

where the o'd channels of the Tutaekuri River are crossed, which cannot be closed until the river-diversion on the left of the line is completed. All fencing has been done except along the Inner Harbour embankment and along portions of Petane Beach. Fifty workmen's huts have been erected, and the concrete foundations laid for a platelayer's cottage at Eskdale Station.

Tutira Section (11 miles 51 chains onwards).—The formation works on the first two miles of this section are fully manned. The service road is being constructed, fencing erected, and culverts built. Permanent survey has been made from 10 miles 60 chains to 14 miles, and 3 miles 60 chains of trial survey made, which completes this latter class of work, as far as the Mohaka River. The number of men employed is 190.

Waikokopu Branch.

Nuhaka Section (0 miles to 17 miles 12 chains = 17 miles 12 chains).—Work was commenced in March last by the letting of a number of co-operative contracts to returned Maori soldiers. Approximately two hundred horses and fifty scoops are at present engaged on the works, the Natives providing the horses and the Department the scoops. 107 employees are at present engaged. About 6 miles of formation has been completed, and it is anticipated that the rails will be laid on 20 miles within the next twelve months.

STRATFORD — MAIN TRUNK.

East End.

Matiere Section (0 miles to 10 miles 21 chains = 10 miles 21 chains).—The formation work on this section is now practically complete, and the labour available is concentrated principally on the tunnels. Only 7 chains of the Okahu Tunnel (76 chains in length) remain to be done. Of the other three, one is finished throughout, and the excavation of the other two is completed, and a commencement has been made with the lining of one of these. The bricks used in the tunnel have been made on the works. A steam stone-crushing plant is operating at Manunui. Metal thus obtained is being sold to local bodies when not required for the railway-works. All materials for the steel bridge over the Ongarue River are on hand, and a contract has been let for the erection. As it is anticipated that this contract will take about twelve months to complete, and as there is a considerable length of formation ready for the rails, I propose to erect a temporary bridge to enable the platelaying and ballasting to be carried on beyond the bridge, thus saving many months in the final completion of the line. Several bridges which occur on this length will consist of concrete piers with steel superstructure. The concrete piers will be erected this summer. The steel for the bridges has already been ordered. Immediately it arrives the contract will be entered into. In view of the difficulties in obtaining cement, &c., I do not think that even with the aid of the temporary bridge previously referred to the rails can reach Matiere under twelve months.

Ohura Section (10 miles 21 chains to 19 miles 70 chains = 9 miles 49 chains).—Permanent survey plans have been completed, and the land-plan survey is in hand. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of formation has been completed. Sixty-two men are at work.

West End.

Tahora Section (42 miles 26 chains to 47 miles 40 chains = 5 miles 14 chains).—Work during the year was confined principally to the completion of the formation of this section and service roads for the section immediately beyond. Platelaying has been extended into the Tahora yard, and ballasting has been continued. The cattle and sheep yards at Tahora were completed and are in use. A bi-weekly passenger and goods service connecting with the Railway Department's service at Kohuratahi has been maintained. A large number of huts and other buildings have been moved forward to the Raekohua Section. Beyond Tahora there is little settlement, and it can be served by a terminus at Tahora. The work beyond is heavy, and I propose to discontinue extensive operations, and to complete the line to Tahora and hand it over to the Railway Department. Later, when some of the other lines are completed, work can be recommenced beyond Tahora with greater vigour, and the time of ultimate connection will not thus be appreciably delayed.

Raekohua Section (47 miles 40 chains to 50 miles 60 chains).—Formation has been commenced, service roads are under construction, fencing is in course of erection, and bridges are being built. I propose discontinuing on this section as indicated above, and transferring the men to the Ohura end.