

Scenery-preservation.

The Board has held several meetings during the year, and made recommendations to the Governor as to acquiring ornamental forest-areas in several localities. The area proclaimed as reserved during the past year amounted to 5,045 acres, the expenditure for the same period being £5,765 5s. 2d. The Inspector, Mr. E. Phillips Turner, has personally supervised the surveys of the areas acquired along the North Island Main Trunk Railway-line, and negotiated with the owners or lessees. Two survey parties have now been at work cutting out the areas on the ground, and capital progress has been made with this important national work.

Drainage of the Hauraki or Piako Plains.

Excellent progress has been made with the drainage-works carried on under the direction of Mr. William C. Breakell, C.E. Briefly to summarise the operations up to the 31st March, 127 miles of drains have been constructed, and the work of forming roads and tracks of access is being proceeded with. From the Piako River mouth to its junction with the Waitoa all snags have been removed; for the next three miles the stream has been cleared of logs to a width of 25 ft., and all willows removed along the whole distance. From the Waitoa River all logs have been removed for three miles. The main canal, fifteen miles long, has been opened along its entire length by a drain 9 ft. wide at surface, 6 ft. wide at base, and 3 ft. deep. Of the two Priestman dredges of special make, imported direct from the makers, one is now at work at the north, or Waitakaruru end, and the other will shortly be at work at the south end. Eight flood-gates have been erected, and twenty more are to follow. Two wharves have been constructed, and two more are under construction. One office, one cottage, and nine workers' dwellings have been erected at Waitakaruru, and a cookhouse is now in hand. About 145 men are now employed on the works; the average for March was about a hundred. The amount expended during the past year was £25,683, and the amount expended since 1906 to date is £30,792. In order to prepare the land for opening for settlement, two survey parties have commenced work, and these will be further increased. It is hoped to have 20,000 acres offered for selection in nine months, and another 10,000 acres within six months after. If the demand for flax again becomes general the Crown will be able to furnish a supply from a large and extending area at the lowest royalty rates; and, the waterways for the carriage of the green flax being so extensive, the cost will be much minimised.

Recreation Reserves brought under Part II of "The Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908."

These, numbering some 457, are supervised by the Lands Department, though locally managed by Domain Boards consisting of selected trustees or local bodies. A general report will be laid before Parliament as usual. In the case of newly dedicated areas, small grants are made from parliamentary appropriations towards the clearing and fencing. The total amount given during the past year amounted to £922.

Cemeteries.

Fourteen new cemetery-sites have been gazetted during the past year, and small subsidies towards clearing, &c., have been granted, totalling in all £214 1s. 2d.

Survey of Crown and Native Lands.

The financial aspect of these surveys may be briefly noticed, as dealt with by the Under-Secretary; and, looking at the keen demand by the public for the opening-up of Crown land and purchased estates for settlement, and the recent determination of the Government that all surveys for the Maori Land Boards, who are opening Maori lands for lease or sale (as the result of the labours of Sir Robert Stout's Commission) should be conducted by the Lands and Survey Department, I cannot see that any diminution of the amount asked for to be appropriated by Parliament can be made. Rather it would seem that a vigorous prosecution of Native surveys will demand that £15,000 to £20,000 should be appropriated in addition out of the sums granted to the Native Department.

DEPARTMENTAL AND GENERAL.

Owing to the coming into force of the provisions of the Public Service Superannuation Act, considerable changes in the *personnel* of the staff have taken place, and, in addition to those mentioned on page 15 of last year's report, the following old and valued officers have either retired or are about to retire: viz., Thomas Humphries, Surveyor-General; David Barron and Henry Trent, Commissioners of Crown Lands and Chief Surveyors at Dunedin and Napier respectively; W. D. B. Murray and S. Thomson, Chief Draughtsmen at the Head Office and Dunedin respectively; Messrs. Montgomerie and Snodgrass, District Surveyors; Messrs. W. E. Sessions and G. Fannin, Chief Clerks at Dunedin and