

The School Commissioners of Otago in reletting ten runs, comprising 195,000 in August next, will offer the leases on these terms. On the same day the Trustees of the Dunedin High School are to offer two runs in Strath-Taieri, containing about 32,000 acres. The Land Department will also offer three runs immediately north of Hyde, being subdivisions of part of Run 204, and aggregating 12,150 acres.

FOREST-TREES PLANTATIONS.

During the past year seven land orders were issued in terms of The Forest Trees Planting Encouragement Acts 1871 and 1872, which entitle the holder, in purchasing Crown lands, to a credit of £4 for every acre of freehold planted with forest trees, and grown to a size prescribed in regulations. Previously, eighteen land orders had been issued for 1,040 acres planted in former years, and the seven orders this year represent 220 acres 1 rood 24 perches, or in all twenty-five orders, and 1,260 acres 1 rood 24 perches planted, of which Canterbury leads with sixteen orders and 835 acres; Otago eight orders and 301 acres 1 rood 24 perches; and Hawke's Bay, one order and 124 acres planted.

The operations of the Planting Board of Canterbury have been referred to in former reports. The energy and success with which the operations of the Board have been conducted during the three years it has been in existence will be best explained by the following extract from the report of the Chairman, Mr. Marshman:—

"The Chairman's report, dated 12th October, 1880, stated that there had been up to that date 150 acres in the Ashburton County sown with gum seeds, the cost being borne by the County Council; and 132 acres in the Selwyn County, part sown in this way, and part planted with pines and forest trees, towards the cost of which the Selwyn County Council had contributed about £330.

"These trees are for the most part growing well.

"Two of the Ashburton blocks have had fire through them, and some of the trees are destroyed; but many that were burnt, and apparently killed, are now shooting again from the root. Over, probably, five-sixths of the ground the trees are quite as thick as it is desirable they should be, and are now from 8 feet to 15 feet high.

"In the winter of 1881 there was sown with gum seed: In the Ashburton County 163 acres, and in the Selwyn County 246 acres.

"We need a mixture of seed, consisting of about half of blue gum, and the other half made up of stringy bark, red gum, peppermint ditto, two or three other varieties, and ironbark and wattle.

"The seed was sown in October and went in well, but the early part of the summer was dry and it did not show any signs of growth for several months, but it has since come very well, and the ground is almost everywhere covered thickly enough with young plants that are now 6 inches to 9 inches high, and looking quite healthy.

"The last season's work has been, so far, a decided success; and, if the present winter passes off without much frost, the young trees will by next summer have become well established.

"The average cost of the work as a whole—that is, including fencing, ploughing, harrowing, rolling, and seed, and the sowing of it—is about £2 6s. per acre, and the total area planted and sown to the present time is about 690 acres.

"It is proposed to expend this year about £450 in the fencing and sowing of, say, 200 acres more."

IMPROVEMENT OF LANDS BEFORE SALE.

As explained in former annual reports, this is the opening-out of Crown lands by clearing of road-lines in bush districts, side-cuttings where necessary in bush or open lands, and generally the beginning of what will ultimately be the roads of the districts. These lines are all graded, and the best lines are selected that the configuration of country will permit of. There are very large areas of Crown lands, especially in the North Island, absolutely closed to occupation until operated on in this manner; indeed, the future extension of settlement on Crown lands very much depends on the amount of pioneer road-making that can be done. The principal works now in hand in both Islands towards the opening of the country may be shortly sketched in the following geographical order of districts, beginning at the North.

Auckland.—From Tauranga to Te Puke, and thence to Pukeroa Block, a good dray-road is in course of formation, or rather has been formed for the greater part of the way; the bridges and crossing of swamp near Te Puke have been all in hand for some time, only requiring to be completed to open out a very important line of communication. The line from Pukeroa is being taken on to a point on the beach about seven miles north-west of Matata; but this is only temporary, as by keeping the line inland to Teteko, the beach is avoided and a through line got to Whakatane, which will intersect an extensive, open, unoccupied country, the greater portion of which is Crown land. From Whakatane to Opotiki the road has been begun, but the greater part inland of Ohiwa Harbour remains yet to be done. From Opotiki to Gisborne through the Motu Bush there is a dense forest country, forty miles across, but much longer by the present track. About twenty miles of this track on the Opotiki side will soon be superseded by an entirely new line, explored by Mr. Crapp, of the Public Works Department, and now under formation. Mr. Barnard, of the Survey Department, has the other portion of the track on to the open country on the Gisborne side in hand. The line is being cleared a chain wide and sown with grass, and a clearing is also to be made at Motu River in the block surveyed for settlement as a camping-ground for stock.

The Cook County Council, under direction of the Survey Department, is forming a dray-road from Patutahi Flat through Crown lands to Waihau and other surveyed lands at the small lakes; and Mr. Lambert, of the survey staff, has succeeded in finding a very much better line for a road from Te Reinga to Opoiti than the existing track. It is proposed to put the formation of that part in hand as soon as funds are available. A reference to the map of the North Island will show that in these several works and proposals there is a great arterial line of communication passing through and rendering accessible many blocks of Crown lands, and connecting isolated settlements at present virtually cut off from any intercourse except by sea.