

private fences. Gates, signboards, and mile-posts are usually in very good condition. It is now the practice to replace rotten gate-posts with posts made of old rails, and a very large number have been so renewed. Cattle-stops have been so largely renewed with ironbark beams that probably less than one-third have the original matai and totara beams. These latter are usually propped in the middle for safety, and will not last many more years. A good number have had the frames replaced in concrete, but much the larger part have the original sills and frames, now in various stages of decay, and considerable expense will be incurred to renew them. It is the practice to renew a certain number of the worst every year, but we observed that such renewals scarcely overtake the decay, and consequently many are in very poor condition. Station-buildings seem to last very well, and, with a few unimportant repairs yearly done on them, the old ones are probably good for twenty years more. The only decay we noticed chiefly affected outside structures, such as loading-banks, platforms, cattle-pens, and a few sills and bottom boards in sheds and station-buildings, but repairs to these would amount to a small sum. Corrugated-iron roofs become rusty after a few years, and we think they are worth painting, which would preserve them for a considerable time. Several stations have been rebuilt, others improved or enlarged, and many platforms have been rebuilt with concrete or masonry fronts and asphalt tops. Station-buildings are kept very neat and trim, and nowhere did we notice any evidence of slovenly disorder. Privies and urinals are almost always clean. Signals are always in good working-order. Water-supply by windmills, steam-pumps, rain, or gravitation, with fire-prevention arrangements, at Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill, we found in good order. Structures and buildings are painted at regular intervals, and are well attended to in this particular. With exception of the iron in them, bridges are not painted, as it is the opinion of the Engineers that it does no good. We do not agree with this opinion, and we think wooden bridges, after being thoroughly dry, should be kept well painted or tarred.

The wharves at Port Chalmers, Picton, Nelson, Greymouth, and Westport have all had repairs, and still require more or less, but on the whole they are very good, and the repairs necessary are not of an expensive nature, at Port Chalmers and Westport timber and piles are on hand for repairs, the Nelson wharves require the most extensive renewals of any of them.

Of the rolling-stock, on Hurunui-Bluff lines we inspected 77 per cent. of the locomotives, 80 per cent. of the carriages, 82 per cent. of the vans, and 73 per cent. of the wagons. Of the West Coast stock we inspected 71 per cent. of engines, 90 per cent. of the carriages, and 78 per cent. of the wagons and vans. The whole of this stock is kept in good repair. The coal-trucks at Westport and Greymouth suffer most from the heavy traffic, and, being made of thin iron, the bodies rust away rapidly; a great deal of repairing and tarring is done for them, and most of them are in good condition, but a number are rusty and thin and will require repairs. The rest of the stock is so constantly sent to the shops that it is often impossible to say whether they are old or new, and, if they continue to be treated as they have been, no one can say how long they will last in good running condition (see details at end of report).

Stores are small in quantity, in good condition, well housed, and all serviceable articles. Christchurch has much the largest quantity of stores, Dunedin has its own lesser quantity, and Picton, Nelson, Westport, and Greymouth are supplied from Wellington.

Stores are chiefly supplied under local contracts, others by contracts let in England by the Agent-General. No large quantities of stores are kept in stock, thus preventing a common source of waste.

On the whole, these lines of railway appear to be maintained with economy, but their working condition is not impaired. They do their work well, and carry a large number of passengers with as much safety as any other lines.

WILLIAM H. HALES,  
C. NAPIER BELL.

#### DETAILED REPORT ON CONDITION OF NORTH ISLAND RAILWAYS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 26th January, 1895.

Acting under your instructions, we have now the honour to present to you the result of our inspection of the North Island railways in the following detailed report.

We have, &c.,

WILLIAM H. HALES.  
C. NAPIER BELL.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

#### THE AUCKLAND RAILWAYS.

*Auckland Station.*—Permanent-way is kept in excellent condition, with good scoria ballast; sleepers—kauri and puriri—all in good preservation. Fences all in good order.

Buildings. We found all the buildings in very good condition, and well looked after these are,—  
Running-shed: Concrete floor, wood walls, iron roof, brick engine-pits with concrete bottom, draining to harbour, all in excellent order.

Goods-shed in very good condition in every part. Iron roof, slightly corroded, but will last some years yet.

Goods office in very good condition. Carriage-shed in very good condition. Carriage and wagon repair store in good order. Office in first-rate order.

Passenger-station, built of brick, in good order, and well kept. Everything neat and clean.

Workshops in good order, and well kept, the iron roof considerably corroded. The set of tools and machinery are all in good condition, and none the worse for wear. Floors are concrete, with wood blocks round about the machines, all in good condition. Smith-shop building in good order, as are the forges and tools, glass skylights somewhat patched; corrugated-iron roof much corroded.

Woodworking shop in very good condition, excellent roof, concrete floor, somewhat worn, all the machines in good condition, and well kept.