act is necessary before emigration can be allowed from this country to any other.