

would be necessary, but it was as well to have an understanding on the subject.

PUNISHMENT OF HIGH TREASON BILL.

The SPEAKER informed the House that he had received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the amendments proposed by His Excellency the Governor in the Punishment of High Treason Bill.

DEATHS BY DROWNING.

Mr. STAFFORD moved, For a return of the names of all persons who have been drowned in each year from the 1st January, 1840, to the present date, in any river or stream in New Zealand, giving the name of any such river or stream and of the Province in which it is situated. He was aware that, should the House concur in the motion, no complete return could possibly be made. The subject was a very melancholy one, as he believed honorable members would admit when they contemplated the long list of names comprising some of their most energetic and enterprising settlers who had lost their lives by drowning. He trusted, on the assumption that the House would order the return to be made that the Government would not confine it merely to the official inquests which were recorded by the Registrar-General, but that they would also, from newspapers and other sources of information, ascertain as far as they conveniently could wherever persons had perished as to where there was not sufficient information to enable inquests to be held. On the West Coast it was notorious that many persons had been drowned, of whose death there was no official record whatever, and whose very names had not been ascertained. The same thing existed he believed, with reference to the River Waikato. He knew that on the West Coast many persons had been drowned whose bodies were many months afterwards found and were unable to be recognized. He trusted, therefore, that some effort outside the ordinary official mode of obtaining information would be made to arrive at an approximate estimate of the deaths by drowning which were not officially recorded. His object for moving for the return was to call the attention of the House and the country to the necessity of applying a little more attention and a little more money towards bridging dangerous streams than had hitherto been applied. They had spent very large sums of money, he would not say now whether wisely or unwisely, in certain directions, which had not contributed very largely towards the settlement of the interior of the country. Notably, he might say that they had spent a very large sum on steam navigation beyond what he thought it was desirable the country should have exclusively appropriated for that purpose, and the result had been as might have been expected, that mainly the whole of the population might be represented to be sitting upon the edge of a saucer as it were, - a fringe along the sea coast, while millions of acres available in the interior for the settlement of families, were at the present moment inaccessible

without great danger in travelling to those who desired to possess them. He was aware that the nature of some of the rivers was such that very great deliberation was necessary before any large works could prudently be attempted in connection with them. That observation particularly applied to the rivers of the Middle Island, which were in fact huge incumbrances rather than ordinary rivers, and were almost impossible to be restrained permanently in any particular course, and devastated, - for a distance of frequently two miles, and even sometimes more, - the country on either side of their ordinary channel. Therefore he did not by any means desire to censure those who had the conduct of affairs, for the fact that many of those large rivers were as yet unbridged, and would continue to be so for some time to come. There were, however, outside those large rivers, a number of small rivers, very contemptible in size, but in which a large number of people had perished in consequence of bridges not having been thrown over them to meet the contingency which very constantly occurred of their being in a state of flood. He thought he had sufficiently indicated to the House his object in bringing the question before it, and he trusted that honorable members would concur in thinking that it deserved their attention, and that some steps should be taken to prevent, in future, that lamentable loss of life which had occurred in New Zealand for want of bridges.

Mr. Fox said that the Government of course would be very glad to give any information on the subject, but he was afraid that the return extended over such a long period, and involved many districts in which there were probably no Government officials of any sort, that it would be extremely difficult to get anything like an approximate return. He would however take an early opportunity of communicating with the Registrar-General who no doubt had his attention directed constantly to the subject of inquests and he had no doubt that between that officer and the Coroner, they would be able to get a tolerably approximate return. What could be done in the matter would be done.

Motion agreed to.

COAL IMPORTATION.

Mr. STAFFORD. In moving the motion standing in his name, said that it was somewhat similar in intention to the return which the House had just ordered. He desired to show how much the country was losing annually through facilities not being given for the working of some of the best coal that was to be found on this side of the line. There was notoriously a magnificent coal field on the River Grey, which was to be found both in the County of Westland and in the Province of Nelson, and which extended on both sides of that river for a considerable distance. For the want of a tramway for a few miles, and a bridge over a small tributary of the River Grey, that coal was practically as inaccessible to the steamers of this country as if it were thousands of miles away; and the country was debarred from having access to coal at a price as would prevent the necessity for importing