

every way, and will be put to use without delay. I hope soon to complete arrangements for the establishment of another Sanatorium in the South Island.

Several serious outbreaks of infectious diseases have been investigated, and a great deal of scientific work, having for its object the combating of preventable diseases, has been undertaken.

The aim of the Department has been to lead public opinion wherever possible, and to coerce only when by no other course could the general safety of the colony be assured.

#### THE TOURIST DEPARTMENT.

The Tourist Department was brought into existence in February of last year, primarily to develop the exceedingly valuable asset which the colony possesses in its natural scenery and thermal wonders, to bring these and the advantages of the colony generally more prominently under the notice of tourists, investors, and probable settlers; also to give to travellers, residents in the colony, and inquirers abroad reliable information regarding the colony. Although not a direct revenue-producing department, it is hoped that as a result of its establishment the stream of tourist visitors will be considerably augmented and thereby increase the wealth of the colony by the money which will be spent in travel and accommodation. The revenue of the Railway, Post and Telegraph, Customs, and other departments will increase with the tourist traffic.

The tourist and health resorts of Rotorua, Hanmer, Mount Cook, &c., have been placed under control of this Department. The receipts from these resorts for the past year amounted to £5,491, giving an increase of £1,311 over the previous year. The Balneologist has commenced his duties, and I feel quite sure that health-seekers and the general public who visit our thermal districts will be greatly benefited by his researches and advice.

#### OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

Last year the estimated amount required for old-age pensions was £215,000, while the amount actually paid was £207,468. It is estimated that £215,000 will be sufficient to meet all claims this year.

In his last Statement my colleague drew attention to the necessity for carefully guarding against imposition, especially on the part of those who act for Native applicants. During the year careful inquiries have been made into suspicious cases, with the result that a number of certificates improperly obtained have been cancelled.

To further safeguard the Department a Bill will be introduced this session giving Magistrates greater powers in dealing with cases of fraudulent misrepresentation.

As honourable members are probably aware, the two largest States of the Commonwealth have, by inaugurating old-age-pensions schemes, followed New Zealand's humane action of 1898. That those who during many years have helped to bear the public burdens and by their labour have played an important part in the building-up of a country should be allowed to claim State pensions as a right in their necessitous old age few, I think, are now prepared to deny; and the recipients are grateful to the Legislature which has enabled to thus secure them independent means.

#### LAND-TAX AND INCOME-TAX.

The revision of land-values has been continued during the year, and, as a result of the year's work, I anticipate a further increase of £12,000 in the land-tax receipts. The activity of the land-market, and the prices readily obtainable for land in most of the districts of the colony, justify the opinion expressed last year that the land-tax revenue would increase year by year until the valuations were finished. I estimate this year's revenue at £300,000. The increase is the more satisfactory as it has been obtained notwithstanding the acquisition by the Crown of many taxable estates for the purposes of close settlement.