

the great value this means of communication will be in reducing the cost of carriage of railway-material, there can be no doubt that there will be a very large passenger-traffic along this river to view the grand scenery through which it traverses.

The permanent-way materials required for the works now under contract at both ends of the line have been already contracted for.

The location of the rest of the line is rapidly being proceeded with, and it will rest with the House, by its votes, to determine at what rate of progress this line shall be continued.

In order to enable honourable members to realize more satisfactorily the state of the case as regards this important railway, a sketch map will be attached to this Statement, showing the position of all the works now in progress in connection with the construction of the line throughout, including the roads leading thereto which I have already described.

Napier to Woodville and Palmerston.—During the last financial year a further length of nearly 12 miles was opened to Tahoraite, being 81 miles from Napier.

A contract has been let for $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles farther, coming within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Woodville; and it is proposed to let another contract shortly to embrace the necessary works to complete the line to Woodville and the station-works there.

A very careful survey has been made for the line through the Manawatu Gorge, and the Engineer-in-Chief has been able to locate it in such a manner as to have no steep grades or very sharp curves.

The contract plans for this length are in a very forward state, and as soon as they are ready it is proposed to call for tenders for the work. Those who are conversant with the nature of the banks of the Manawatu River through the Gorge will understand that it is of the utmost importance to bestow the greatest possible care in locating the railway, as the slightest variation one way or the other in such a position means very large loss or gain in cost of construction; and honourable members will, I hope, agree with me that to ensure attaining the best line it was better to wait a month or two and have this work thoroughly done. This, at least, has been my endeavour.

The line between the Gorge and Palmerston is of the easiest description, and the surveys of this length are now in hand.

On the portion of this railway previously opened for traffic, namely, from Napier to Makatoko, a considerable amount of money has been expended during last year in providing water supplies and other additional accommodation along the line, and also for some improvements to the railway-station at Napier, as it will be necessary during the current year to still further increase the accommodation at some of the stations in order to provide for the increasing traffic.

Wellington-Woodville.—The works on the extension of this line from Masterton to Mauriceville, 17 miles, which have been considerably retarded by floods and bad weather, are now approaching completion, and a portion of this section, reaching from Masterton to Opaki, is expected to be ready for traffic about December next. Beyond Mauriceville the only work done has been the completion of the Awaparua Bridge, which is to be used, in the meantime, for road-traffic. No further extension of this railway at the Masterton end is at present proposed, but a section of about 14 miles, from Woodville southwards to Pahiatua, will shortly be surveyed for contract, and some of the works along it may be put in hand during the current year.

On the portion of the line already constructed the Wellington passenger station has been removed to a more convenient site, and provision has been made for the large increase in traffic which is expected to ensue when the Wellington-Manawatu Railway is completed.

Foxton-New Plymouth.—The last link in this railway was finished in March last, thus completing through communication over a distance of 190 miles from