

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

Belgrove Section (21 m. 35 ch. to 26 m. 71 ch. ; length, 5 miles 36 chains).—This section was maintained for part of the year until the line was opened for traffic.

Motupiko Section (26 m. 71 ch. to 29 m. 20 ch. ; length, 2 miles 29 chains).—The platelaying and other works on this section were completed during the year.

Motueka Section (29 m. 20 ch. to 30 m. 58 ch. ; length, 1 mile 38 chains).—The bridge and other works, including the station yard and station buildings, were finished during the year.

The above three sections were opened for regular traffic on the 1st of March last, though passenger trains had been run over the sections previous to this date, and goods trains for a longer time.

Springfield Section (0 m. to 6 m. ; length, 6 miles).—The platelaying and ballasting has been done from 4 m. 59 ch. to 5 m. 47 ch., and a temporary siding laid at 5 m. 43 ch. An office, &c., has been built at 5 m. 33 ch., and it has been connected to Springfield by a telephone line.

Mount Torlesse Section (6 m. to 18 m. ; length, 12 miles).—The cuttings, banks, culverts, &c., are in hand up to 9 m. 63 ch. at Staircase Gully, and considerable progress has been made. Two tunnels have been started, and some progress has been made with the driving, and lining has been begun. One tunnel-front has been completed. The lining is of brick and rubble masonry. A contract for the supply of 100,000 bricks has been let, and over half the quantity has been delivered. A service-road has been made up to 9 m. 60 ch. ; and a branch-road has been made to the Waimakariri River, to get a supply of shingle. All this work has been satisfactorily carried out by co-operative labour.

Otira Section (32 m. 11 ch. to 37 m. 75 ch. from Stillwater, and 12 m. 21 ch. to 6 m. 8 ch. from Arthur's Pass ; length, about 12 miles 7 chains, including deviation).—A large amount of work has been done on this section during the year, and very good progress has been made. The line is nearly completed for about eight miles beyond Jackson's Railway-station, and a locomotive ran from Jackson's to Aicken's for the first time on the 29th ultimo. There are now only a few gaps in the banks between Aicken's and Otira Stations, and two small bridges have to be finished. The permanent-way has been laid for seven miles and a quarter, nearly two miles of ballasting has been finished, and about a mile and a half more is partly done.

Three locomotives are in use for hauling ballast and stone for the protective-works. Two steam-cranes are in use for loading stone, and a third is being erected. A flood, said to be the highest during the last twenty-five years, occurred in the end of January last. This flood showed that the bank was too low in some places. Some damage to the unfinished works was caused by the flood ; but some relief was got by an advantageous change in the river-bed at one of the worst places. Similar changes might at other times cause considerable trouble in the future. It will take a considerable time for the protective stone-work to sink sufficiently far into the shingle to be beyond the influence of scour, and until this takes place there will always be some danger of damage by floods where the railway-bank runs along the river-bed. Every effort is being made to push on with the work of protecting the bank.

The weather during the year has been very favourable for the prosecution of the works on this section.

The location of the line beyond the Otira Station, over Arthur's Pass, is still under consideration. A special report by a committee of engineers, dealing with the general question, was submitted in October last.

BLENHEIM-AWATERE RAILWAY.

The formation on this line was completed under contracts up to 28 m. 38.5 ch. some years ago, and the line was opened to 20 m. 42 ch. on the 18th April, 1893. A start was made to complete the line in September last. The small bridges between 20 m. 54 ch. and 23 m. 60 ch. have been put in hand, and the earthworks on the line up to 28 m. 38 ch. have been, for the most part, made good.

Awatere Section (28 m. 38 ch. to 33 m. 60 ch. ; length, 5 miles 22 chains).—The earthworks and culverts on this section were begun, and were well in hand early in the present year. The works are generally of a light nature, except at the approaches to the Awatere Bridge. All the cuttings and banks up to the Awatere River are in hand, and some of them are almost completed ; the culverts, pipes, &c., are completed. The approach cuttings to the Awatere Bridge have been begun.

A contract was let to Messrs. Scott Brothers, of Christchurch, in April last, for the construction of a combined road and railway-bridge over the Awatere River. This bridge will be 1,065 ft. long. The superstructure is to be of steel, supported on cast-iron cylinder and concrete piers and abutments. The contract price is £22,001 18s. 6d., and the contract date for completion is the 8th April, 1901.

INCH VALLEY LIME-QUARRY RAILWAY.

This line is a branch of the Palmerston-Dunback line, and branches off at the Inch Valley Station, about six miles from Palmerston South. Its length is about two miles and a quarter. The work of construction was begun in August last, and is now well advanced towards completion. Two timber bridges have been built—one over the Shag River is 388 ft. long ; the fencing, cattle-stops, &c., are finished. The earthworks were somewhat heavy. A lime-kiln is being built under contract, and the plate-laying will be begun shortly. A cooler and hauling-engine have yet to be provided to complete the works. Land-plan surveys for a mile and three-quarters have been done.

OTAGO CENTRAL RAILWAY.

Hyde-Kyeburn Section (56 m. 20 ch. to 77 m. 35 ch. ; length, 21 miles 15 chains).—The works on this section from Kokonga to Ranfurly Station, including the bridge over the Taieri River, were finished during the year, and the section was opened for traffic on the 14th December last.