

Crown lands accessible. The works which in last year's report were detailed as either in progress or projected have all been gone on with, and are either completed in whole, or for the section of the work for which the vote was taken.

The opening of the Crown lands by these means, more especially in bush districts, is imperative, if the settlement of the country is to proceed. Every mile of road that penetrates the wilderness is followed up by the settlers, and by this operation the productive area of the country is increased. The opening and settlement of such country as Kairanga, Kiwitea, and Seaward Moss is akin to discovering a new country; and there are tens of thousands of acres of Crown lands in the colony awaiting opening out, which at present might as well be in Africa, as regards any benefit they are to New Zealand. The most vigorous efforts should be made to overtake this work; it cannot be entered on too soon. In the topographical maps of the Survey Department, and the accurate information of the country possessed by the several district officers, there is a reliable basis on which to proceed intelligently with the opening of new country. There is a very great demand for land for settlement, and a decided set towards the North Island at present. In the 3,011,000 acres of the Otago and Southland runs there is a potent means of attracting settlers to the colony. This country is naturally easily accessible, but the subdivision into smaller areas will be greatly promoted by formation of road-lines up some of the valleys. A comparatively small expenditure will go a long way. Taking the land districts in geographical order, the following sketch is given of the principal works it is proposed should be undertaken:—

*Auckland.*—East Coast District.—There are several hundred thousand acres of Crown lands in this district; the soil is good, but the country is generally very rugged, and many of the blocks quite inaccessible to horse traffic until bridle-tracks are made. It is proposed to form a bridle-track from Ormond-Opotiki road to Waiapu, and continue the road *via* Motu to Opotiki; also to open part of the Waimata blocks by a road from Gisborne, and to improve the road from Gisborne to Clyde, Wairoa, with cross roads, opening up Ruakituri and other Crown lands.

Te Puke Block.—A considerable amount of work has been already done on the road between this block and Tauranga; it should be completed and extended on through Pukeroa block, now under sectional survey. This road is important as the future main line to Opotiki and the Hot Lakes from Tauranga.

North of Auckland.—This district has had a great opening up in the main road, which has been carried throughout its entire length as far as connecting all the main settlements on the east side. This has quickened settlement, and it is proposed to run tracks or roads to connect Sandy Bay and Helena Bay with main line between Whangarei and Kawakawa. It is proposed that, instead of continuing to widen and improve the road from Kawakawa to Whangaroa and Mangonui, which passes through a comparatively poor country, to survey an inland road-line from Kawakawa *via* Ohaeawai-Okaihu to Waihou, Mangamuku, and Victoria Valley. This line is made to Okaihu, already one-third the distance, and it passes through a fertile district and opens out a large area of Crown lands and kauri forest, as well as much land suitable for settlement. The road-line between Herds' Point and Victoria Valley has been opened; and, in continuation of this, the main line down the west side of peninsula north of Auckland, the track over the Maunganui Bluff and down the Kaihu Valley to Dargaville, should be prosecuted to completion; also the exploration of a track across the Waioku plateau, from the head of Kaihu Valley towards Hokianga. It is also proposed to connect blocks in the vicinity of Opotiki and also Helensville with these respective places by improved roads.

*Taranaki.*—It is proposed to penetrate the bush to the east of the railway line by the extension of one or two roads a few miles further.

*West Coast, North Island.*—Forty miles of road were cleared of bush within the last twelve months, which, up to date, has enabled 8,000 acres of bush land to be sold; and other 8,000 acres is now ready. There are still 75,000 acres to survey and open out, and the main road-lines should be felled before sale, and cleared 16 feet wide. Under the excellent management of the Crown Lands Ranger, Mr. Robinson, this work has been done well and very economically. Felling a chain wide and clearing in the middle 16 feet wide has been done at 15s. a chain, or £60 a mile. For work of this kind the system of piece-work has been found far better than that of contract.

Parihaka Block.—This land is open fern land, with scrub and flax. A little formation on one or two of the cross-roads will make the land appear much more civilized.

Momahaka Block is a few miles east of Waverley Railway-station; 7,000 acres surveyed. It is excellent land and would sell readily, but it is cut off by the deep valley of the Momahaka, which has been examined, and a good practicable road-line can be laid out. It should be formed, or at least be in course of formation, before offering the land for sale.

*Hawke's Bay.*—Several of the roads already opened in the bush blocks near Woodville will be extended for a mile or two further into the Crown lands.

Puketitiri Bush, and adjacent pastoral sections, to be opened by formation of a road, part of the cost of which to be borne by local bodies.

Tutanae Bush.—About 59,000 acres of a quarantine reserve, which is no longer wanted, excepting about 3,000 acres. It requires an exploratory survey through it to find the best lines of road, preparatory to its subdivision for sale.