

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

PANAMA CANAL

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 30th July, 1885.

I transmit to you herewith some extracts from the *Times* relating to the progress made in the construction of the Panama Canal.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 28th July, 1885.]

THE PANAMA CANAL.

Paris, 27th July.

THE annual meeting of the Panama Canal Company will be held on Wednesday next. An elaborate report will be read by M. de Lesseps, which gives a highly favourable picture of the progress of the undertaking and of its prospects. Subjoined are some passages from it:—

“The attacks made on your undertaking, and the impression which these manœuvres were calculated to produce, might have led us to the hurried cutting of a narrow canal, to be amplified later on, after the passage of the American Bosphorus had been made by ships, and when consequently the feasibility of our scheme had been demonstrated, especially as it was originally supposed that there would be a larger amount of rock to extract than really exists. The idea then was that a total extraction of about seventy-two million cubic mètres would be necessary. To the future would have been left the burden of a heavier expenditure, the promoters gaining a few months and proving more speedily the perfect practicability of the plan of cutting the isthmus.

“These fears have, happily, not been realized. Our shareholders, remembering Suez, have resisted all attacks, and nobody has seriously called in question the possibility of cutting a direct maritime canal between the two oceans across the Colombian Cordilleras. On the other hand, the mercantile marine ready to utilize the canal as soon as it is opened, and the traffic which will result, are such that we ought to finish the canal as completely as possible before it is thrown open. For the Suez Canal a traffic of three million tons was reckoned upon; and a traffic of twenty million tons will have to be provided for in a few years. At Panama the first year's traffic will be of the minimum amount of six million tons already known and ready to pass through; and who will venture to calculate what the traffic between the two great oceans will be a few years after the opening of the new highway so impatiently expected?

“We have, therefore, to complete the maritime canal at one stroke, and, as the sagacity and firmness of our shareholders supported us, we have not hesitated to adopt the programme of our Supreme Consultative Committee of Works—a programme submitted to you on the 23rd of July, 1884. . . . By virtue of one of the clauses of the concession the Colombian Government was called on to estimate the degree of advancement of the works. The declaration of the Government, dated the 26th of December, 1883, was in these terms: ‘The Panama Canal Company is entitled to be adjudged, according to the provisions of the Act of Concession, 150,000 hectares of land, as the equivalent of rather more than one-third of the execution of the work.’

“With the works carried on since this declaration the efforts actually put forth may be considered as more than half the total efforts necessary. This considerable amount of effort, which insures the execution of the work, being undeniable, the opponents of the Panama Canal Company, as formerly those of the Suez Canal Company, resort to puerile discussions, utter absurd criticisms, and, impotent to injure, they do not shrink from calumny or defamation.

“A fresh band of opponents has appeared. You have had hitherto against you certain capitalists concerned to delay as long as possible the inauguration of the new highway, either in the interest of existing modes of transport or in order to attract capital for the problematical execution