

company's proposals have been under the consideration of the Public Accounts Committee, and the Committee have reported as follows: "That, inasmuch as the Midland Railway Company does not regard its contractual rights as being at an end, but, on the contrary, expresses its intention of paying the account already rendered to it by the Government up to 29th February last, in pursuance of section 123 of 'The Railways Construction and Land Act, 1881,' on or before the expiry of the notice served upon its representative in July last under section 125 of the said Act, and as the Midland Railway Company claims that upon such payment being made all its rights in the matter of land-selection and otherwise under the contract of the 3rd August, 1888, are and will be fully preserved, the Committee is unable to make any recommendation on the company's petition."

The Receiver appointed on behalf of the debenture-holders has also petitioned Parliament praying for equitable consideration on account of the great loss which the debenture-holders must in any case sustain, and the almost entire loss which they will probably make unless Parliament intervenes. This petition has also been before the Public Accounts Committee, and the Committee has reported as follows: "That, having carefully considered the petition of the debenture-holders in the Midland Railway Company, it finds that, from the facts contained in the report of the Committee of even date with this in respect to the Midland Railway Company's petition, it has no recommendation to make."

#### WORKING RAILWAYS.

The Railways Statement, which has already been laid before Parliament, has dealt fully with the subject of the opened lines of railway, so that it will not be necessary for me to offer any remarks on that matter. The vote for "Additions to open lines," being a charge upon the Public Works Fund, however, I should explain what provision is intended to be made under this head. Last year £40,000 was voted for services of this class, and £38,487 was expended. This year the amount asked for by my honourable colleague the Minister for Railways was £91,412, and the whole of that amount could be very advantageously expended in additions to open railways, but I regret that the demands for other pressing works do not admit of so large a sum being allocated. The vote proposed is £60,000, which shows an appreciable increase over last year's vote. The expenditure on additions to open lines during 1893-94 was £8,042; during 1894-95, £28,309; 1895-96, £38,487; and now proposed for 1896-97, £60,000.

#### TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR RAILWAYS.

The total appropriations proposed for railway-works, including additions to open lines, surveys, permanent-way materials, and rolling-stock, and also the Midland Railway, is £263,923. Last year the amount was £215,550, which was by far the smallest amount on record.

#### ROADS.

##### ROADS CONTROLLED BY THE MINISTER OF LANDS.

The following table shows the amounts voted and expended during 1895-96 in respect of the votes and accounts named:—

| Name of Vote or Account.                        |     |     |     |     |     | Voted.  | Expended. |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----------|
|                                                 |     |     |     |     |     | £       | £         |
| Main roads                                      | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 25,130  | 27,959    |
| Miscellaneous roads, &c.                        | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 23,060  | 17,075    |
| Local bodies' "thirds" and "fourths"            | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 410     | 168       |
| Lands Improvement Account                       | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 166,582 | 108,168   |
| Government Loans to Local Bodies Account        | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 50,000  | 28,343    |
| Native Lands Purchase Account                   | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 62,062  | 56,947    |
| Cheviot Estate Account (roads only)             | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...     | 1,779     |
| Land for Settlements Account (roads, &c., only) | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ...     | 4,740     |
| Total                                           | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 327,244 | 245,179   |