

alternative line enters the pumice-stone country, which extends the remainder of the distance, viz., to 123 miles, where the line, as described, would join Mr. Rochfort's, at a distance of 25 miles from Te Awamutu. The construction-works required would be moderate over a considerable length of the line, but very costly over other portions; the formation averaging probably a little over £4,000, and this with rails, rolling-stock, stations, &c., added, would amount to a total of about £7,000 per mile, not including cost of land.

I have, &c.,

R. W. HOLMES,

Resident Engineer

The Engineer-in-Chief, Wellington.

No. 2.

Mr. A. J. RAWSON to the CHIEF SURVEYOR, New Plymouth.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, 30th April, 1884.

I have the honour to forward the following report:—

Though my late journey through a portion of the King country was strictly to explore for a railway route, yet, as that journey took me through a considerable tract of little-known country, I have thought it would be perhaps affording useful information to forward a brief report of the nature of the country from a settlement point of view, more especially as the broken character of the country along the coast is generally supposed to extend much farther inland than it in reality does.

After leaving the Tongaporutu, until arriving at the Makarakia, the country is broken and unfit for settlement, judging by what can be seen from the track, but the Makarakia has a fair bush valley and so has the Waitara.

The Tangarakau is a narrow bush valley, almost gorge, with abrupt ridges on either side, but the creeks running into it have, many of them, fairly good small bush valleys, and there is some good bush tableland at the head of the river.

The Eao drains about 40,000 acres, and has a fine bush valley, the soil being a rich river deposit, and the bush containing some fine timber and light scrub free from supplejack. The hills are mostly easy, and fit for grazing. Roads could be got through the valley and into the Tangarakau and Mangaroa.

The Mangaroa and the Waitohena drain about 60,000 acres, and joining form the Mangaroa, which flows into the Ohura. The land in the main valley and the two branches is of the same nature, being bush, with scattered patches of scrub and fern land of good quality. The valley is wide and level, the soil being a rich river deposit. The hills towards the Tangarakau and Mokau are high and broken, but towards the Waikaka and Ohura they are lower, mostly suitable for grazing, the soil being of good quality. The bush is scattered heavy timber, with light under-
scrub, free from supplejack. Roads could be got up and down the valley and into the head of the Eao and into the Ohura at the junction of the Mangaroa and that river, and about three miles below the junction of the Waikaka and Ohura.

The Waikaka drains about 30,000 acres. It has a good valley, as have most of the branches opening into it. About half the country so drained by this river is fern land, half of which is light fern land from having been over burnt; the rest is bush and scrub, the soil of which is of very good quality. The valley is suitable for a road, as are most of the valleys opening into it.

The Ohura drains about 75,000 acres. With the exception of two or three miles the whole of this valley is fit for settlement; these two or three miles lie from the Taupo track down stream, the immediate valley being smothered in pumice-stone, which pumice-stone extends through the narrow valley to the Ongarue, and for some distance up and down that river. The Ohura Valley is half fern, half bush and scrub, the southern side being mostly fern, as the Natives have apparently had clearings on that side. (The Waikato tribes are said to have been driven into these valleys by the Ngapuhi.) About half this fern land has been deteriorated by being frequently burnt, probably requiring a long period of sheep-grazing to recover its original tone; but, where not so burnt, the tutu and fern are heavy, showing good soil. The bush land is invariably of the best quality. The hills sloping into the valley are not abrupt, and could mostly be ploughed. There is plenty of good timber (rimu, kahikatea, matai and totara) scattered through the valley, many spots being suitable for mills. This river, like the Mangaroa and Waikaka, can for long distances be navigated by canoe. The whole length of the valley could be traversed by a road; branch roads could also be got into all the surrounding valleys.

The Mokau-iti.—This branch of the Mokau drains about 45,000 acres, chiefly an open fern valley, intersected by swamps and dotted by kahikatea clumps. The swamps will be perhaps the best part of the valley in the future, as, from the river and its branches having a good fall with banks from ten to twenty feet high, they will be easily drained, the swamps, being of the same nature as those I have seen drained in the Rangitikei-Manawatu District, affording fine summer pasturage. The kahikatea bush is in sufficient quantity to be worked by mills. The fern land has in parts been over cropped and over burnt by the Natives, but would take grass well; the rest of the fern land is of good quality, more especially on the slopes of the hills. Grey limestone crops out of the hills in large quantities in several places, and clay suitable for pottery is plentiful throughout the valley. The whole valley can be easily traversed by roads, one of which could go over into the head of the Ohura and another into the Waikaka.

Coal of the same nature as the Mokau coal, and apparently part of the same seam, is to be found cropping out in several places on the Tangarakau and at the head of the Eao, the seam where seen being four or five feet thick with a slight dip to the south.