

and perhaps more varied in its character than is to be found in any other part of our country, ranging as it does from the bold glacier-decked heights which wall in Milford Sound to the open sunny park-like grassy lawns of the Eglington Valley. When the track is further improved, and huts have been erected, this new route, whilst shortening the journey from Wakatipu to the head of Lake Te Anau by something like 150 miles, will place the traveller in direct communication with the Clinton Valley, Sutherland Falls, Milford Track, &c., and will traverse delightful scenery the whole way. I consider that Lake Wanaka should be connected by motor service with Clyde, and that Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri should be connected by a similar service with Lumsden, and inquiries are being made to see if such services can be instituted with a reasonable prospect of success. Probably Lake Wanaka is one of our most interesting tourist resorts, but owing to various causes this district has not been developed to the extent that it deserves. Efforts of an inexpensive nature, however, are being made to effect an alteration in this direction. The season at Queenstown has been a successful one, and it is hoped by judicious outlay to afford further attractions for visitors to this favourite resort. Regarding the scenic grandeurs in the South, it has been my endeavour since assuming charge of the Department to make these more accessible to our own people, especially to those whose means and time are limited. With this object in view, and together with the co-operation of the Union Steamship Company, arrangements were made last Easter for the s.s. "Talune" to run an excursion trip to several of our most beautiful sounds. The trip was an unqualified success, every available berth being booked. The company did its utmost to make the outing a pleasant one, and the passengers also united to that end. The fare was £5 for the whole trip, and for this moderate charge much of our glorious Fiordland scenery was visited. As the result was so satisfactory, I am now in negotiation with the Union Company to run two trips during the ensuing summer. These will embrace a wider range than last Easter's excursion, and I have every hope they will be equally as successful as was the initial trip. There are also under consideration projects for similar cheap sea excursions in other parts of the Dominion. It is not so easy to arrange land trips for the many, but I have given instructions to afford facilities for "campers" on the overland trip from Te Anau to Milford Sound, further particulars concerning which will be made known in due course. In referring to the West Coast Sounds it may not be out of place to mention that Mr. Richard Henry, the Curator, who for so many years was identified with Fiordland, has been transferred from Resolution Island to Kapiti Island, and is now an officer of the Lands Department. During his sojourn on Resolution Island Mr. Henry rendered valuable service to the Dominion and to the scientific world by reason of his investigations as a naturalist.

Many improvements of a permanent nature have been carried out at Rotorua, and the upkeep of the town has been well maintained; and yet, with economical administration, the bank overdraft of £508 11s. 7d. which existed when the Department took control of the town has been converted into a credit balance of £49 at the close of the year. The total revenue of the town for the year amounted to £4,756, and the expenditure to £4,249. The revenue of the town is chiefly derived from Crown rents and bath fees allocated for the requirements of the town under the statutes passed for its management and control. The different "round trips" about the district have proved popular, and have been largely taken advantage of. At Whakarewarewa the complete model of a Maori pa has made good progress towards completion, and constitutes one of the attractions of this interesting thermal region. At Te Aroha various improvements have been effected, and the indications are that the popularity of this charming resort continues to grow. The Waitomo Caves also show an increasing popularity. The new accommodation-house is now ready to receive visitors, and it should fill a much-needed want.

The overseas agencies have carried on as hitherto their ordinary work. Apart from disseminating information as tourist bureaux, a good deal of useful work has been done in advising settlers of a good type. In this connection, information has been placed at my disposal to the effect that a number of people with a considerable amount of capital has been induced to set out for New Zealand by the information received at the overseas agencies.

With the object of further stocking the waste lands of the country with big game an order was placed some time ago in Canada for some moose, and it is hoped that these will be successfully acclimatised, as has been the case with other imported animals. So far as can be ascertained, the thar, imported in 1904; the elk, Japanese blacktail, and Virginian deer, imported in 1905; the chamois, sambur, and axis deer, imported in 1907; and the axis deer (lately liberated in the Seaforth Valley) and bharal sheep (liberated at Mount Cook), recently imported, have all been successfully acclimatised. In particular, the elk seem to be doing well in the Fiord country.

The leasing of a number of tourists' accommodation-houses, and the reductions consequent upon the reorganization of the Department in the Head Office staff and the staffs of some of the institutions under the Department's control, will make it possible to considerably reduce the expenditure for the maintenance of the Department from the Consolidated Fund during the current year. As compared with the vote for 1908-9 a reduction of about £8,000 will be made on the vote for 1909-10.

In order to increase the usefulness of the Department, there is now under consideration a proposal for the issue by the Department of tickets over all the principle routes—railway, steamer, and coach—throughout the Dominion. The various offices in the chief centres of population are readily accessible to the public, and I am sure that, in issuing tickets in the manner proposed, the Department will take up a duty for which it is particularly well adapted, and which will prove to be of great convenience to the people of New Zealand, as well as to those who come from overseas, and who are more or less unfamiliar with the conditions of travel in the Dominion. Up to the present the Department has furnished all information regarding routes, and arranged details of tours. Inquirers, after obtaining the information they seek, have then to go to other offices for the necessary tickets. It is felt that it will be a great convenience to travellers if, at the same time that they have their tours mapped out, they can obtain the tickets for the tours they intend to take.