

Appendix.

No. 4.
Minutes of
Evidence.H. H. M'Arthur,
Esq.*H. H. M'Arthur, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council; Examined.*

I AM of opinion that the progress of all improvements in the colony is greatly retarded, and the colonists much embarrassed in their undertakings for want of a sufficient supply of mechanics and labourers. The demand has exceeded the supply for many years, and has been greatly increased within the last year; more particularly by the projected public buildings—churches, court-houses, and gaols—as well as by the demand for private buildings of every description, and the extension of rural occupations, by the established settlers and immigrants. The influx of mechanics and labourers has not kept pace by any means with the great demand thus occasioned and further extended, both by the annual increase of the flocks and herds, and the consequent activity of every branch of commerce connected with the importation of the supplies required by the colonists from England and foreign countries. The present demand for mechanics and labourers of all classes is become very great; and has been in some measure augmented by the delay which has occurred in carrying into effect the system of immigration proposed by the colonial, and approved by the home Government; and I am confident 5,000 or 6,000 men would find employment, at good wages; and as the introduction of this number would give increased activity to enterprise, and create a still greater demand for labour, by the further necessity for building, &c., a constant stream of immigration, to the extent of 3,000 or 4,000 men, would be annually absorbed, without difficulty or reduction of wages. I look forward with anxious, though favourable anticipation, to the workings of the admirable plan for bringing out emigrants from our mother country established by his Excellency the Governor; as, if carried into effect to the extent the colonial funds are capable of affording, and in the manner proposed by his Excellency, there can be no doubt of relief from our present difficulty in the course of 12 months, or of a constant supply from the same source for the future.

*John Blaxland, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council; Examined.*John Blaxland,
Esq.

THE want of labour has now become so alarming, that we have not men to plant our crops, or gather in what little may be grown of hay or corn, and the decrease in the quantity of our wool will soon become as rapid as was its increase under different circumstances. The settler is now compelled to put from 600 to 1,000 sheep into each of his flocks, which will greatly decrease the number of lambs, and be productive of scab, in consequence of the neglect and filth which must result from so many being crowded together; and I consider it necessary to get labourers from any place which may be thought the most conducive to the immediate relief of the present wants of the colony. I think 10,000 labourers would be required annually, for some years to come; and, if a proportion of those were married, it would attach them to the colony, and save the expense of sending them back again to their own country. In proof of the present great scarcity of labour, and of the shifts which flock-owners are put to in consequence, I beg to hand in to the Committee an extract from a letter to Mr. Walker, from the superintendent of his station, at Wollerawang, in the district of Bathurst, by which it appears, that after having had recourse to the almost worse than useless services of the native blacks and their women, he was still compelled to put nearly double, and, in some instances, more than double the number of sheep in a flock that any shepherd could do justice to.

Extract of a Letter from *Wollerawang, Bathurst, to Mr. Walker.*

9 June 1837.

“ You may judge of the straits we are in, when I tell you that, after pressing all the blacks and their gins that I could possibly muster into the service, to follow the sheep, I was still obliged to leave one flock with 1,380 sheep in it; another, 1,186; three flocks have above 1,000, and several 700, 800 and 900.”

Alexander Berry, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council; Examined.

Alex. Berry, Esq.

I AM of opinion that there is a general want of labourers, farm and household servants, shepherds, stock-keepers and mechanics. I think an importation of 10,000 during the course of the ensuing year would not be more than sufficient to meet the present wants of the colony. I am not an extensive sheep-holder; my establishment is an agricultural one; and for want of a sufficient supply of farm-servants and labourers, I have been unable to carry on many contemplated improvements, or even to keep up the extent of my former cultivation. I am also greatly in want of mechanics. I would certainly give a decided preference to European labourers; but if they cannot be procured in sufficient numbers, which I fear they cannot, I should be disposed to make a trial of Indians. A New Zealander has been in my service for about two years, during which time he has been a useful and obedient servant, ready to work in any way as required. The wages I agreed to give him, when he entered my service, was four shillings per week, out of which he was to clothe himself. He received the usual ration of flour, meat, tea, sugar, &c. During the two years' service he has saved upwards of 5*l.* of his wages, with which, he says, he purposes purchasing agricultural implements and seeds, to take with him when he returns to New Zealand, which he intends to do in about a year hence, until which time he has agreed to remain with me at the same wages. I think the Dhangars would probably be as useful as this New Zealander has proved himself. I should be very glad to take twenty of them, either single men, or with their families, if thought more advisable; but I should prefer single men, by way of experiment, in the first instance; as, if they did not answer, there would be less difficulty in returning them to India than married persons with children. I fear also, in the case of married people, that it would be found impossible to prevent improper intercourse between their women and the convict portion of the labourers on the estate.