

the public, and especially to Auckland, will more than compensate indirectly for any difference between receipts and working expenses. But, no doubt, a station will before long be opened at Waiuku; and should it ever be deemed desirable to connect Waikato Heads with the Telegraph system, it could be done by the erection of a few miles of poles and wire from Waiuku, the nearest point on the line to the North Waikato Head.

AUCKLAND TO BAY OF ISLANDS.

This line follows the course of the Great North Road from Auckland to Brigham's Creek, and thence runs direct to the Riverhead terminus of the Kaipara Railway. From Riverhead, the line will follow the Kaipara Railway to Helensville. The poles have been erected from Auckland to Riverhead, and those for the distance between Riverhead and Helensville are lying at Riverhead ready for use as soon as the railway is sufficiently advanced to enable the Department to make use of it for conveying them. This is all that has been done towards establishing telegraphic communication with the Bay of Islands. Other requirements, considered to be more pressing, have had to be attended to; but it is intended to resume this work shortly.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS.

BLUFF TO BALCLUTHA.

The reconstruction of this section with heart of totara poles was completed early in October.

BALCLUTHA TO WAITAKI.

Between Oamaru and the Waitaki River, 140 new poles of heart of totara have been used in reconstruction. Concurrently with that work, the third wire, elsewhere referred to, was erected. The old wires across the Waitaki have been replaced as they evidenced deterioration. The reconstruction was commenced on January 1st, and was completed on February 18th.

TOKOMAIBIRO TO QUEENSTOWN.

The renewal of about eighteen miles of line between Queenstown and the Kawarau River is contemplated; and a contract has been made with a timber merchant at Queenstown for 300 heart of totara poles. It is intended to erect them during the summer.

WAITAKI TO CHRISTCHURCH.

During the running of the third wire on this section, the line received a careful overhaul. It is possible that it will soon be found necessary to erect a fourth wire, and to continue it to Dunedin.

CHRISTCHURCH TO HOKITIKA AND GREYMOUTH.

This section has given little or no trouble beyond such casualties as might be expected from the mountainous nature of part of the country. During the running of the second wire between Christchurch and Hokitika, the line was carefully inspected, and new poles were inserted as required.

GREYMOUTH TO WESTPORT, INCLUDING THE REEFTON LINE.

This section is now in thorough repair. The reconstruction, stated in the last report to be completed as far as Charleston, was finished to Westport in November. For more than forty miles, totara poles have been substituted for those of birch; and where it was not practicable to renew with totara, new birch poles, cut from the neighbouring bush, were used. The lineman formerly stationed at Charleston has been removed to Brighton, which has been converted into a lineman's station. By this arrangement, £100 a-year has been saved, efficiency not being in any way sacrificed. The interruptions caused by the road contractors between Greymouth and Reefton have already been mentioned.

CHRISTCHURCH TO BLENHEIM.

From the Waipara River to Gore's Bay, this line has been carefully examined and repaired. The length from Kaikoura to Blenheim is now being overhauled, and made thoroughly efficient. A new crossing-place for the wires at the Hapuka has also been made, thus freeing the line from future interruptions by floods at this point.

BLENHEIM TO NELSON.

Between Havelock and Nelson (25 miles), this line has been reconstructed. The work was commenced on November 16th, and was completed on January 24th. 357 poles were used, 215 of them being heart of totara, and the others of black birch or matai, it being impossible, owing to the hilly and inaccessible nature of the country, to use totara poles the whole distance. The reconstructed line commences about five miles south of Nelson, and terminates about ten miles north of Havelock. With the exception of the black birch and matai poles just mentioned, all the poles between Blenheim and Nelson are of totara. The line between Picton and Blenheim has been altered in many places during the last few months, so as to keep clear of the railway now being constructed.

WELLINGTON TO OPUNAKE AND NEW PLYMOUTH.

This section has been carefully overhauled between Opunake and Wanganui, and between Wellington and Otaki. At the Otaki crossing, the piles have been strengthened and supported by cradling to protect them from floating logs during heavy floods. At the Waikanae crossing, the iron poles have been carefully examined, and a new wire substituted for the old one. It is to be hoped that before long the opposition of Natives to carrying the line inland between the foot of the Paikakariki and the Manawatu may be overcome. This section suffers greatly in insulation during the prevalence of westerly winds. From the steadily-increasing business between Wanganui and Wellington, it will soon be necessary to erect a second wire between those points; but from the cause mentioned, it would be worse than useless to put it on the present line along the coast. During the year, another attempt was made to connect Opunake with Stoney River; but it was found that the Native opposition remained as vigorous as ever. New Plymouth is consequently not connected with