

SOUTHLAND.

Field-work.—Under the heading of "Rural and Suburban Surveys" there have been executed during the year 396 sections, embracing 35,170 acres, at a cost of 1s. 7½d. per acre. In view of the acreage cost, due allowance must be made for the fact that upwards of 180 sections, covering more than five thousand acres, were in bush. Under the head of "Town Section Survey" there have been executed 184 sections, comprising 243 acres, some sixty of these sections being in bush. The work done under the head of "Minor Triangulation" has been merely nominal, and consisted simply of the extension of one or two triangles from the main Waiau triangulation to localities where sectional surveys were required. An analysis of the surveys shows that some eighty-two sections, embracing 19,173 acres, have been laid off within blocks that were expressly set apart on the maps for agricultural deferred-payment purposes. These blocks were situated chiefly in the Centre Hill and Takitimo districts, several of them lying on the eastern bank of the Waiau River, between Manipori Lake and the mouth of the Wairaki. This locality is somewhat remote at present, but, as means of communication improve, there can be little doubt that the sections will gradually be taken up. On the Waimea Plain, a short distance from Longridge Station, some fifteen sections, comprising 3,350 acres, were laid off for the Otago School Commissioners, being the subdivision of a large education reserve, the lease of which had previously expired. The sections were disposed of partly for cash and partly on deferred payments, very satisfactory prices being realized in every case. Under the head of "Rural and Suburban Survey," in addition to the sections mentioned, there were thirty-two purchased areas, comprising 6,091 acres, the survey fees of which, amounting to £421 4s. 4d., had been deposited by applicants under the system of "free selection before survey." These outstanding surveys have now been worked up to date, applications having been very few during the last year or two, owing, no doubt, partly to depressed times, and partly to the fact that, outside of deferred-payment blocks and freehold land, the choice is not now very extensive. During the year some eleven saw-mill areas have been surveyed, each covering 200 acres. This is a smaller return than was handed in last year, and would seem to indicate what is apparent in other ways, that the saw-milling industry in this district is less prosperous than it used to be—that the demand is smaller, and that prices are thus necessarily low. There can be little doubt, however, that the depression is merely temporary, the extensive forests possessed by Southland, and the extent of railway communication, being substantial guarantees of the permanence and future prosperity of the trade. A few mineral areas (coal and lignite) have been surveyed during the year, the remainder of the work chiefly consisting of the subdivision of bush and other reserves, the subdivisions as a rule being offered for sale partly on the cash and partly on the deferred-payment system. I might mention that some nineteen sections, comprising some 180 acres, were surveyed at Athol for the Southland High Schools Board, two or three sections being also laid off near Nightcaps for the same body. In addition to the sections in Waimea Plain, some suburban sections adjoining the Township of Edendale were also laid off for the Otago School Commissioners. The field-work, so far as I have been able to test it in the field and the office, has been very faithfully and efficiently done, the steel band securing closures in chainage that would hardly have been possible under the old linked and now superseded chain.

Office Work.—In addition to the usual routine work of the office, which could scarcely be shown in a tabular form, I have to report that there have been prepared during the year 353 certificates of title in lieu of Crown grants and 30 Crown grants proper. The Crown certificates being in triplicate, it will be seen that the preparation of these grants involved the making of 1,089 plans. The number of plans examined and passed for deposit in the Land Transfer Office was 29. These comprised 106 original sections, which were subdivided into 877 allotments, embracing an acreage of 44,102 acres. During the year there were 108 applications to bring land under the Land Transfer Act. These of course involved careful examination previous to their acceptance by the District Land Registrar. The number of certificates of title issued under the Land Transfer Act was 763. The plans of these being in duplicate, it will be seen that the number of same put upon titles was 1,526. To keep pace with the Crown and ordinary certificates issued it became necessary to prepare 101 record-maps. In regard to the preparation of lithographs, I have to report that thirteen drawings of townships, village settlements, deferred-payment blocks, &c., were made by us, and printed by a local lithographic printer, the number of prints turned out being 1,850. One of these was a large drawing of that portion of the County of Fiord which had previously been explored by Mr. District-Surveyor Hay. In addition to the above, ten drawings, four of which were tracings, were prepared of districts, townships, &c., and forwarded to Wellington for purposes of photo-lithography. Five of these embraced the survey districts of New River, Waiau, Lothian, Mataura, Mabel, and Lindhurst. One embraced an extensive subdivision of educational reserve land on the Waimea Plain, another showed the high schools endowment subdivision at Athol, the remainder being drawings of the Townships of Mataura, Gore, and Manipori. I may state that plans of a number of runs were prepared as a basis of lease during the year, and some 120 plans were inserted on deferred-payment licenses. Ere passing from the matter of district maps, I may state that in Southland only four districts remain to be lithographed, these being the sparsely-settled districts of Takitimo, Wairaki, Centre Hill, and Eyre, a considerable portion of each district being purely pastoral country. The utility of these district maps is very great indeed, and I hope ere the next annual report is required that all the survey districts in Southland will have been lithographed. We are now engaged with the preparation of a general topographical map of the Invercargill Land District, roughly embracing as it does the Counties of Southland and Wallace. As the Southland District proper is intimately connected geographically and commercially with many of the survey districts across the Mataura, a map of this description will meet a much-felt local want.

General.—By far the greater proportion of the deferred-payment blocks that stood upon the maps have now been surveyed. The work in prospect does not at present look very extensive, though there are one or two localities where surveys are fast becoming necessary to meet the wants of settlement. One of these is between Seaward Forest and the coast, and extending from Block V., Oteramika Hundred, to the Mataura River. Were a road to be constructed from Oteramika open