

picturesque peaks, and along the banks of streams and rivers, or around waterfalls, thermal springs, and stalactite caves, &c. Not only for æsthetic but also for economic reasons it is frequently of advantage to retain a certain proportion of the lands of the country in its natural state.

EXPENDITURE DURING YEAR.

The expenditure for the twelve months was £10 more than for the preceding year, but a very large proportion was for cost of surveys along the Wanganui River, North Island Main Trunk route, &c. Owing to the greater care now being taken of our scenic areas, a correspondingly greater expenditure is needed for fencing purposes, eradication of noxious weeds, &c., but the enhanced beauty of the reserves well repays the expenditure. The strictest care is exercised in spending the vote, and it can safely be said that the State has derived very great value from its outlay. Office-expenses are almost nil; the meetings of the Board were arranged for times when the members were in Wellington on other business, and all the money has been spent either on the acquisition of land, its preservation in a state of nature, free from the incursions of stock and the growth of noxious weeds, or in surveying, valuing, and acquiring new areas. The following table shows all expenditure since the passing of the Act of 1903 :—

Comparison of Expenditure.

	1904-5.	1905-6	1906-7.	1907-8.	1908-9.	1909-10.
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Compensation for land	216	3,336	7,856	4,286	3,813	1,688
Expenses of Commission and Board ...	1,822	1,221	185	86	24	...
Salaries of officers... ..	...	...	...	175	325	325
Administration (including fencing) ...	...	...	304	382	1,063	1,159
Miscellaneous (surveys, valuations, &c.)	52	527	801	555	540	2,603
Totals	2,090	5,084	9,146	5,484	5,765	5,775

RECENT SCENIC RESERVATIONS.

During the year some very pretty areas of forest lands have been secured and set apart under the Scenery Preservation Act. In the Auckland District two sections of the Selwyn Estate, on the Rotorua-Lichfield Road, two small areas of bush in the vicinity of the Waitomo Caves, and a small piece of Native land adjoining Lake Rotoma were added to existing reservations. In Taranaki, three sections of Crown land, totalling less than 250 acres, were proclaimed. In Wellington District, the Wharite Mountain (overlooking Woodville), and the Manawatu Gorge (near Palmerston North) were permanently reserved, and six other areas (mostly Crown land) in various parts of the district. The famous Peel Forest, in Canterbury, was purchased and set apart; and the remaining reservations comprised two small areas of freehold land in Otago, one being on the bank of the Taieri River, not far from its mouth, and the other on the Karoro Stream, in the Clutha County, close to the sea-coast.

Two survey parties have been at work during the summer on the banks of the Wanganui River, busily surveying and defining the boundaries of scattered areas of Native land containing the best of the scenery between Wanganui and Pipiriki. In all these cases, however, as far as possible, only the land actually between the river itself and the top of the ridge forming the skyline, as seen from the passing steamers and boats, has been taken, and great care has been exercised in laying off the division-lines in such a manner that the adjoining holdings may not be detrimentally affected. It is thus hoped to preserve most of the natural beauty of the scenery on the river, but by so doing another object will be gained—namely, the protection of the river-banks. This is of a far-reaching nature, and the consequences are difficult to overestimate. The river now forms one of the principal waterways of New Zealand; and yet its maintenance is entirely dependent upon the banks retaining their natural covering of forest and vegetation. The more the bank is denuded of vegetation, so much the more will the course of the river be impeded and navigation checked. It is, therefore, hoped that the efforts of the Government will be recognised as being in the best interests of the State and locality.

During the year arrangements have been concluded for the acquisition by the Crown, by means of exchange, of an area of 181 acres 3 roods 4 perches in the vicinity of Mount Somers, Canterbury, in order to secure the preservation of the bush and scenic attractions which the area contains. The area includes what are known as the "Sharplin Falls," where one of the tributaries of the Ashburton River issues through a rocky gorge from the bush-clad slopes of Mount Somers and the Winterslow Range, the whole forming a very good specimen of wild bush scenery. The locality is already becoming a favourite holiday resort for inhabitants of the Ashburton County, and when its attractions become more widely known visitors, no doubt, will come to it from all parts of the district.

The Kennedy's Bush and Peel Forest scenic reserves are in good order, and the latter especially has been visited by large numbers of people during the holiday season.

APPENDICES.

The report of the Inspector of Scenic Reserves will be found in Appendix B, and contains a most interesting *résumé* of his inspections over the scenic reserves in the Dominion. Generally speaking, they have been found to be in excellent condition, and in cases where it is essential that they should be further protected by fencing, eradication of noxious weeds, and so forth, this has been done. Notices regarding their protection under the Scenery Preservation Act have been posted up in conspicuous positions, and every care is taken that they shall remain in as attractive a condition as is possible.