

sent requirements is being obtained at moderate cost. A small quantity of broken stone has been supplied to local authorities, and two lifts of ballast have been placed on the quarry siding. A circular concrete reservoir, to hold 30,000 gallons, has been constructed opposite 10 m. 12 ch. in connection with the Oakleigh Station water-supply. Fencing has been completed throughout the section, and a third platelayer's cottage at Tauraroa Station is approaching completion.

Waiotira Section (14 m. 75 ch. to junction with North Auckland Main Trunk Railway at 19 m. 75 ch.; length, 5 miles).—Formation is completed to 16 m. 20 ch., except for two banks over which trestles have been built. A steam-navvy is working in the cutting at 16 m. 30 ch., and is making very good progress. Earthwork is in hand beyond this point to the end of the section. Eight concrete culverts and six earthenware pipe culverts have been constructed, and others are in hand. A temporary track has been laid and lightly ballasted to 16 m. 20 ch., and a temporary telephone-line has been provided to the same point, and is now being extended to Waiotira. A platelayer's cottage at Waiotira is nearly completed.

Lately a number of Yugoslavs have commenced work on this section, enabling the whole length to be manned. As the earthwork parties complete their contracts they will be transferred to the Main Trunk line north and south of Waiotira Junction.

NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

Maungaturoto Section (83 m. 75 ch. to 88 m. 21 ch.; length, 4 miles 26 chains).—This section was completed over a year ago, and the work in hand is only maintenance, but a good deal of trouble has been experienced with slips and subsidences. Station buildings are being erected at Maungaturoto. Traffic is carried on under the control of this Department.

Paparoa Section (88 m. 21 ch. to 92 m. 6 ch.; length, 3 miles 65 chains).—Slips have been very troublesome on this section, which traverses a belt of extremely treacherous country, and the work train has been almost continuously employed in removing slipped material and making good the damage. The line has been kept open for traffic, which is carried on as far as Huarau (90 m. 15 ch.), but it has been a difficult matter to do so at times during the exceptionally wet and stormy weather experienced. The Huarau Tunnel was completed to 91 m. 40 ch. 50 lk. (= 3½ chains) at the south end, and to 91 m. 52 ch. 70 lk. (= 1 chain) at the north end. The men employed in the tunnel ceased work on the 6th September last, and no work has been done since, except that the faces were made safe by the permanent staff. Steps are now being taken to resume work at this tunnel.

Mareretu Section (92 m. 6 ch. to 96 m. 45 ch.; length, 4 miles 39 chains).—The Golden Stairs Tunnel was completed to 93 m. 49 ch. 50 lk. (= 1½ chains), and the bottom heading was driven to 93 m. 56 ch. 80 lk. (= 9 chains) at the southern end. At the northern end the work was completed to 93 m. 70 ch. 95 lk. (= 2 chains), and the bottom heading was driven to 93 m. 68 ch. 95 lk. (= 4 chains), but the work was suspended in August owing to shortage of labour, the few men remaining being transferred to the Huarau Tunnel. No work has been done in the cuttings on this section, and most of those where work had been commenced are being filled by slips.

Waikiekie Section (96 m. 45 ch. to 107 m. 28 ch.; length, 9 miles 55 chains).—Work has just been commenced on the two approaches to the Waikiekie Tunnel, at 105 m. 11 ch. and 105 m. 38 ch.

This line has been affected perhaps to a greater extent than others by the prevailing scarcity of labour. The few men available are occupied almost entirely with maintenance-work and the running of traffic, so that there is not much progress to report.

Kirikopuni Section (107 m. 28 ch. to 115 m.; length, 7 miles 52 chains).—This section extends from the junction with the Whangarei Branch, now under construction, to the Wairoa River. Some years ago construction-works were commenced at the northern end, but owing to war conditions work was suspended in November, 1915. It is now practicable to resume work on the section from the southern end, in conjunction with the work on the Whangarei Branch, and accordingly the southern approach to the Tokatoka Tunnel (108 m. 30 ch.) has been commenced. Work will also proceed southward from the junction in order to connect as soon as possible with the section northward of Ranganui, and so provide rail communication between Whangarei and Auckland.

WAIUKU BRANCH RAILWAY.

(Length, 12 miles 15 chains.)

The number of men employed during the year has been very small, and formation-work has been confined to the length between Paerata Junction and Mauku Station (5 m. 46 ch.). The formation of Paerata and Mauku station-yards was completed, and the rails were laid as far as Mauku, and ballasted. An overbridge was erected at 5 m. 30 ch., and approaches formed. Road-deviations at 2 m. 45 ch. and 5 m. 30 ch. were formed. Fencing was erected for a total distance of ¾ mile. Station buildings have been erected at Helvetia (2 m. 3 ch.), Patumahoe (4 m. 7 ch.), and Mauku. The length from Paerata Junction to Patumahoe was handed over to the Railway Department on the 10th December, 1917.

A few Yugoslavs have now been obtained for work on this line, and formation beyond Mauku has been commenced.

EAST COAST MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

Waihi-Tauranga. (Length, 40 miles.)

Athenree Section (0 m. to 12 m. 35 ch.).—Work on this section, which was suspended in March, 1917, was resumed in January last, and fair progress has been made considering the small amount of labour available and the nature of the formation, which is largely in rock. A small stone-crusher has been placed on the works to provide broken stone for concrete culverts.