

enabling you to give a favourable answer, and we regret to find that you are still without any instructions. It appears that our representatives in New Zealand were advised last session to petition the Parliament praying the recoupment of our losses under the emigration agreement, but without success. Since, however, our proposal to apply the amount recovered from the men, *pro rata*, in reduction of your passage-charges and our own advances, has been before the Government, you have adopted the system of free passages, which was doubtless an urgent necessity in consequence of the greatly-increased demand for labour; but you will not fail to see that our position is thus materially altered since our offer of June and July last, and that it will now be impossible for us to enforce further recoveries from our workmen. You will admit that the Government are in a similar position as regards the promissory notes taken from ordinary emigrants; and that a heavy loss to the Government, as well as ourselves, must inevitably follow the adoption of free passages. Under the circumstances, we are again compelled to ask your reconsideration of our position, and to press our claims for the remission of passage-expenses and all other disbursements in connection with our emigration. The passage-charges include—Promissory notes to Government, £18,240; payments in cash, £97 10s.; interest on promissory notes to 28th February, 1874, £1,275 12s.: total, £19,613 2s. And our other disbursements are as follow, viz.: Ship's kit for emigrants, £1,791 15s.; outfit, railway fares, dock dues, medical examination, &c., £9,619 13s. 9d.; agency expenses for collecting emigrants, printing, advertising, journeys, and commission, £1,679 9s. 10d.; immigrants' maintenance in New Zealand, boat hire, &c., £3,759 0s. 6d.; loss of interest on advances to men to the 31st December, 1873, £708 16s. 10d.: total, £17,558 15s. 11d. Total of outlay, exclusive of additional interest on promissory notes accruing from time to time, £37,171 17s. 11d.; less repayments by workmen, according to last advice, £2,766 15s. 3d.: grand total, £34,405 2s. 8d. We note that, in a memorandum to the Cabinet, No. 66, April 1, 1873, the Minister for Public Works says, 'The only thing which has kept the rates of labour from rising to rates ruinous to the various interests in the colony has been the shipment of so much labour by Messrs. Brogden;' and we feel assured that this testimony is supported by facts, and that the advantage to the country of our large number of selected labourers, and their families, dispersed through the various provinces of the colony, contributing to its revenue, and employed in developing its resources, can hardly be over-estimated. The following return, received from our firm by last mail, will show you to what extent, in point of numbers, the country has been benefited by the introduction of our workmen, viz.: Number of working-men sent out, 1,299; number working for the firm, 76; number distributed throughout the colony working for other employers, 1,233. We have a grave charge of complaint against colonial employers for enticing our men from their employment, and in several instances engaging the emigrants on landing, notwithstanding the employers were made aware of the engagement the men had entered into prior to leaving England. Our agent at Dunedin, referring to this subject, writes: 'October 20, 1873. Immediately the men were landed at these works, every artifice was resorted to by farmers and others to induce them to quit the firm's employ, and engage in farm-labour, &c. Higher wages were promised, and every means used to decoy the men away, and in the greater number of instances with success. The men, on the other hand, do all in their power to avoid the repayment of their promissory notes; and the proof of this assertion lies in the fact that, of the whole number of immigrants who originally landed in Otago, only five continue in the employ of the firm. Our engineer on the Dunedin and Clutha Railway-works, also reports that 'The working of the immigration scheme in this province (Otago) has met with even worse success than that of Marlborough; for at the time of the landing of the immigrants per "Bebington," "Lady Jocelyn," "Christian McCausland," "Zealandia," and following vessels, the labour market was by no means full, and a great many of the farmers in both the country districts adjacent to Dunedin, and more remote, enticed many of the men away by offering them 40s. to 48s. per week, and board and lodging. The honesty of the greater part of the men was not proof against this opportunity of getting rid of their obligations to the firm. There is no reason to doubt that the debt to the firm with which our men landed in this country is that which prompts them to attempt at once to get employment at the hands of some other employer. We have no wish to multiply similar reports from other provinces, showing the gain to the country from our imported labour, but we cannot help complaining of the recent action of the Government in entering into direct competition with us in the labour market, thus rendering it impossible for us to complete our engagements within the stipulated time. Our recent contract for completion of certain works at Auckland and Ohehunga within the next three months was entered into on the supposition that we should have only the ordinary demand for labour to compete with; but we regret to say that our exertions are paralyzed by the withdrawal of our men for service in the railway corps on the Waikato extension,—the Government offer of the highest current wages, with lodging, accommodation, and other inducements, rendering our efforts to retain our workmen wholly abortive. In urging our appeal, we must again reiterate that the importation of our immigrants was undertaken by us, not from any desire of ours to engage in this work, but at the urgent request of the New Zealand Government, in order to prevent the withdrawal of labour from the various colonial industries; that much pressure was put on us by you to commence sending out emigrants before any agreement had been made, and without giving us time or opportunity to communicate with our firm in New Zealand. You will also remember that we repeatedly explained to you that we had had no experience of this kind, and sought for no profit, and therefore proposed to keep separate accounts of our expenditure and receipts, and be reimbursed by the Government our actual outlay on this account. Moreover, all the details connected with it were carried out under your advice and assistance; our emigrants were shipped from time to time under your instructions, and were landed at the various ports selected by yourself; and we cannot look at our position in the matter in any other light than as the agents of the Government, acting under their supervision and direction, and seeking only to be freed from any loss. The arrangement for taking the promissory notes from the emigrants was also made under your advice, and upon your assurance that we should be able to recover them without much loss, and the amount we were to pay the Government for passage was fixed by you and agreed to by us; again asserting, at the same time, that we relied on your assurance that we should thereby be amply secured from loss,