

The demands on the staff for settlement surveys have prevented as much attention being devoted to this class of work as its importance deserves, and it is to be apprehended that in this respect the shortcomings of the past will be repeated in the future, and rights of road reserved under the grants will perforce be allowed to lapse in many cases through want of a sufficient field force to exercise the rights. The department is constantly in receipt of applications from local bodies or individuals to have roads defined which it is unable to attend to. The amount of arrear-work in this particular branch in some of the districts is very great and ever on the increase, whilst at the same time it has the effect of debarring settlement to a certain extent. The attempt has been made in some cases to call in the aid of the local bodies in laying out roads before the rights lapse, but it has not in all cases proved successful. It would seem that some alteration in the laws regulating these matters is necessary, by extending, in the future, the time within which reserved road-rights may be exercised, and also in the direction of legalising by a more simple process those lines of road which have been in use for a certain time without objection from the owners of lands affected.

MISCELLANEOUS WORK.

A sum of £6,834 has been expended in the various and multitudinous duties performed by the survey staff, which cannot be classed under any of the headings given in the returns. The items consist of explorations, inspections, reports on various matters, small surveys of varying public interest, contract inspection, costs of work incomplete in the field, and sundry small items too numerous to be necessary of mention here.

ROAD-WORKS GENERALLY.

By the direction of the Government the Survey Department took over from the Public Works Department all the roads in charge of that department on the 1st January last. Since that date all matters relating to road-construction and the various operations connected with the taking and closing of roads, the vesting of bridges, &c., in the local bodies, &c., has been performed by the Survey Department. Six of the Public Works officers have been transferred, in order to assist in carrying out these functions. In the Appendices will be found particulars of the various works undertaken by the department during the year; and for statistical purposes the road-works lately in charge of the Public Works Department have been included as for the three months ending the 30th June—notice of them prior to that date having been embodied in the Public Works Statement of the Hon. the Minister for Public Works. The roads under the charge of this department have hitherto been those especially designed to open up the Crown lands before sale, and, during the year under consideration, there were formed in all 61·2 miles of cart-road, 70·36 miles of bridle-road, 84·51 miles felled and cleared, and 36·9 miles improved in various ways, and a great length of main roads in Auckland, Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland maintained. The particulars for each district are given in the tables to be found attached to the Appendices; but, in addition to those shown, the department supervised the plans, specifications, &c., of a number of works undertaken by several of the local bodies under grants from the Government.

The total amount spent on roads, tracks, bridges, and grading—and in the improvements in the village-homestead special settlements—for the year amounts to £32,074 2s. 3d.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The work performed by the indoor officers of the department has consisted as usual in the checking, recording, and compiling of the plans received from the field surveyors, and in the various operations connected with the preparation of instruments of titles, account-keeping, and the other multifarious duties pertaining to a survey establishment. The publication branch at the head office, under Mr. Barron's special charge, has been kept fully at work, the results of which are shown in that gentleman's report below.

During the year the department lost the able services of the late Surveyor-General, Mr. James McKerrow, by his transference to the Chief Commissionership of Railways. Mr. McKerrow held office as Surveyor-General from the 1st November, 1879, until the 29th January last, when you did me the honour to appoint me to the office vacated by him. Within the past year two of the cadets have passed on to the grade of assistant surveyors. The strength of the department on the 30th June stood at 63 surveyors, 63 draughtsmen, 18 cadets, 7 clerks, 1 accountant, and 4 book-keepers.

S. PERCY SMITH,
Surveyor-General.

The Hon. G. F. Richardson, Minister of Lands,