

The gross receipts show an increase of 82.64 per cent. over the previous year. The expenses of maintenance increased by 24.39 per cent. It may not be out of place here to note that, although the Department maintains the Rotorua baths and collects all fees, its vote does not receive any credit for the amount, which this year totalled £2,415 2s. 10d.; the amount, however, is included in the above returns.

AGENCIES.

The usefulness of the agencies wherever they have been established is referred to in appreciative terms on all sides, and the civility and attention accorded by the officers in charge have been testified to by tourists in most commendatory terms. The number of persons who applied for information at the various bureaux during the tourist season was 21,044, a good indication of their usefulness.

ADVERTISING.

The Department's scheme of advertising has been greatly extended, and much-improved arrangements have been made in several countries, more especially in the Commonwealth and in the United States of America. The continually increasing number of visitors to the colony, I think, may be regarded as a manifestation of the value of the Department's work in this connection. As in the past, large numbers of photographs illustrative of the colony's scenery, thermal wonders, and industrial resources have been extensively distributed: 8,325 pictures have been disposed of for purposes of decorating public museums, libraries, and halls, and steamship-saloons; for reproduction in newspapers, books, and pamphlets; and for making lantern-slides used in lecturing on the colony. A number of first-class sets of slides are now being made use of by lecturers in several countries.

A further issue of 100,000 coloured postcards has been printed and found a ready sale, not only in New Zealand, but a large number have been taken by the trade in the Australian States. Guide-books and pamphlets numbering 5,600 have been sold and issued free, together with 5,000 illustrated newspapers.

The Department's Itinerary of Travel for 1903-4 has been enlarged, well illustrated, and generally much improved. A few well-selected advertisements permitted the printing of 10,000 copies of this popular booklet without cost to this Department, enabling it to be issued free, and thereby increase its circulation and usefulness. These booklets have been freely distributed in the Commonwealth, United States, and a number were sent to London. The next issue will be much more largely distributed. In addition to the above-mentioned 10,000 a special edition of 5,000 copies was printed and sent to the colony's Official Representative at St. Louis Fair.

The Department has been in communication with the Hawaii Promotion Committee and the Tasmanian Tourist Association with a view to an exchange of literature which would be mutually beneficial.

A comprehensive guide to Rotorua district and a book setting out the sporting attractions of the colony, as well as a medical guide to the various hot springs compiled by Dr. Wohlmann, are now in the press. A general guide to the colony and several district guides are well in hand. Several small district maps have been issued, and, in conjunction with the Railway Department, the general map of the colony issued with the penny time-table has been greatly improved. The Department is exceedingly short of suitable tourist maps, and very much work remains to be done in order to meet requirements in that direction.

PRESERVATION OF SCENERY AND HISTORIC SPOTS.

The administration of the Scenery Preservation Act passed last session has been intrusted to this Department. The Commissioners were appointed in March last, but no expenditure has so far been incurred in connection with the acquisition of scenic spots.

During the past year this Department has devoted considerable attention to the preservation of native forest and spots of scenic and historic importance. Officers of the Department have visited many localities where it is desirable that the native vegetation and the remains of Maori fortifications should be saved from destruction. Reports have been made thereon and suggestions submitted to the Scenery Preservation Commission.

While anxious to secure the preservation for all time of certain choice areas of native forest in various parts of the colony, it is very far from the Department's desire to interfere with the progress of settlement in bush districts. What is aimed at is the reservation for the perpetual use and pleasure of the people of suitable tracts of forest-growth in the vicinity of centres of population, on the main routes of travel, particularly in the immediate neighbourhood of railways and coach-roads, and on the banks of our principal scenic rivers and lakes.

SPORT.

The systematic restocking of our trout-streams and the further provision of "big game" is a work which, in my opinion, is second only in importance to the conservation of our magnificent natural scenery and thermal wonders. The excellent trout-fishing and deer-stalking now possessed by New Zealand are attractions which are annually drawing visitors in increasing numbers from Great Britain, Europe, India, America, and the Australian States.

While it is satisfactory to find New Zealand can furnish the angler with better trout-fishing than any other part of the world, care must be taken not to unduly deplete the supply. Many anglers fail to exercise any moderation or forbearance in their fishing. Without laying down an arbitrary rule on the subject sportsmen may be reminded that the useless destruction of fish is opposed to all the instincts of true sport, and they should place a reasonable limit on their catches.

A somewhat similar remark may be applied to wild-duck shooting. Enormous bags are reported to have been made by individual sportsmen on such favourite shooting-places as Lake Elles-