

tion appears bleak, but the records show that three hundred visitors made use of it last season. Any intending tourist can, without much inconvenience, make a trip from Stratford to the Dawson's Falls House, or *vice versa*. The route is notable for the rough grandeur of its scenery.

GENERAL.

In consequence of certain statements made, the Board engaged a paid Ranger for nine weeks, mainly in the western and south-western portions of the reserves, to detect any breaches of the by-laws. Possibly the evils may have been exaggerated; at any rate, nothing in the shape of vandalism or of trespass in pursuit of game could be detected, although no doubt adjoining settlers either drive cattle in or allow them to stray, causing damage to the undergrowth. I am strongly of opinion, therefore, that an active Ranger is most essential.

I have this year had a survey made of the portion of the reserve at Ahuahu, which is leased to the adjacent holders, and I will shortly issue titles therefor.

Owing to the effluxion of time, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, a new Board was elected this year, and some of the old members who have given valuable assistance since its inception have now bidden farewell to it. To these I must convey my thanks for the valuable help rendered, and I might here state that every praise should be given to members who give time and out-of-pocket expenses in furthering the park's interest, as well as that of the district, and, in fact, of the colony as a whole through one of its natural assets.

As I have already mentioned, owing to the late closing of the season, I cannot give the receipts and expenditure as I would have wished, but, generally speaking, everything over expenses is being put into the reserve in the shape of improving the houses and the access thereto.

On the various road approaches the Board have been spending any accrued or voted funds in conjunction with and under the supervision of Mr. Murray, District Road Engineer, New Plymouth. The appended statement gives the work in detail, although since the end of the financial year further works have been gone on with.

From grants issued direct to the District Road Engineer the following works have been performed:—

Upper Egmont (Metalling to radius-line).—Under the supervision of the Moa Road Board, a contract for 15½ chains metalling was let on the 28th March for the full amount of the grant.

Upper Egmont.—On this work the dray-road has been extended from the 2-mile peg to 3 miles 5 chains, and 373 lineal feet of culverts have been constructed where most required from radius-line upwards. The grades from the 2-mile peg have been eased, so that none are now steeper than 1 in 10 (formerly 1 in 8), or less. About a mile still remains to be done to reach the Mountain House. The work is at present being extended by funds provided by the Egmont National Park Board. Expenditure, £293 19s. 11d.

Upper Pembroke.—There has been no expenditure.

Dawson's Falls.—Thirty-one chains of dray-road have been formed along a sideling between 2- and 3-mile pegs, and 53 chains of clearing and rough formation have been done from end of dray-road formed last year towards the above-mentioned sideling. There is still a gap of 93 chains to connect these parts; this work is at present being done by funds provided by the Egmont National Park Board. Expenditure, £183.

In addition, the undermentioned works have been completed and paid for out of the Board's funds:—

Upper Egmont Road.—Clearing, 11 chains; formation, 12 chains; culverts, 11. Expenditure, £40.

Dawson's Falls.—Clearing, 29 chains; formation, 29 chains; culverts, 74 ft. Expenditure, £110 19s. 8d.

During the year two meetings of the National Park Board were held, and the different committees and custodians of the four mountain houses have all worked with great zeal and harmony with the governing statutory Board for the advancement of the great domain, of which we are the common custodians.

As, on account of my transfer to Auckland, this will be the last time that I shall have the honour of presenting the annual report, I desire to place on record my high appreciation of the aid and co-operation and never-failing courtesy that I have at all times received from my colleagues on the Board. My special thanks are also due to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. S. Percy Smith, F.R.G.S., and Mr. G. W. Palmer, our energetic Secretary.

In this my last annual report I make my final appeal for assistance in the development of this magnificent colonial asset. I admit that there are many places more wonderful in this country, but here you have direct on the colony's great northern highway a noble mountain that should be within easy distance of all, particularly tourists from abroad. Yet the only access to the different mountain houses is by pack-tracks, and the accommodation is not of a class suited to the tourist, who is always willing to pay. On the plains below, too, there is much to see. From the base of the mountain to the sea the country is rich in historic memories, and studded with ancient Native strongholds and Maori and European battlefields.

There certainly is no place in the colony, or perhaps in the world, where there is so much historic interest crowded into so little space as in Taranaki. In the days of old it was peopled by a brave, warlike, and, at the same time, industrious people, and, although our own early settlers had to contend with the remnant only, they found their foeman worthy of their steel.

I would ask as my last word that Egmont should have the assistance its accessibility demands, that its forest, flora, and fauna be protected religiously, and that the remaining scenic and historic spots and landmarks in the district be looked upon and conserved as sacred ground for all time.

JAMES MACKENZIE,

Commissioner of Crown Land and Chairman of Board.

The Superintendent, Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, Wellington.