

miles of dray roads opened and in progress. Horse roads, of a total length of 320 miles, were opened or in progress, at a total expenditure of £121,985.

At the end of the year 1872-73 the total length of dray roads opened and in progress was 1141 miles, and of horse roads a total length of 470 miles were opened or in progress, at a total expenditure, including liabilities, of £290,752 16s. 9d.

Several very large bridges are now in hand, and will be completed during this financial year,—more particularly the Patea, the Waitotara, and the Whenuakura bridges, on the West Coast.

The bridge which is now under contract over the Manawatu River at the Gorge, is being built of sufficient strength to enable the Government hereafter to use it for railway purposes. The Government hope that during next summer the work will have so far progressed as to ensure a good traversable road from Wellington, Napier, and Wanganui.

A large portion of the work on this road has been done by the Scandinavians, and it is only fair to them to state that they have worked very steadily and well, and have every appearance of making very useful settlers.

ROADS, NELSON SOUTH-WEST GOLD FIELDS.

A reference to the Report of the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief shows that during the past year $33\frac{1}{2}$ miles of first-class metalled road has been completed, and 9 miles made passable for heavy traffic, in addition to which surveys have been completed for about 50 miles of main road.

The expenditure in this district has been during past year £26,652 19s. 9d., with outstanding liabilities of £9,233 1s. 6d.

In conformity with the terms of the Act, it is intended to spend the balance during the present year, and it is hoped this expenditure will fully secure to the district the benefit which the Legislature had in view.

WESTLAND ROADS.

The works which it has been decided to carry out are all in hand and a fair rate of progress has been made with them.

It is expected that the whole of the vote will be expended during the current year.

RAILWAYS.

I now come to the subject of Railways; and here I may remind honorable Members of the Statement made by my honorable friend Mr. Ormond at the close of last Session on the second reading of the Railways Bill, in which he gave a very clear outline of the course the Government intended to pursue with regard to railway works throughout the Colony. So far as it has been possible, the expectations raised by that Statement have been realized, and, with the exception of two lines in the Wellington Province, the whole of the railways are now, if not more forward, at least in as far forward a state as it was then expected they would be.

I shall take the railways in the order Mr. Ormond did, and state what has been done in each case. And first, I come to the Riverhead and Helensville Railway. The contractor has made fair progress with the works. At the end of last Session an arrangement was come to with the contractor for this line by which the Government were to find the rails at a fixed price. The rails have long since been ordered, and we have advices of contracts being entered into which lead us to hope that we shall in the course of about three months have the rails here. There is no doubt that between the Provincial and General Governments the contractor has more or less suffered; but we have little doubt that an arrangement satisfactory to all concerned will eventually be arrived at. This line is to cost less per mile than many others; but it must not be supposed that it is equally good, as such is not the case. The gradients are more heavy on this line than on any other, except the Wellington and Masterton at Rimutaka, and as no ballast, in the ordinary sense of the word, has been provided, a considerable additional expense will have to be incurred to make the line serviceable, if there should prove to be much traffic on it.