

The settlers are, however, in want of capital to fence and stock their grass, and, if a method of helping them to begin to be self-supporting were devised, many of them would become New Zealand's best peasantry. Without such assistance they may fail, or they may survive in penury. To a small extent the system of agisting stock prevails, and by this means fences are erected or a herd begun.

The principal roads constructed during the year have been—In the Auckland District, the Opanake-Hokianga Road, of which 30 miles are made 14ft. wide; the Awakino-Te Kuiti Road, of which 7½ miles have been constructed as a cart-road; the Galatea-Waikaremoana Road, 27½ miles, as a cart-road; Rangitaiki-Ruatoki Road, 29½ miles, as a bridle-road; Rotorua-Te Teko Road, 19½ miles, as a cart-road.

In Taranaki, the Ohura Road has been extended 10½ miles; the Waitara-Awakino Road 3 miles; the Waitotara-Eltham Road 6 miles.

In Wellington, the Alfredton-Weber Road, 37 miles, is now open from end to end, and only wants one bridge and a few miles of formation to permit of coach-traffic throughout. The Mangawharariki Valley Road has been finished as a bridle-road from Pemberton to Mangaweka, and can be converted into a coach-road by the widening of 4 miles between Wairaki and Rangitikei River, across which a bridge is now being built. The Mangaweka main road to Tokaanu has been maintained for coach-traffic, and also the Pipiriki-Wai-o-uru Road, which is a part of the main road Napier to Pipiriki, has been maintained as a summer coach-road. A good deal of metalling still remains to be done to enable wheeled vehicles to traverse it in winter, and this will be expensive to do. In the Waimarino country, and in Te Kapua and adjacent country, roads are being made as fast as means will permit, 35½ miles having been formed during the year.

In Hawke's Bay, the Waikopiro Block has been roaded to the extent of 1½ miles, besides about 5 miles felled and cleared, and arrangements are being made to make a direct route to Ormondville. The road from Wairoa to Lake Waikaremoana, which is eventually to connect with the road now forming through the Urewera country, has been extended up to and some distance along the shores of the lake.

In Nelson, the maintenance of the main road from the Hope to Westport and Reefton was taken over, and nineteen bridges had to be rebuilt, besides sixteen others repaired; a large number of new culverts have replaced the open crossings; 56 miles were remetalled, besides extensive deviations and repairs. The new road from Wangapeka to Karamea was continued for about 6 miles at the Wangapeka end, and work was also begun on the western end at the Little Wanganui River.

In Marlborough, the works are mainly for the improvement of the means of communication between the settlements in the Sounds; of this kind of road about 27 miles were constructed during the year.

In Westland, the Reefton-Hokitika-Ross Road was taken over and maintained. The Kanieri Bridge was repaired; many culverts were renewed; a deviation of considerable extent was made at Rimu, and a large quantity of new metal spread throughout. The floods on the Hokitika-Christchurch Road have been rather greater than usual, and consequently the cost of maintenance has been more. A new route across the Southern Alps by Whitcombe's Pass was partly formed as a footpath for seventeen miles, leaving eleven miles to be done this year to reach the Rakaia River in Canterbury. The cost of a dray-road would, however, be so great as to be out of the question at present. There are so many objects of interest to tourists and mountaineers on the track that if it is made passable for pedestrians the route would become a pleasant one for excursions in summer weather.

In Canterbury, the roads in the Cheviot Estate were transferred to the newly-formed County Council, the Government contributing £3,000 to finish the roads, &c., in the manner proposed when the estate was placed in the market.

In Otago, the construction of roads in the Tautuku Forest country has been continued for about fourteen miles. In Central Otago numerous short roads have been formed to permit of settlement, and the new road from Livingstone to Naseby, *via* Dansey's Pass, has been completed with the exception of one bridge, the erection of which is not quite finished. Roads have also been made through the Maruvenua Estate, leased early in the year under the Land for Settlements Act.

In Southland, the roads have been completed in the Lillburn district west of Waiau, but the bridge across the river at Clifden has not yet been built. Tenders were invited, but those received were considered too high. Another design will be prepared as soon as the necessary borings have been made. The roads to settled lands in the Waikawa district are being made slowly, about six miles having been formed during the year. About seven miles of road and one bridge of 106ft. span have been formed in the Merrivale Estate, and a large number of other minor works were done throughout the district to enable settlement to proceed.

HEAD OFFICE.

MAPS.

Mr. F. W. FLANAGAN, the Chief Draughtsman, reports:—

In addition to the usual departmental routine work done during the year ended the 31st March, 1896, a large amount of miscellaneous urgent work, exceeding that of any previous year, had to be put in hand at once and completed in the shortest possible time. The increasing requisitions of other departments of the service in the drawing and photo-lithographing branches have caused some delay in the preparation of district and geographical maps, for although there has been no absolute cessation of this work, it requires to be carried on uninterruptedly to ensure satisfactory progress. The general work of the office has been kept up to date and very satisfactorily performed.