

CANTERBURY.

Minor Triangulation and Topography.—The accompanying return shows that 236,518 acres have been done, at a cost of £840 9s. 9d., or 0·85d. per acre, in country lying in the interior of the island, where it is only practicable to work in summer, and the surveys were necessary in order to fix the position of freeholds, to ascertain the nature and character of the country, and to enable the survey of the gold-mining leases to be made. Mr. Maitland, whose work in this class of survey has so often been favourably reported on, has, I regret to say, determined to leave the service.

Sectional Surveys.—On this work nine staff surveyors, one cadet, and one temporary assistant have been engaged, resulting (with the assistance which surrounding surveys afforded the offices at Christchurch and Timaru) in the completing, with very trifling field-work, of an aggregate of 41,967 acres, at a cost of £5,011 19s. 7d., or 2s. 4½d. per acre. This rate is no doubt high, but the work generally consists of sections of small area, much scattered and hampered by old surveys. The nearer the completion of the survey of sections bought under the free-selection system is approached the more expensive it becomes, if the rate is calculated at per acre; it may cost less to lay out a thousand-acre block on the plains than one acre surrounded by bad and doubtful work in the hills.

Inspection.—There has not been so much done as could be desired, so much of the Inspector's time having been occupied in other work, such as the correction of the property-tax estimate of the value of Crown lands, superintending the construction of roads, assessment of land to be offered for sale by public auction or by application, &c. Five inspection surveys have been made and duly reported to you.

Old Provincial Surveys.—Mr. W. C. Wright, of the Timaru office, has been fully occupied in compiling and, when necessary, revising these surveys in the field, calculating on the system now used surveys done under the old régime, and making the recent triangulation and sectional work the basis on which to embody the old. He reports having done nineteen sections, containing 430 acres, of the old work with sufficient accuracy to meet the requirements of the new, besides surveying twenty-two new sections, containing 784 acres, altogether at a cost of 11d. per acre. Similar work of combined old and new surveys has been completed under Mr. Shanks's supervision, in the Christchurch office, of eighty-six sections, containing 2,565 acres, at 12½d. per acre (see heading "Sectional Surveys").

Gold-mining Leases.—Have been surveyed in the Wilberforce by Mr. Pickett, under exceptionally difficult and trying circumstances, but at the cost of the lessees, who deposited with the Receiver of Land Revenue £15 for the survey of each lease, together £210, of which £153 18s. has been the actual outlay, which is to be passed to the credit of this department, and the balance is to be refunded to the lessees, the charges for each lease being based on the number of days occupied. The average height of these sections (leases) is 4,000ft. above sea-level, and they lie amongst mountains so precipitous that the higher pegs could not be driven, and indeed the marks have only been made and pegs put in at considerable peril to the surveyor and his men. Mr. Pickett, in his topographical plans and report, has furnished much valuable information concerning this almost unexplored region.

Land Transfer Surveys.—Mr. Munro, who has charge of the checking of plans sent to this branch of the Survey Office, reports that he has investigated the various titles, so far as the survey is concerned, of twenty-eight plans, containing 255 allotments, lodged under the Act; fifteen plans for public works and railways; twenty-three plans of road closures; and fifty-seven plans of applications for transfer. He remarks that, "by comparison with previous years, there has been a material decrease during 1883-84 in plans checked for deposit and documents referred to the office for checking of areas and descriptions, and a decrease of about one-fifth in number of ordinary certificates issued." In order to determine accurately the positions of holdings, standard surveys have been made by Messrs. Welch and Maitland in Akaroa and Timaru respectively, but, owing to the extreme accuracy aimed at, they have proved very costly; it is to be hoped that in the future the rate of expenditure for this class of work may not be so high.

Office Work.—Forty-two large and 127 small plans, with traverse sheets, have been received from the field surveyors, of which, and of those left last year, 37 large and 126 small have been passed as correct, and there remain unchecked, or held back on account of discrepancies, 45 large and 71 small plans; 10 block-sheets, 1 town and 3 district record-maps, have been constructed, and additional work placed upon a few of those formerly constructed in the Christchurch office; 13 block-sheets constructed and revised; and in 21 the adjacent work has been revised in the Timaru office.

Reduction Office.—One county map, that of Waimate, on a scale of 1 inch to the mile, has been made, and tracings of Geraldine and Akaroa completed for Wellington, besides one of Akaroa for the map-room. Of district maps, Akaroa and Pigeon Bay have been finished, and Okain's, Orari, Aeland, Mount Peel, Kapumatiki, and Opihi are in preparation. Tracings for photo-lithography of the Hororata, Kowai, and Akaroa cannot be completed until the plots of some of the work are checked.

Crown Grants.—Forty-five grants of 52 sections, containing 1,969 acres, have been issued; 845 certificates of title of 1,437 sections, lots, or reserves, containing 175,388 acres, have been prepared; 1,718 certificates of area have been forwarded to the Chief Commissioners returning 177,185 acres. There remain to be done 154 Crown grants and 5,845 certificates of title.

PROPOSED OPERATIONS, 1884-85.

Arrears of surveys should apparently lessen very considerably year by year, when it is considered what few new purchases are made; but, owing to various causes, this lessening is not proportionate. By the subdivision of reserves into village allotments and the creation of new reserves, there are still 624 new sections, containing 24,705 acres, and 120 revisions, containing 11,468 acres, to be done, besides some large blocks of pastoral land to be vested in public bodies, which require to be surveyed before they can be Crown-granted.