

my duty not only to dispel the idea of the colony being able to get such a man for the salary fixed by the Act, but to assure you that a man in the first rank of the railway world was in any case entirely out of the question; and that it was hardly probable you could find a man, even in the second rank, for less than £3,000, if not £3,500. When it became necessary to advise you that none of the candidates who had applied could be recommended there were only a very few others about whose fitness we could then have no doubt. One of these was Mr. Eddy, who was immediately taken at £3,000 by New South Wales; another was the only man who (then or since) has seemed to me to possess the combination of qualities really wanted. But, although there had been some private communications with men of that class, it was not until your message of the 20th September arrived, inquiring whether a suitable man could be found for a salary of £3,000, that they could be formally approached; and, as the gentleman to whom I have last referred would not entertain any offer less than £3,500, there were only three left between whom there really seemed to be a choice.

Now, the responsibility of making any choice at all was exceptionally great, on account of my not being in a position to give you the means of comparing the qualifications of the men whom we had approached. For reasons which will, I dare say, have been very obvious to the Government, men of the class to which I am referring will not make any application at all for an appointment, nor allow themselves to be placed in competition with others. No communications, in fact, could have taken place with them at all except in the strictest confidence, and the only course open to Sir Edward Watkin, Mr. Findlay, and myself was to make up our own minds as to the person who ought to be recommended, and simply give the reasons for recommending him, without making any comparison for you as between him and any one else. We had hoped to perform this duty together to the end; but in the interval that elapsed before your telegram of the 20th September, Sir Edward Watkin had made all his plans for a long visit to India, and, although up to the last moment he continued to give the colony his invaluable help, and expressed his willingness to concur in what should be thought best, his departure unavoidably placed the responsibility of making a choice upon Mr. Findlay and myself.

We have now come to the conclusion that Mr. Frank Ree is the best man available to you. Mr. Ree is thirty-seven years of age; he has been for some time second in command (Deputy-Manager) of the Liverpool District on the North-Western Railway, where he has had two thousand men under his immediate charge, and the practical working and control of a goods and mineral traffic of 2,600,000 tons annually, besides, perhaps, the heaviest live-stock traffic in the Kingdom; and where he has successfully held this great traffic in the face of the keenest competition not only of other lines, but of steamers and canals. Before being sent to Liverpool he had been for seven years principal assistant to the Manager of the London District, with the practical management of the North-Western Company's great dépôts at Camden Town and the city, added to an intimate connection with their other dépôts at the Victoria and Albert Docks. His experience has been gained during twenty years' continuous service, the first ten of which were passed in a thorough training in all the departments of the vast North-Western system, and, after that, in the practical working of its traffic in the two greatest ports of the world. He has been sent at various times to conferences of railway and water-carriage managers, a duty requiring exceptional abilities, where such conflicting interests are involved in the measures adopted for developing trade, regulating train-services, and fixing rates. Finally, he stands first on the list for promotion to a higher post of the same service in which his life has been spent.

I enclose a letter from Mr. Ree, briefly describing his position. My own conversations with him have impressed me very favourably; he is a quiet, self-contained man, who knows his own mind; and, as a railway-manager, I do not believe there is any chance of your getting a better man for a salary of £3,000.

I now await your orders as to whether the appointment is to be made now or whether you will postpone a decision till you have received this letter.

I have, &c.,
F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1 in No. 13.

Mr. FRANK REE to the AGENT-GENERAL.

DEAR SIR,—

Liverpool, 26th October, 1888.

The following is a memorandum of my twenty years' services with the London and North-Western Railway. I am at present their Deputy-Manager for Liverpool and the district, with full powers, having the practical working and control of a yearly tonnage of 2,600,000 tons of goods and coal, of which 2,000,000 tons consists of goods alone, which large trade is carried on chiefly in connection with the import and export trade of the Port of Liverpool. The men under my immediate charge number over two thousand, their wages and salaries exceeding £115,000 per annum. I have also the management of about the heaviest live-stock traffic in the Kingdom. The whole of this traffic is not only held together, but increased, in the face of the keenest competition, both by rail, canals, and coasting-steamers. Previous to my Liverpool appointment I was principal assistant to the Manager for the London District, including the great goods-dépôts of Camden Town and Broad Street, and an intimate connection with the shipping interest of Poplar and the Albert and Victoria Dock dépôts of the company. Besides having had the practical working of the traffic in the two most important ports in the world, I had, both in Liverpool and London, to represent and protect the interests of the London and North-Western Railway Company at various conferences of railway and water-carriers, and develop the trade in the two districts by suitable rates and arrangements, train-services, and other facilities.

Sir F. D. Bell.

Yours, &c.,
FRANK REE.