

It will take one other season to complete the survey of the back country of Canterbury and Amuri. There will then be reliable maps on the scale of 2in. to the mile, showing natural features, altitudes, fences, or other occupation. These maps will be a great aid in the apportionment of country into runs and in clearing up doubts and disputes about boundaries.

SETTLEMENT SURVEYS.

An area of 302,895 acres has been subdivided into 2,484 sections, at an average cost of 1s. 4½d. per acre. This rate is nearly one-third less than the average of the last few years. The saving is mainly due to a larger average area in sections reducing the cost per acre. The most expensive surveys are, of course, those in the bush; and, when this natural difficulty is aggravated by the contiguity of old and inaccurate surveys which must of necessity be defined on the ground before the exact position of the adjacent Crown lands can be determined, the cost is often greatly increased.

As the Land Act of 1887 has so widened the scope of the selection of land on settlement conditions, that a settler is no longer restricted to the limit of 320 acres on deferred payment or 640 acres on perpetual lease, but may now select any area of second-class lands up to the limit of 2,000 acres, it has been deemed best in these altered circumstances, especially in the case of broken bush country, not to be at the expense of a completed sectional survey, but, instead, to grade and peg the centre-line of the roads, all the pegs being numbered in Roman letters, and before opening the land for selection to issue skeleton lithographed plans with every numbered peg shown. In this way the selector, with plan in hand, can visit the land and make his selection intelligently, the side lines being afterwards marked as required, without any previous expense having been incurred in the cutting of unnecessary survey-lines. On this system 140,000 acres have been recently treated at a cost of about 9d. per acre, the skeleton plans of some blocks of which have been issued, and others are now in the various stages of preparation and issue to the public.

NATIVE SURVEYS.

For the Native Land Court purposes of investigation of title, partition orders, and individualisation of title, 373 blocks, comprising 296,810 acres, were surveyed, 258 blocks of 125,715 acres, by staff surveyors, and 115 blocks, of 171,095 acres, by authorised surveyors.

For Native-land purchase, 14 blocks, covering 353,204 acres, of which 3 blocks of 87,160 acres, were surveyed by staff surveyors, and 11 blocks, of 266,044 acres, by authorised surveyors.

LAND TRANSFER SURVEYS.

There is nothing calling for special remark in this class of survey, except that in the amendment of the Land Transfer Act now before Parliament provision is specially made for compulsory revision of surveys, where that is deemed necessary, before acceptance of plans at the Land Registry offices. Experience has shown the necessity of having this power as a check on imperfect surveys.

GOLDFIELDS AND ROAD SURVEYS.

There has been very considerable activity in mining-surveys in connection with the numerous dredging-claims which have been taken up on the west coast of the Middle Island and on the beds of the rivers in Otago. There have also been the surveys of the usual quartz and alluvial claims. In all, 297 applications, of an area of 10,700 acres, were surveyed.

Of road-surveys, 316½ miles were laid off through Native and Crown-granted lands, in the exercise of rights reserved in the grants. The taking of roads through occupied land, whether belonging to Europeans or Natives, is usually attended with some remonstrance on the part of the owners, the most of whom, although they desire the road, yet think it should not be taken through their land.

Under the exigencies of a diminished staff, and the demands of local bodies for the definition of roads through Native blocks, the warrant to take roads has been intrusted, in several cases recently, to authorised surveyors in the employ of the County Councils or Road Boards. And this is a very reasonable arrangement from the point of view that the local bodies have afterwards to make and maintain the roads selected. But, on the other hand, the Natives complain bitterly of the unfairness of the local authorities in the exercise of the warrants. In future, either the staff surveyors will again have to take the work up solely or else the department will have to be well satisfied as to the intended placing of the roads, either before issuing the warrant to the authorised surveyor or before accepting the plan. It would