

The Mangaweka Viaduct is in hand, the concrete foundations being in progress at the site, and the ironwork in course of manufacture at the Makohine workshop. This viaduct, though longer than Makohine, is not so high, and not nearly as difficult or expensive a structure. With favourable weather its erection will probably not take more than four months from the time the finished materials can be railed through from the Makohine workshop, so that at a comparatively early date after the opening of the line to Mangaweka it will be possible to proceed with the platelaying beyond that township towards Taihape.

Contracts have been let for the steel superstructures of the bridges over the Toi-toi Creek and the Hautapu River, and all the steel and iron required for the remainder of the bridges up to Ohakune has been ordered from England. Instructions have also been issued for the heavier portions of the earthwork on the Murimutu and Raetihi Sections to be taken in hand when the necessary plant and supplies can be conveyed thither.

Viewing the North Island Main Trunk Railway as a whole, the position of the works at the present time is as follows :—

|                                                           |     |     |     |                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------|
| Total length of railway, Marton to Te Awamutu             | ... | ... | ... | 210 miles.           |
| Length open for public traffic                            | ... | ... | ... | 69½ miles.           |
| Additional length on which rails are laid                 | ... | ... | ... | 18½ "                |
| Further length on which formation is practically complete | ... | ... | ... | 19½ "                |
| Still further length on which work is in hand             | ... | ... | ... | 30½ "                |
| Making a total length finished or in progress of          | ... | ... | ... | 138 miles.           |
| Of the remainder a final survey has been made             | ... | ... | ... | 72 "                 |
| Total                                                     | ... | ... | ... | 210 miles.           |
| Date of authorisation of railway                          | ... | ... | ... | 10th November, 1884. |
| Amount expended to 30th September, 1901                   | ... | ... | ... | £871,667             |
| Estimated amount required to complete                     | ... | ... | ... | £986,000             |
| Number of workmen now employed                            | ... | ... | ... | 1,166                |

I informed Parliament last session that if ways and means were provided from time to time as required this railway could be completed and opened for traffic within about four years from the end of last session, and I see no reason to suppose that that expectation is not still capable of realisation. The total expenditure on the line during last financial year, exclusive of the cost of rails, sleepers, and other permanent-way materials supplied, was £109,832. This year a larger amount will be required, and an authorisation of £160,000 is accordingly proposed for it.

#### RIMUTAKA DEVIATION.

The detailed survey of the proposed deviation of the Rimutaka Railway between the Upper Hutt and Woodside, *via* the Tauherenikau route, has been completed. Application having been made to have a trial line run for a route by way of the Wainuiomata Valley, instructions have been issued to the Inspecting Engineer to make an examination of this route so that a comparison may be made of its supposed advantages as against those of the Tauherenikau route.

#### BLenheim-Waipara.

The works at the northern end of this railway are approaching completion, and the station-buildings at Seddon are about to be erected. It is probable that the line will be ready to hand over to the Railway Department for ordinary traffic shortly before the ensuing Christmas holidays. Representations having been made as to the necessity of providing some protection to the trains while crossing the Awatere Bridge from the very strong winds which occasionally blow up and down the Awatere Valley, it has been decided to erect a suitable wind-screen, the construction of which will be proceeded with immediately.

At the southern end of the railway the work has made substantial progress. The earthworks on the first twelve miles are virtually complete, and the few