

tunnel, 75 chains long. A contract has just been let for the erection of the steel superstructure of a combined road and railway bridge over the Ongarue River where the railway leaves the Main Trunk line at Okahukura. The piers will be built by the Department. Six small contracts for formation beyond the tunnel are approaching completion, and the work is well in hand up to Matiere Township, ten miles from the junction-point. A tramway three miles in length is being laid into Matiere to facilitate the transport of construction material and to keep heavy traffic off the Ohura Road. Settlers' stores will be hauled over the tram-line.

MOUNT EGMONT BRANCH.

Owing to alterations in design of incline and in proposed methods of operating the quarry on the mountain, construction-work on this line has been suspended during the greater part of the past year.

OPUNAKE BRANCH.

The line has been located from Te Roti to Opunake, twenty-three miles distant, and construction-work is in hand by contract and co-operative parties over the first seven miles to Kapuni Station. Bridges of substantial design will be required to carry the line over the Waingongoro and Mangatoki Rivers on the first section. Materials for concrete piers are being brought to the bridge-sites.

OHAKUNE-RAETIHI BRANCH.

Formation-work is completed for seven miles, and is in hand over the remaining 1 mile 50 chains. All the culverts are in place and piers for most of the bridges built. Steelwork for bridge superstructure is slow in coming to hand. Platelaying is in progress, and ballasting will follow in a month or two.

RANGITIKEI RIVER BRANCH.

In the Railways Authorization Act of last year was included a new branch line from Greatford to a point in the Rangitikei River bed, from which a supply of metal could be obtained for use by the Government and by local bodies in south Taranaki. Since the passing of the Act negotiations have been in progress between the Government and the Rangitikei County Council, who have a somewhat similar scheme in contemplation, as to the manner in which the metal-deposit could be worked to the greatest advantage. Pending a definite arrangement of terms and conditions of supply no construction-work has been done on the line.

FEATHERSTON-MARTINBOROUGH.

No construction-work was undertaken on this line during the year, and only £70 on account of survey-work came to charge against the vote.

SOUTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

Platelaying and ballasting over a length of eight miles terminating at Mills Station is approaching completion under contract, and with a little trimming and finishing work this section will be ready for opening. Formation-work, mostly of a light nature, is proceeding at a moderate rate on the section beyond Mills. The country traversed here is bare and sandy, and extensive plantations of marram-grass have to be made to protect the railway banks and cuttings from drifting sand. A further length of thirteen miles, from Kekerangu to the Clarence River, will be included in this year's Railways Authorization Bill.

MIDLAND.

At the Nelson end construction-work beyond Glenhope was resumed in November last, and is well advanced for two out of three miles, which will carry the line to Kawatiri.

The works on this length are fairly heavy, and rapid progress cannot be expected.