

EXPENDITURE DURING YEAR.

Although the results of scenery-preservation up to the year 1909 are very gratifying, and represent a national asset whose present and future value it is almost impossible to place too high an estimate upon, yet it is equally gratifying to point out that the expenditure in acquiring and setting apart the freehold lands included in the reservation has been comparatively trifling. When the Scenery Preservation Act of 1903 was passed, a special vote of £100,000 was set apart for the necessary purchase-money and other expenses in connection with scenery-preservation; but the following table shows that rigid economy has been practised in spending this amount, and that no less than £72,323 is still available for future purchases and maintenance.

Comparison of Expenditure.

	1904-5.	1905-6.	1906-7.	1907-8.	1908-9.
	£	£	£	£	£
Compensation for land	216	3,336	7,856	4,286	3,813
Expenses of Commission and Board ...	1,822	1,221	185	86	24
Salaries of officers... ..	...	...	...	175	325
Administration (including fencing) ...	...	...	304	382	1,063
Miscellaneous (surveys, valuations, &c.)	52	527	801	555	540
Totals	2,090	5,084	9,146	5,484	5,765

Details of expenditure for the year are given in the statement of accounts following Appendix A. It will be recognised that the annual cost of the Scenery Preservation Board is a very small proportion indeed of the total expenses, which are chiefly made up by the purchase of land, administration, fencing, surveys, and valuations.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY SCENIC RESERVES.

Since last November the recommendations of the Scenery Preservation Board as to comprehensive and adequate scenic reservations along the route of the popular North Island Main Trunk Railway, which had been sanctioned by the Government, were advanced a further stage by survey parties having been kept steadily at work in surveying and laying off the minimum areas that are deemed absolutely necessary for reservation in the immediate vicinity of the line, in order to preserve the most striking features of the scenery for the admiration of travellers and the protection of the lower-lying lands beneath. The first reserve surveyed was in the immediate vicinity of Ohakune, and comprises a striking forest-clad bluff (Raetihi No. 5B Block) in full view of the railway. It forms an impressive background to the view from the train, and is generally looked upon as a magnificent example of the Waimarino bush scenery. Other reserves along the line near Turangare and Whakapapa Gorge are now under process of survey, and it is to be hoped that by the publication of next year's report a most valuable addition will have been made to the present reserves.

Among the lands now being surveyed are some 2,000 acres in the Whaharangi Block, which front the Raetihi-Pipiriki Coach-road for six miles, and partially adjoin the Wanganui River for about three miles. The famous "Dress-circle" is included among these reservations, and some very picturesque scenery; whilst an historical rata-tree known as "King Dick" is among the objects of interest on the route. It is hoped that the areas will be completely surveyed and gazetted by the end of the year.

REASONS FOR RESERVATION.

It cannot be too often pointed out that the Government in making these reserves is actuated by a desire to interfere as little as possible with settlement, and only to reserve those lands which cannot support more than a comparatively sparse population, and from their generally rugged character are not well adapted for agricultural or pastoral purposes, whilst the destruction of the bush on the hill-sides would undoubtedly tend to seriously damage the lower-lying lands, and choke up the streams that at present run harmlessly down the valleys; whilst in many other respects the reservations will confer a boon on the community at large, irrespective of their scenic value. This policy has been strenuously followed from the very first, and in no case has any genuine complaint been made that farm-land has ever been withheld from settlement for æsthetic purposes.

SCENERY PRESERVATION BOARD.

Owing to the departure for England of Mr. Donne, General Manager of the Tourist Department, and the alteration in the status of that Department, it will be necessary to bring in an amendment of the Scenery Preservation Act, and to reconstruct the *personnel* of the Board, as at present it is very difficult to obtain a quorum at any meeting.

Mr. T. E. Donne has always taken a lively interest in scenery-preservation, and his departure from New Zealand affords a fitting opportunity of noticing it.

The report of the Board appears in Appendix D.