

Goods and live-stock traffic show increases as under :—

Cattle	...	...	...	32,696 head;
Sheep	...	...	...	1,471,690 „
Pigs	...	...	...	9,643 „
Chaff, lime, &c.	...	...	...	22,658 tons;
Wool	...	...	...	7,973 „
Firewood	...	...	...	4,966 „
Merchandise	...	...	...	27,813 „

and decreases as under—

Drays	...	...	...	90
Timber	...	...	...	18,000 tons;
Grain	...	...	...	131,500 „
Minerals	...	...	...	209,000 „

the net result being a decrease of 227,000 tons in the gross goods tonnage.

The decrease in the live-stock traffic is to some extent due to the fact that the operations of various freezing companies were restricted to a considerable extent during the year ending 1913 by labour troubles with slaughtermen. The natural increase in the flocks of the Dominion and the satisfactory prices ruling for sheep and wool have also been an important factor causing the sheep to change hands readily, and owing to the difficulties in obtaining labour there seems to be a disposition among farmers to devote themselves to sheep and dairying in preference to agriculture.

The decrease in the timber traffic has resulted from the fluctuation of the business, particularly the export trade, and is mainly due to the falling-off of the export traffic on the Westland Section, and slackness in building arising out of labour troubles.

The falling-off in the grain traffic is confined to the South Island, and is to some extent due to the fact that farmers are devoting themselves more to stock-raising, and there has been consequently a less acreage under crop. The unfavourable season, during which there were heavy floods in Otago and Southland, further militated against the traffic. Added to this there is the fact that the quantity of grain forwarded ex stores at the principal ports is considerably less than for the preceding year, indicating that large quantities of grain are being held for more favourable prices.

A decrease of 209,000 tons in minerals is directly traceable to the labour troubles existing during the year, which restricted the operations of the mines in various parts of the Dominion. These were most acutely felt in the mines operating in the Greymouth and Westport districts. This will be readily understood from the fact that since the 29th October to the 5th January, 1914, not a particle of coal was carried on the Westport Section, where the traffic decreased by 155,000 tons—nearly 20 per cent. of the average total output. At Greymouth the traffic decreased to the extent of 75,000 tons. The strike also restricted the output of brown coal in some of the districts, and resulted in larger quantities of foreign coal than usual being imported and conveyed by rail to supply the shortage in the local product.

The average number of men employed on the railways during the year was 14,176, against 14,213 for the year ending 31st March, 1913. Twelve members of the Second Division were promoted to the First Division, 479 members of the permanent staff resigned, 83 members retired on superannuation, 48 died, 111 were dismissed, and 1,160 were engaged. The amount paid under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act during the year in respect to members who sustained injuries in the execution of their duties was £12,459.

The additions made to the rolling-stock during the year consisted of 22 new engines, 91 bogie cars, 23 brake-vans, 729 wagons, 2,060 new tarpaulins. Of the locomotives, one goods tender-engine, Class Ba, ten heavy tank-engines, Class Wg, and four Class X 94-ton tender-engines, four-cylinder balanced-compound, were built in the Government railway workshops, and seven Class Ad 72-ton tender-engines, four-cylinder balanced-compound, were completed under contracts with Messrs. A. and G. Price (Limited), of Thames. Four old carriages and one old car damaged in a collision were written off, and five obsolete cars were sold. One old van and seven second-hand wagons were sold, and seven worn-out wagons written off, and have been replaced by new vehicles paid for out of revenue. 1,147 tarpaulins were worn out and written off, and have been replaced by new ones charged against revenue. During the year 578 modern steel axles were placed under cars, vans, and wagons in substitution for old iron axles. The effect of this change is to increase the carrying-capacity of the wagons by 2 tons and at the same time give greater stability to the wagons.

The rolling-stock on the Gisborne Section was equipped with the Westinghouse air-brake during the year, and arrangements made for the equipment of the rolling-stock on the other smaller sections in turn until all the rolling-stock used on the railway system of the Dominion is equipped with this necessary appliance. 11,188,020 cubic feet of Pintsch gas was manufactured for use by the Department during the year, at a cost of 2s. 2·92d. per 100 cubic feet. This shows an advance of 1·61d. per 100 cubic feet, due to the fact that the cost of rebuilding the Palmerston North Gasworks, which were destroyed by fire during the year, has been charged against the gas-output.

There were 108½ miles of track relaid during the year: of this mileage, 80½ miles of main lines were laid with 70 lb. rails, 10½ miles of branch lines with 55 lb. steel material in substitution for 40 lb. rails, and 17 miles of branch lines with 53 lb. steel material removed from main lines and placed in branch lines in lieu of 40 lb. rails.

During the year 395,712 cubic yards of ballast were used, an increase of 105,000 cubic yards compared with the previous year. 256,054 sleepers were put into the track during the