

The advantage of railway officers being instructed in telegraphy is recognized by the Commissioners, and they advise its encouragement. This is well, and it may be added that under my system of railway telegraph this was already done with marked success. Stationmasters, signalmen, railway clerks, and office boys were trained in telegraphy, and telegraph clerks were trained for railway duties.

No additional hands were introduced, as the report would lead the reader to suppose, to swell the ranks of a fostered department; but the adaptation of the telegraph to subserve the requirements of an extended railway system was the sole end in view. If the Commissioners really consider that telegraphists unacquainted with railway working can as fitly serve for railway operators, at least I may be allowed to differ in opinion.

The system is already abolished, and the railway telegraph is, for the future, amalgamated with the general public telegraph service. I did not recommend this course, but still I endeavour to further the wishes of the Government in the matter, and, if economy results from the change, I shall be glad to find it so, and, so long as the efficiency of the service is not seriously impaired, shall be content.

*Unnecessary Officers.*—Under this heading a reference is made to a locomotive engineer. On this I ask, do the Commissioners intend the public to suppose that a locomotive engineer is unnecessary at Dunedin? It is not to be supposed that a witness, in an hour's interview, will be able to make four persons, new to the subject, acquainted with the various and intricate duties of a locomotive engineer or superintendent. I have already briefly sketched an outline of those duties in an earlier part of my reply.

I know, from actual experience, that to intrust the care and working of fifty-five locomotive engines of an aggregate value of some £90,000 to a shop-foreman, however long experienced, would neither be prudent nor practical. If the service is to improve and keep pace with the advancements of the age, a number of matters of detail must be attended to with minutest attention and care, over and above the actual repairing of machinery which the Commissioners suppose to be the sum total of the engineer's duties. The report states nothing to show that such an officer is unnecessary, but rather infers the unfitness of the person for the office he holds. With regard to the fitness of a particular person to hold the position assigned to him, those are best qualified to judge who are acquainted with the manner in which he discharges his duties. To assume that no man can, by his ability, energy, and perseverance, qualify himself for any sphere beyond the one he originally commenced in is to lay down a principle that would disqualify many men for the positions they have held and still hold with credit and success. There are many in the highest position in New Zealand who can fully bear me out in this. It is needless to refer to the numerous instances known to every one of men who have been distinguished in professions in which they were wholly self-taught.

Under the same heading of "Unnecessary Officers," a reference is made to the traffic manager at Nelson. The Commissioners do not state that this officer, besides the management of the traffic on the Nelson line, is intrusted also with the maintenance of way as well as the superintendence of the locomotives, not only on the Nelson line, but also on the Picton-Blenheim. This officer is a regularly-trained mechanical engineer. I submit that it would be suicidal to place six valuable engines in the charge of stationmasters that know nothing whatever of their construction or working.

It is further stated that in Nelson there is a storekeeper who has no stores and no office, and who receives £160 per annum. As a fact, there is an officer at Nelson who receives and issues, and keeps the accounts of, stores; but the total cost of the work, salary, and all told for the nine months ending 31st March, 1880, was under £30.

Included in the indictment against the South Island Commissioner, and among the list of "other unnecessary officers," a reference is made to the assistant manager of the Kaipara Railway. In the manner this remark is introduced in the report, a cursory reader, not for the moment observing that this is a North Island Railway, may very readily be misled into the supposition that another case of the South Island Commissioner's extravagance has been discovered, and his mind is influenced accordingly. This is another matter laid against me with which I have no connection whatsoever.

Next it is stated, on the evidence of the manager at Christchurch (as though it were closely connected with Kaipara), "that entirely unnecessary gates are maintained at railway crossings for the purpose of giving employment to old railway servants." The remark follows that, "with such examples cropping up on the surface, and disclosed by a hasty investigation, there can be little doubt that a large number of unnecessary officers would be discovered by a head of the department really wishing to remove them."

I will give some facts which a less hasty investigation would have readily disclosed. When I first took charge of the Canterbury railways in 1877, I found double gates shutting across the railway line, and gatekeepers resident at them at all the principal level crossings on the north, south, and Lyttelton lines within a radius of, say, twenty miles of Christchurch. I advised the Government that a great saving might be made and greater safety secured to the trains by moving these gates and gatekeepers, and throwing open the crossings. This was accordingly done, all the gates were removed off the line, and a large number of gatekeepers discharged by degrees. Some of the gatekeepers, however, were still retained as watchmen at some of the main thoroughfares in the Town of Christchurch and on the Lyttelton line. Considering the large number of vehicles continually crossing the line at such points, and the number of trains incessantly passing, it may be a matter of opinion whether the public safety would be sufficiently considered by removing the remaining few of these watchmen.

But there is another point involved. My frequent representations are well known to the Government, that there are employed in these places persons who have been years in the service, now grown too old to earn their living by ordinary work, and others who, in the faithful discharge of onerous and dangerous duty, have accidentally been maimed and crippled for life. And, while I have frequently urged that the railway, which should be worked as a strictly commercial undertaking to the best possible advantage, should not be saddled with the support of persons who cannot perform remunerative work, I could not turn adrift to starve persons who have faithfully served and suffered in the service of the department. So barbarous and inhuman a measure would be a stigma on any adminis-