

THE TARIFF.

I have had a series of tables prepared, for the information of honourable members, showing the results of the ten months of the year in which the tariff has been in force in imports and duties as compared with the imports and duties of the corresponding ten months of the year ending on the 31st March, 1888. The comparison is necessarily very imperfect, owing to articles being differently grouped, and to different rates of duty being charged on items that were before in the same group. I have examined the matter carefully, but, so far as I can see, it is unfortunately impossible at present to deduce any law, or even found any satisfactory argument, as to the effects upon trade and industry produced by the tariff; the time has been far too short and the disturbing elements too large, especially the extensive speculative clearances made in May, 1888, in anticipation of the increased duties. One thing, however, I may point out, that the tariff has been successful in producing the revenue required of it.

The Tariff.

Tables Nos. 10 to 13. Tables appended showing results of new tariff.

Successful in producing revenue required of it.

OTAGO CENTRAL RAILWAY.

Last session I made a promise to the House that I would, with the Minister for Public Works, visit the country on the route of the Otago Central Railway in order to judge for myself as to the desirability of continuing that work, and make a proposal in accordance with the conclusion I came to. In fulfilment of that promise the Minister for Public Works, the Minister of Defence, several members of the House, the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, and myself visited the Central Otago district shortly before last Christmas. I was very much pleased with the country, and came to the conclusion without any doubt that the railway ought to be continued, if it could be done without infraction of the policy we are all agreed on—that is, without recourse to a new loan. We think it can be done, and a Bill to give effect to our proposal of at once continuing the line will be submitted for the consideration of Parliament.

Otago Central Railway.

Should be continued, if without recourse to new loan: think it can be done. Bill will be submitted.

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

I may here mention an important enterprise with which the South Island specially, and the colony as a whole, is deeply concerned—I mean the Midland Railway. The company have now raised three quarters of a million as a further instalment of their capital. This, it is estimated, will enable them to make the stipulated expenditure at the Springfield and Nelson ends of the line, and to continue the line to Reefton and towards Lake Brunner on the West Coast.

Midland Railway.

It is matter for congratulation that this important work—colonial in its character—is now to be pushed forward with vigour. It is to the interest of both parties—of the colony not less than of the company—that it should be brought to a successful issue. To the colony, its success means not only the completion of the main trunk railway system from end to end of the Southern Island, including the connection of important centres now isolated, but also the permanent settlement of a large tract of country which, but for this railway, could only be settled very slowly and with difficulty.

Matter for congratulation work now to be pushed forward.

VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS.

My colleague the Minister of Lands has visited the village settlements north of Auckland, in the Forty-mile Bush, and in the South, and I visited the one near Timaru. A most instructive return has been prepared, and will be laid upon the table of the House, giving much interesting detail of the settlers and settlements. The general conclusion to be drawn from our past experience is that village settlements supply a want, if formed of a small number of settlers in a neighbourhood where some work can be conveniently obtained, where the land is of good quality, and, most important of all, where the settlers are of the right sort. This general principle, we think, is clear, but its application in particular cases which we have had in view needs further consideration. I may state, however, that in newly-settled districts we have kept it in mind and have made suitable reserves.

Village Settlements.

Experience shows that in certain circumstances they supply a want.

DISTRICT NORTH OF AUCKLAND.

The country north of Auckland was visited during the recess by three of my colleagues, who had not been previously in that part of the colony. I much regret that time did not permit me also to visit it, as I had hoped to do. The opinion they formed of the district generally was very favourable. The Minister

District north of Auckland.

Proposals as to main trunk line north of Auckland, &c., will