

The Village Settlements.—Very few works have been undertaken in the various settlements. The roads have, as far as practicable, been kept in repair. In most of the village settlements the main road through them is formed and maintained by the Government. The settlers have, as a rule, been employed on the work.

GERHARD MUELLER, Chief Surveyor.

MAIN ROADS.

Oxford-Rotorua (33 miles) and *Tauranga-Napier*, including the Lichfield branch and Wairakei loop (206 miles).—These roads have been maintained as unmetalled dray- and coach-roads. The average cost per mile for the past year has been £10 11s. 7d., including everything. The average number of men employed has been 14·3, which gives a length of rather over 16½ miles per man.

During last winter and spring numerous slips occurred on the Tauranga-Napier Road, near the southern end, and several small culverts and embankments were washed away. However, no serious delay happened to the mail-coaches or other traffic, although, from March to December, parts of the roads were very muddy and soft, necessitating the laying of large quantities of manuka fascines, &c.

A contract has just been let for building three new bridges, one of which is 85ft., and the others each 56ft. long, to take the place of the old ones, which, through decay, have become unsafe for heavy traffic.

Several other bridges require repairing, and many culverts must be renewed and repaired during the current year, and the metal on the Titiokura Hill must also be renewed. I have allowed for these works in the estimates lately forwarded.

I hope and expect, under the Proclamation recently made regulating the width of tires, to be able to keep these and other roads in better order at the same cost.

MISCELLANEOUS ROADS AND BRIDGES.

The *Waitomo Caves* (5 miles), *Rotorua-Waiotapu* (20 miles), *Rotorua-Galatea* (18 miles), and *Maketu-Rotorua* (10 miles, Rotorua to Tikitere) have been maintained as dray-roads, employing altogether an average of 2·9 men, equal to 18½ miles per man, and an average cost per mile of £5 3s. 9d. for labour. On the Rotorua-Galatea Road, new works to the value of £73, comprising 12 chains rock side-cutting, 2 chains earth, a small bridge, and three miles of tussocking, have been done. The roads are now in good order.

The *Rotorua-Te Wairoa* (10 miles) has been maintained as a bridle-track by piece-work as occasion has required, and is in good order as such. I would again suggest that if funds can possibly be provided this road be reinstated for wheel-traffic, as being the only likely route by which those unable to travel otherwise than on wheels may be able to visit and see the vast effects and devastation of the recent volcanic eruption at Tarawera.

Alexandra-Kawhia (42 miles).—I have only had charge of this road since October; the scarcity of money at my disposal has prevented any improvements being made. The road has been kept open for traffic from Alexandra to Oparau, but owing to the punt at that river, and the Waihohonu culvert, close to it, having been washed away by floods, and there not being sufficient money in hand to re-establish them, travellers have had to cross the Oparau by the old Maori track some two miles off the road, or to go across the Kawhia Harbour by boat. No regular men are employed on this road; the repairs are generally done by piece-work. The ferry above mentioned should be re-established, and the culvert rebuilt at once, and some nasty points in side-cuttings taken off, when the road, which is much needed, would be available for wheel-traffic with safety and ease.

Otorohanga-Kihikihi (17 miles; bridle-track).—Considerable improvements have been made, and with a little more expenditure this track could be used for wheel-traffic.

Otorohanga-Te Kuiti (13 miles; bridle-track).—Improvements in the form of swamp-crossings, culverts, and side-cuttings have been made, and others are in hand, which will make this a fairly good track. Although this and the Otorohanga-Kihikihi track have not been surveyed, care has been taken to choose the sites for the improvements so that they will be of service for the permanent road when made.

Kawa-Whenuahou (4 miles).—A few repairs, consisting of fascining, making up banks, and filling in ruts have been made, and the road is now in good order.

Roads to give Access to the Marton-Te Awamutu Railway.

Tunnel-Karioi, north end, Mokau to Waimarino Plain (70 miles).—No new works have been done. The restoration of the small bridges that were floated off their foundations by the floods in 1893 has been completed, and a great number of slips have been removed from the part made some years ago at the south side of the Tunnel Hill. Six miles of old bridle-track have been improved, and the road maintained as a bridle-track as far south as Taumarunui, 43 miles, to which place it is at present in good order. South of that place nothing has been done to maintain the bridle-track, as the traffic is very little, and can find other channels, and a great many of the small bridges and the culverts made by the Public Works Department six or seven years ago are so much decayed as to require either complete renewal or very extensive repairs, which I think should not be done until funds are available to fell the bush at least 1 chain wide, the present track being merely cleared through the standing forest. No regular party is employed on any part of this road.