

river. The field-work has been completed and the plans of the line have been made.

A trial survey of the further extension of the line will be put in hand as soon as an experienced location Engineer can be spared for the purpose; and I hope to be able to furnish information to Parliament next session as to the probable cost of constructing this railway through to a junction with the North Canterbury railways.

#### OTAGO CENTRAL.

The work on the section of this railway between Hyde and Kokonga was vigorously proceeded with during last year, and the line handed over to the Railway Department on the 1st October last, and opened for regular traffic on the 18th of that month. The works between Kokonga and Taieri Bridge have also been actively proceeded with, and the formation completed, and the rail-laying nearly so. I regret to state that the works in connection with the Taieri Bridge contract have not been proceeded with satisfactorily, and the completion of the line to Waipiata and Ranfurly (Eweburn) is likely to be delayed thereby. It is anticipated, however, that the bridge will be finished early in the new year, and by that time the formation-works from the bridge to Ranfurly will be also completed, so that the rail-laying to that point can then proceed uninterruptedly. I am in hopes that the section to Waipiata will be ready for traffic by the 1st of March next, and that the whole line to Ranfurly will be ready for opening by July or August following.

Several petitions have been presented to Parliament for the extension of this railway to the Clutha Valley. The work is one which the Government considers should undoubtedly be undertaken, and when the line is completed through to Ranfurly the formation-works on the section between Ranfurly and Wetherburn, as the first link in this connection, can then be put in hand. It is proposed to make the works on this railway of a somewhat lighter form of construction in future, but to retain the present 3 ft. 6 in. gauge.

The expenditure on the Otago Central Railway during last financial year amounted to £25,238, exclusive of the value of the permanent-way materials issued to the line, while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the amount of £13,499. This year we ask for a vote of £30,000, to complete the works now in hand.

#### ROXBURGH EXTENSION.

The survey of the line to connect Roxburgh with Heriot has been completed, and shows that a practicable line can be obtained by way of Spylaw and the Moa Flat Estate, but the earthworks for several miles will be of a very heavy character. The total length of the line will be  $27\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and the probable cost of constructing a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge railway according to present standards would be about £190,000. The cost of constructing a line to connect Roxburgh with Lawrence, 38 miles in length, was estimated by the District Engineer in 1886 at £188,000, so that as regards cost there is practically nothing to choose between the lines. The latter line would afford a much speedier and cheaper connection for the Roxburgh district with Dunedin, however, as the relative distances to be travelled by train between these points would be 131 miles by way of Heriot and 98 miles by way of Lawrence, and the fares and goods rates would, of course, amount to considerably more by the former route than by the latter.

The district immediately beyond the present terminus of the Heriot Railway regards itself as entitled to better railway facilities for the transport of its produce. During the recess detailed plans and specifications will be prepared for an extension of this railway for a distance of  $6\frac{1}{4}$  miles beyond Heriot, to a point locally known as "Eddie's," and, as the construction of this section would serve a very considerable area of excellent agricultural land, and would afford reasonable communication to the upper end of the Crookston and Bengier districts, and as the cost of the extension is estimated to be under £25,000, the question of putting the work in hand will be worthy of consideration when