

The cave camp, situated on a small river-beach at the 20-mile peg, will form the headquarters, from whence easy excursions can be made to other glaciers, and to the saddle, 2,000ft. above, and distant only four miles and a half, from whence a glorious view can be obtained of the magnificent Arrowsmith Range, Neave Mountain, Louper Peak, and the Rakaia River-bed. Where else in New Zealand could such scenery be visited in such a space of time?

There is ample scope just here for the beginner in the alpine exploration to practice rock-climbing to a height of 8,000ft., traversing ice- and snow-fields, and crossing the glaciers themselves. On our coast-line of two hundred miles we have at present only two roads across the Alps—the present Christchurch Road, and the horse-track *via* the Haast Pass, in the far south. What finer trip can be imagined than a ride from Hokitika to Ashburton *via* the Whitcombe Pass, and, by rail and coach, return by Arthur's Pass to the Coast again?

There are so many objects of interest along the whole line of the Whitcombe Valley that it is difficult to particularise them all. The following appeared to me to be the most striking: The Derwent Crags, a fantastic pile of bare blue rock towering up some 500ft. above the grassy slopes of Mount Tarleton. The Barron Cañon, perhaps the prettiest bit of scenery along the route. The Price River is not very long; its principal characteristics are the cataract up its right-hand branch—three leaps of about 1,000ft. each—and the short cañon or gorge at its junction with the Whitcombe. A few chains through this gorge the Price is joined by the Warden Creek, a stream flowing through a veritable crack in the hills. The "Natural Bridge Site," a peculiar distribution of large boulders, which have rolled down from the adjacent mountains and lodged in the river. In dry weather the waters are forced underneath, but a flood rises 6ft. over all. The "Boulder Gates," formed of erratic boulders, one of which we measured and found to be 240ft. by 230ft. by 56ft. This is a size which puts the erratic at the Jura completely in the shade.

I confidently look forward to this beautiful valley being one of New Zealand's greatest attractions before the lapse of many years. It only wants to be known to be appreciated.

D. BARRON, Chief Surveyor.

CANTERBURY.

Waipara—Cheviot Road.—£200 was authorised for the repair and shingling of this road. The work, the character of which I reported upon more fully last year, was carried out partly by contract and partly by day-labour, under the supervision of the Waipara Road Board. The total cost amounted to £219 15s. I found, on inspection, that the work had been satisfactorily carried out, and recommended payment of the amount authorised.

Hokitika—Christchurch Road.—The expenditure on the Canterbury portion of this road, fifty-one miles, under Mr. Hurrell, the Government Inspector, during the year, amounted to £1,869 10s. 8d. This is somewhat in excess of the average of previous years, and was due to the exceptional severity of the winter months. The snowfalls, especially, were very heavy. The snow lay deeply on the ground for ten weeks, blocking all wheel-traffic; despite the attempts of the Inspector, with a strong gang of men, to clear a track through the drifts on Porter's Pass and other high-lying sections of the road; but, owing to the dry, frosty weather, their efforts were only partially successful. The frosts broke up with rain in the beginning of September, followed by heavy floods, which destroyed fords, caused heavy landslips, and scoured and damaged the road from end to end. The destruction was most severe on Craigieburn, the Waimakariri, and the Bealey Valley cuttings. Since that time there have been numerous and damaging floods, and at present the men are engaged repairing, with heavy log cribwork, a breach in the road just beyond the 48 milestone. A little further on a large slip took place quite recently, carrying away about 2 chains of the hillside; meanwhile the wheel-traffic follows the old track in the river-bed. The employment of extra labour was found absolutely necessary to make good the breaches, slips, &c. The road throughout is now reported as being in fair condition, though the Inspector and surface-men have had anxious and arduous work to keep it clear during the frequent storms and floods. Provision will require to be made this year for shingling the portion of the road between the 3- and 20-mile pegs, long lengths of which are completely worn out.

Roimata Settlement—Road- and Drain-construction.—£228 7s. 6d. was expended on the works during the year, comprising the formation of 48½ chains of street 46ft. wide, and footpaths each 10ft. wide; the construction of about 65 chains of open drains and 9 chains of covered drains, laid with 9in. earthenware pipes. These works were carried out partly by contract and partly by day-labour, the wage being at the rate of 6s. per day. All the sections in the settlement have fairly good drainage. A contract has recently been let for £295 19s. 4d. for metalling the street 16ft. wide, and for gravelling the footpaths, which will complete the whole of the work designed for the opening-up of this settlement.

Akaroa Dairy Factories' Roads.—The £300 authorised for expenditure was expended by the Akaroa County Engineer on the roads leading to the German Bay, Wainui, Le Bon's Bay, Chorlton and Little Akaloa, and the Okain's Bay dairy factories, and the creamery at Little River, as agreed upon between the directors of the factories and the Chairmen of the various Road Boards interested. The works, which are reported as complete, comprised benching and levelling and improving the original roads, constructing culverts and metalling; the only new work being the formation of 42 chains through Reserve No. 936 at Wainui. I have deferred authorising the payment of the above grant—viz., £300—pending inspection of the works.

Akaroa Lighthouse Road.—£100 was authorised for expenditure on this work, particulars of which were given in last year's report. The work was inspected by me on the 21st November last, and found to have been satisfactorily carried out by the Akaroa and Wainui Road Boards in accordance with the plans and specifications previously submitted for approval.