

The equipping of Marton, Ngaio, Tawa Flat, Ngaurukehu, Sockburn, Templeton, Islington, and Parnell Tunnel is in hand, also the rearrangement of Addington, Hornby, and Rolleston to suit the double-line working.

One hundred and thirty Tyer's electric tablet instruments were installed and brought into use on the sections embracing the line between Marton and Frankton and between Wellington and Longburn. The extension of the system over the sections Woodville to Waipukurau, Pukeuri to Washdyke, and Ngahere to Blackball, is in hand.

The automatic tablet-exchanger was installed at 80 stations during the year. The main line, Wellington to Auckland, is fully equipped with this apparatus, which is being extended to other main lines as quickly as possible.

Since the practical work connected with the equipment of the lines with up-to-date safety appliances was begun in 1899, 650 electric tablet instruments have been brought into operation at 274 tablet signalling-stations, embracing 1,158 miles of line; staff-and-ticket working installed on 21 miles of track, electric lock-and-block working on 4 miles of double line; 969 signals and 1,993 levers installed in connection with the signalling and interlocking at 59 stations; 451 signals and levers installed at 186 stations not fitted with interlocking; 22 interlocked points fitted with Annett's or tablet locks; 125 automatic tablet exchangers, 125 electric bells, 130 signal-repeaters, 1,045 telephones, 212 Morse instruments, and sixteen electric lock-and-block instruments installed; and 4,754 miles of railway-wire provided on 1,652 miles of telegraph-poles.

Three events of unique and historical character occurred during the year—viz., the visit to Auckland of the American Fleet, the completion of the North Island Main Trunk line, and the acquisition by the State of the Wellington Manawatu Railway Company's line, eighty-four miles in length. The rail-heads of the North Island Main Trunk line were joined up on 3rd August, 1908. The first through passenger-train, conveying Ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament to take part in the welcome to the American Fleet, left Wellington for Auckland at 9.55 p.m. on 7th August. The train consisted of nine passenger-cars, one dining-car, and one bogie brake-van, weighed 212 tons, and was worked by the Manawatu Railway Company to Longburn, thence to Waiouru by the Working Railways, Waiouru to Taumarunui by Public Works Department, thence by the Working Railways Department to Auckland, where it arrived at 6.31 p.m. on 8th August. The return train left Auckland at 10.20 p.m. on 17th August, arriving Wellington at 6.10 p.m. on 18th August.

The official opening ceremony of the Main Trunk line took place at Manganui-o-te-ao on 6th November, the last spike being driven by the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward, K.C.M.G. Special excursion trains were run from Wellington and Auckland respectively, and were availed of by a large number of passengers.

Through goods and passenger traffic *via* the Main Trunk line were worked conjointly by the Working Railways and Public Works Departments from 9th November, 1908, until 15th February, 1909, when the last section was formally taken over by the Working Railways, and the Auckland-Wellington through express service commenced running daily.

The terms upon which the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company's line could be acquired by the State having been mutually agreed upon, the company's line with 324 members of its staff and all appliances were taken over and incorporated as part of the State-owned railways on the 7th December, 1908. The rolling-stock acquired consisted of 20 locomotives, 56 bogie cars, 16 brake-vans, 343 wagons, 225 tarpaulins, and 2 ten-ton hand cranes. A considerable amount of expenditure has been incurred since the line was taken over in extending the station and siding accommodation, installing the electric tablet system, and making such other alterations as were found essential for efficiently working the increased traffic consequent on the diversion of business formerly sent from the Napier line to Wellington *via* the Wairarapa. This diversion of traffic has resulted in a material decrease in the business over the Rimutaka Incline, and a considerable saving in operating-expenses will ultimately result therefrom.