

*Rural and Suburban.*—The return for this year shows a greatly-decreased area completed when compared with last year, viz., 30,320 acres, against 57,666 acres for 1880, and, what is of equal importance, a largely-increased cost per acre, viz., 2s. 9d., against 1s. 3d. for 1880. It is due to the gentlemen engaged on this class of work that an ample explanation should be furnished of the reason why so small an area has been made ready for settlement, and why, at the same time, the cost has been more than doubled. The reason is a very simple one, and easily understood by the profession: it is contained in the fact that nearly the whole area returned consists of small isolated sections surrounded by old surveys. Whenever this is the case the surveyor has not merely to survey the application covered by his instructions, but to go over, in addition, all the adjacent sections, to see that he does not encroach on granted land. The inefficient manner in which, as a rule, the old surveys have been marked on the ground, the inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the former system (or want of system), added to the incompleteness of the office record, all combine to produce a series of problems only soluble by the most earnest and careful application of the best professional acquirements. It is no exaggeration to say that, for every acre which the surveyor is allowed to return as surveyed, he has to survey two others to verify his position, and for which he gets no credit. It is due to the skill and care taken by the staff in these most perplexing questions that so few references have to be made to the office, or to the comparative absence of disputes as to boundaries. I cannot better illustrate the difficulties connected with these surveys than by pointing out that four of the most able and energetic officers in the district only produced something over 9,000 acres of section-surveys between them, notwithstanding that they work from twelve to fourteen hours a day, and did very little other work. It has been my unpleasant duty to refer to these old surveys, perhaps *ad nauseam*, in a strain the reverse of complimentary, but it is a duty I owe to the Government and the survey staff to do so; and I trust that I shall not thereby be thought to reflect on my predecessors as wanting in the necessary ability to carry out a more enlightened system. No one knows better than myself that they were hampered by want of means, the exigencies of an inflowing population, the Native difficulty, and physical intractability of the country; and that they, one and all, would have welcomed any change which substituted method for no method. The short-sightedness of former days (in addition to the above causes) now involves the colony in ever-increasing expense in rectifying former errors. I see no prospect of the cost of section-survey, when surrounded by old surveys, ever being less; on the contrary, it must increase. The set-off against this is, however, the fact that from time to time large blocks come in for subdivision, which reduces the mean cost on the whole considerably. This will be the case next year. This question of old surveys is a burning one in this branch of your department. The officers grumble at not being able to produce better results, whilst the outside public, utterly oblivious of the difficulties, blame the department for not attending to their individual wants as soon as they require them. The Waste Lands Board gets no small share of odium in the matter, for which they are not responsible. Whilst our best officers are engaged in works which produce so little result, it is no wonder that we are accused of retarding settlement. During the year an area of 4,772 acres has been surveyed, in order that grants might issue, at a cost of £825 17s. 2d. These have generally been old surveys, which, on examination, were found unfit for the purpose of the Land Transfer Act, or were deficient in linkages. The surveyors have generally taken them as they come up to them in the course of their work. A large amount of this work (how much is unknown) still remains to be done; but I am aware of 14,611 acres, in 122 separate sections, all of which must be resurveyed before grants can issue. Many of them will be most difficult to define, owing to the destruction by fire of the original maps. In one case a whole district of some 3,000 acres has to be granted, of which there are no plans whatever. The homestead surveys made during the year, at the cost of the applicants, amount to an area of 7,032 acres, in 37 sections. The survey of boundaries of lands sold many years ago has cost £361 11s. 7d.

*Town Section Surveys.*—A considerable area (457 acres) has been laid out in town sections, numbering 1,022, at a cost of 13s. per section. This includes part of Tauranga, part of Ngaruawahia, part of Cambridge, Waihi Gold Field Town, Te Aroha Government and Gold Field Towns. The latter was surveyed at the request of the Warden during the Aroha rush; some sixty buildings were already erected on my last visit there. A Native town at Ohinemutu, at the Hot Lakes, has also been surveyed, and appears under this heading. Standard points (stone blocks) have been laid down in Cambridge, Ngaruawahia, and Ohinemutu, whilst the usual iron pipes have been placed in the others.

*Native Land Court Surveys.*—The amount of work done by the staff under this heading is only 53,673 acres, whilst schedule surveyors have completed 30,276 acres, the cost of which has been advanced by Government under the Act of 1880. The two principal items which go to make up these areas are—20,850 acres, surveyed for the Tauranga District Land Court, at a cost of £565, and 3,417 acres of Native land at Ohinemutu, divided into 76 rural sections, which form part of the settlement scheme at the Hot Lakes.

The survey of the largest block, performed by one of the staff, has been paid for in land by the Native owners. The outstanding amounts due to the Government on Native blocks for survey is very large, and extend over a period of eight years. It will probably be advisable to make application to the Court to have certain defined portions of each block cut off and awarded to the Crown in lieu of payment, but on this subject I intend shortly to report to you at more length, giving full particulars. The Natives seem anxious to take advantage of the Act of 1880