

According to the special reporter of the *New Zealand Mail*,—

"There were crowds of people at all the wayside stations between Palmerston and Mangaonoho on the lookout for an interview.

"At Halcombe, or thereabouts, the Crown Lands Commissioner of Wellington, Mr Baker, cropped up. He had heard that Mr Seddon had arranged to proceed from Pipiriki by canoe to Taumarunui, and he thought it but right to let him know it would be expedient to make the trip overland rather than by the river, as the journey by this latter route was beset with difficulties, and would occupy some four or five days. Mr Baker was thanked for his information and went on his way.

"Mangaonoho, the present terminus of the railway (and likely to remain so for some years to come), was reached at half-past nine, and a 'bus of rather primitive design, with four horses harnessed to it, was in waiting to convey the party to Ohingaiti. It was a moonless night, but by the fitful gleam of the stars the visitors were able to dimly discern the lay of the country—the Rangitikei River far down below the serpentine curves of the road, further on the Makohine Gorge (where a viaduct 240ft. high is to be constructed), and hard by it the landslip which engulfed a whare with its occupants not long since. Ohingaiti was reached at ten o'clock, and the travellers found at host Meehan's hotel all the comforts that might be expected even in a metropolitan hostelry.

"Ohingaiti has garnered up quite a collection of good stories, derived from its prelicensing days, when sly-grog selling was safe. Take a sample lot: An enterprising "shebeenist" sent away for a case of whiskey, but the trouble was how to get it to the settlement without exciting suspicion. Mother-wit came to his rescue, and helped him over the stile. At the railway-station where he was to take delivery he noticed a case containing Government stores for Ohingaiti, and bearing the Public Works Office label. In a trice the label was shifted from the case of stores to the case of whiskey, and upon a Government trolley in care of Government employes the case of whiskey was unsuspectingly borne into the district. Once there, however, it mysteriously disappeared; but the shebeen drove a roaring trade for the next few days.

"In another instance the sly-grog seller received the "straight tip" that the police were planning a raid. There was a spring close by, and into it eighteen bottles of whiskey were quietly stowed away. This accounts for the streak of luck which befel a couple of teamsters next morning. They took a bucket to the spring to water their horses, the bucket collided with one of the bottles, and the teamster, plunging in his hand, dragged forth a bottle of Walker's "Kilmarnock." In fact, he did not stop until he fished out eighteen bottles. For about a week fast and furious was the pace on the road to Moawhango, and the news spread far and wide how well teamsters So-and-so had done out of their contract, and how generously they had stood drinks of whiskey for all and sundry whom they met."

The special correspondent also tells several other good stories relating to the trip. There is a place rejoicing in the euphonious name of Moawhango. The Natives here desired that it should be proclaimed a township, but the greatest wish of their hearts was that the Government should appoint a policeman to superintend the morals of the place. In many of our European communities the policeman is voted a bore and a nuisance, for, to quote Gilbert again, he interferes with the "enterprising burglar" when he "goes a-burgling", but the Maoris have a better sense of the fitness of things, and according to our special reporter the Premier made the following remarks anent the appointment of a constable:—

"Then they wanted a policeman. But before the policeman came there must be a police-station and a lock-up, and the Government had neither land in the place nor a house in which to put the policeman. He could not be put into a tent, and if the prisoners were put into a tent they would soon make tracks. Were they prepared to give the Government a piece of land upon which to put up a station, and were they disposed to contribute towards the expense of putting it up? Or should he say that if they gave the site the Government would put up the station? They could consider this matter, and let him have their answer when they came to a decision. At present he believed there was a district constable. However, if they had a place for the policeman and a lock-up for the prisoners he would send the policeman along next week. They could hardly expect their prisoners to behave as did the prisoners in the early days of Dunedin. Those prisoners, it is alleged, used to be regularly liberated each morning to amuse themselves as they pleased all day. A bell rang in the evening to let them know that the gaol was going to be locked up for the night. Then there would be great commotion amongst the prisoners. They would say to one another, 'There goes the bell, if we don't hurry up we shall be locked out for the night.' (Laughter amongst the Natives.)"

Civilisation goes "marching on," and the swarthy inhabitants of Moawhango require a telephone. The Maoris are essentially a business people, and this fact seems very contradictory to their poetic character, for the business man and the poet seldom run together. Marcus Clarke was not much of a poet, but he was a literary genius, and a few remarks of his on "business men" may not be out of place. "They are the cream of the social bowl—in their own estimation; the stone pillars which, according to the Arabic legend, hold the earth up. There never was, or can be, anything to equal them. You may be the best fellow in the world, the sole supporter of an aged mother, and the protector of a whole boarding-school full of orphan sisters, you may work like a horse, and give all your goods to feed the poor, but if you are not a business man you are sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. To be a business man is a special gift, a sort of inherent nature, like a cast in the eye. If you are a business man you will succeed in business—that is to say, you will be a good husband, a good father, a conscientious Christian, always vote with the Government, and when you die will go straight to heaven. If you are a business man people will shout for you, the papers will write you up, and your friends will give you prayer-books with gilt edges."

"Mr. Seddon went on to say he was surprised to find that the Natives wanted the telephone brought to Moawhango. He looked upon this request as having been inspired by the Europeans.