

esteemed friends, and the Chairman is as bad as I am—cause what I call monuments to be erected all over the Dominion consisting of bridges of some kind which no one ever uses if he can possibly help it. When I went up to Palmerston the other day Mr. Fulton took me down to a level crossing. He examined the ground a good deal and said, “There is a good deal of traffic across here.” I looked at the ground after he said that and admitted that there evidently was a good deal of traffic. Then we looked up and down the street, but there was not a single vehicle or a single soul within view. However, just by us was a beautiful monument going over two or three lines of railway; and I do not suppose any one except the blind and the lame ever went over it. No active person would think of going over it. That is a monument of what I call the railway-crossing mania. We all know what it is, and it is a very bad thing to get. The Palmerston North man who lives in danger of his life near Terrace End has only to keep clear of that line exactly twenty minutes out of the twenty-four hours. Then this unfortunate person comes down to Wellington. He gets into a tram and goes up to Manners Street, where he sees two lines of tramway down the middle of the street, with people going across in every direction, together with motor-cars and horses, all day long, and he does not, as a rule, see many accidents; so that the railway-crossing question is quite a mania. Then you take up this Palmerston plan—it is a terrible thing to look at; it almost puts you off your head. Then you come to Wellington and you think nothing about it. There are 70,000 people in Wellington and, I think, twelve thousand in Palmerston North—about one person to the acre, and they mostly stay at home. When I was up in Palmerston North I never saw twenty people congregated together, except on a railway-platform.

*Mr. Luckie.*] There are innumerable railway-crossings throughout the railway system in New Zealand, are there not?—Of course there are. If you go to Canterbury and take the line between Christchurch and Temuka you will not find a single bridge across the line, but there are scores of railway-crossings. You have to put up with them, and you cannot help it if you are going to be at all economical. I do not think very much about the question of railway-crossings. I have a formula which I always express: If there are trains shunting and standing about at a cross-road, you can have a subway or a bridge if it is found necessary. That generally suits the people.

As a matter of fact, you consider the question of subways and overbridges is only a matter of vital consequence in the neighbourhood of cities where there is more than the ordinary traffic and much shunting?—You cannot make a definite rule about it. Cook Street is a 99 ft. street. It is easy to put a bridge along the middle of Cook Street, and that will leave 35 ft. on each side. There is no difficulty about putting a bridge across there if required, but that is a matter that the Department and the municipality have to settle for themselves. Mr. Fulton says that he could put a subway there; but he believes more in subways than I do, and I believe more in bridges than he does. Mr. Fulton took me down a subway much against my will, but I noticed that the inhabitants kept perfectly clear of it and never went near it. I had to go up and down the steps, and I was not at all pleased with my experience. However, in dealing with the main question, I think there is no difficulty in taking enough land. There should be no shunting across the Square at all. Take the block of land which lies between West Street and Botanical Road. The present goods area is very much blocked; it is not used fully, and there are old buildings across it. Then there is the engine-shed, and not more than half the area can be used at the present time. The block of land from West Street to Botanical Road, and between Main Street and Church Street, can be taken wholly. There are a number of small residences on it, but that area gives 80 chains from Botanical Road to the Square. Now, supposing that after mature consideration the General Manager and the Chief Engineer consider that is not sufficient, they could take the continuation across Botanical Road. On the left-hand side as you go north to Terrace End there is a confectioner's shop known as Dustin's. I should not attempt to take any of that valuable land north of Dustin's. Mr. Fulton has made a small sketch-plan to show one way of doing it, but there are many ways which the Railway people may elect to work out for themselves. Mr. Fulton's sketch-plan will show that you can take land from Dustin's corner to Kairanga Road, or farther if necessary. Then you could put the station in the vicinity of West Street. [Plan produced and explained.] You will then have room for the passenger-station and the passenger-sidings. You will have approximately 14 chains across from Church Street frontage to the boundary of this land; therefore I can see no difficulty whatever. As I said just now, it is a question of taking sufficient land in a suitable position to get the goods-station on one side, with sorting-yards and sufficient sidings to do the thing effectually and completely. You will then not shunt on the Square at all. You will have a considerable distance between the points and the Square to enable you to shunt your trains if you want to. There is no question about it that you will get about 90 acres for your station in the manner I am suggesting, remembering that you have a large quantity of land already, and that you absorb the whole of the present Main Street on both sides. Main Street will be diverted between Dustin's and Kairanga Road.

*Mr. Marchbanks.*] Do you propose to close West Street?—I think West Street will have to be closed; but when you get your passenger-station there I would make a passenger-footbridge to connect Church Street with the new station and with the new Main Street. You would then be able to have a covered-in accommodation for vehicles approaching the station from the Church Street side, and the main approach would be from the Main Street side. You could have facilities for getting a passenger approach to the station without crossing the railway-lines on the level. The question of cost is, of course, a little more difficult, because I have not had a detailed plan, and have had no time to make one. The compensation which is put down by the Railway Department for the land on account of the diversion is £100,000, and a similar sum should suffice to take all the land to retain the station on the present route by going south. It might be found that the whole of the land taken was not immediately wanted. For instance, on the Church Street frontage you could get a very large sorting-grid there, and in that case you might retain the people on the Church Street frontage