

It is proposed to prosecute this work in a vigorous manner, and for this purpose to ask for authority to spend £500,000 per annum during the ensuing five years.

#### RAILWAY CONCESSIONS.

The concessions made in the ordinary passenger fares this year amount approximately to £75,200 per annum.

Previous reductions have included reduced school-excursion fares, largely reduced holiday fares, sheep-rates reduced by 20 per cent., agricultural-produce rates by 20 per cent., frozen meat, butter, cheese, milk, firewood, lime, chaff, manures, and scrap-iron reduced, totalling in value on 31st March last £294,239.

The total reductions in rates made since the Government assumed control of the railways amount to no less a sum than £369,439. This large sum has been of immense service to the producers and users of the railways.

#### OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT.

It will be in the recollection of honourable members that last year Parliament allocated £35,000 to defray the cost of sending a contingent to South Africa, there to uphold our Mother-country's honour, justice, and equity. Subsequent events and developments caused the people of this colony to render further assistance.

The voluntary equipping of corps on the part of the parents and people demonstrated a patriotism solid, sincere, and unparalleled in the history of our great Empire. The sons of New Zealand were not behind their parents. It was for them to volunteer. How nobly they responded to the call the historian of the future will relate, leaving comfortable homes, certain employment, good prospects in life—Yes, and even life itself they were prepared to sacrifice—for the good of the Empire.

How bravely they have comported themselves, fought, and bled is within the knowledge of all. The favourable mention by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Generals French, Carrington, and officers under whom they have served, makes one feel proud of them, and of the stock from which they sprang. New Zealand Hill in South Africa is a beacon that forever marks what New-Zealanders can do and dare.

New-Zealanders in the past were ever honoured: our boys have established a greater claim to that honour, and have won laurels, though costly the price, that must ever be revered so long as the British race and the English language exist.

It falls to my lot as Colonial Treasurer to place before you the amount required to meet our engagements: it is for us, in the language of Rudyard Kipling, to "pay, pay, pay."

That it will be cheerfully voted goes without saying. But in addition to that, and before the session ends, I hope to see the end of the war, and to arrange for Parliament to have the opportunity to tender to our boys at the front, and their relatives, our heartfelt thanks and appreciation of their services.

#### CONCLUSION.

The Statement as a whole, the conclusions arrived at, and the proposals submitted, will repay and stand the fullest and most complete scrutiny. The taxpayers generally have in the face of forced, although abnormal, expenditure received remissions to an amount unprecedented in the history of our colony.

It has not fallen to the lot of any previous Colonial Treasurer to announce in a Financial Statement remissions and concessions in taxation amounting to what from present outlook would be £350,000. Circumstances over which the Government have no control have prevented further concessions being granted, and we cannot go further at present with prudence.

The facilities granted by our railways will be enjoyed by all; and the "free breakfast-table" long desired and spoken of is now fast becoming an accomplished fact.

We propose to commence the century by giving a universal penny post which will suitably mark the occasion, and redound to the credit of the enterprising people of this the most progressive colony in the Empire to which we belong.

To the present Postmaster-General and to this colony belongs the honour of taking the legislative initiative in respect to universal penny postage. The fact that Great Britain and some of her dependencies should have adopted the system before us is owing to our necessities being so great that we could not well afford to relinquish the revenue.