

The total goods tonnage was 6,075,282, an increase of 413,942 tons over the previous year. Increases are as under :—

|          |    |    |    |    |    |                |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----------------|
| Cattle   | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 59,928 head ;  |
| Sheep    | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 62,811 head ;  |
| Pigs     | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 17,382 head ;  |
| Wool     | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 6,293 tons ;   |
| Firewood | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2,440 tons ;   |
| Grain    | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 52,957 tons ;  |
| Minerals | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 436,414 tons ; |

and decreases as follows :—

|                  |    |    |    |    |    |               |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|
| Lime, chaff, &c. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 17,312 tons ; |
| Timber           | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 54,895 tons ; |
| Merchandise..    | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 11,955 tons.  |

The live-stock traffic of last year was abnormal as the result of the labour-conditions prevailing in 1913. The increase in live-stock traffic for the year just ended must therefore be regarded as satisfactory, especially in view of the unusual and disadvantageous conditions prevailing during two-thirds of the year as a result of the European war.

Owing to the inability of the shipping available to deal with the frozen-meat export traffic, the freezing-works became blocked, and were forced to wholly or partially close down, seriously retarding the movement of fat stock for slaughter. The effect was, however, counteracted to a large extent by a considerable movement of sheep from drought-stricken areas for depasturing elsewhere.

The increase in goods traffic is confined mainly to minerals—principally native coal. This business showed a drop of 209,000 tons in 1914 as the outcome of labour troubles, which seriously restricted the output from the Westport and Westland coal-mines. During the year just ended there was an extraordinary demand for bunker coal for naval purposes, and the output from the Westport coal-mines increased by 140,000 tons, and from the Westland coal-mines 190,000 tons, over the output of the previous year.

The increase in grain traffic is mainly in the Canterbury District, where the exceptionally high prices ruling in consequence of the war has induced a free movement of grain traffic, and resulted in the releasing by owners of considerable quantities of grain that had been held in stock from the last year.

The decrease in chaff, lime, &c., is largely due to the effect of the dry season on the oat crop, and also to the fact that the flax-milling industry has been affected considerably by the outbreak of the war.

There has been a general falling-off in the timber traffic in all districts. To some extent this is due to a depletion of milling-areas in close proximity to the railway, but there has in addition been a diminution in the output of a large number of mills consequent on the restriction in the demand for building-timber. This has had a material effect on the export trade and the quantity of timber shipped to ports on the East Coast for railing inland.

The average number of men employed on the railway during the year was 14,614, against 14,176 for the year ending the 31st March, 1914.

Ten members of the Second Division were promoted to the First Division ; 403 members of the permanent staff resigned ; 99 retired on superannuation ; 32 died ; 116 were dismissed ; and 1,283 engaged.

The amount paid under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act during the year in respect to members who sustained injuries in the execution of their duty was £13,996.

The additions made to the rolling-stock during the year comprised 24 new engines, 34 bogie cars, 8 bogie brake-vans, 1,012 wagons.

Sixteen of the new engines—viz., ten heavy tank, Class Ww, six four-cylinder balanced-compound tender engines, Class X, 94 tons—were built in the Government railway workshops ; and eight engines—viz., six four-cylinder balanced-compound 72-ton tender engines, Class Ad, and two large simple superheated tender engines, Class Bb—were completed under contract by Messrs. A. and G. Price (Limited), Thames.

Two cars damaged in collision, two vans damaged, one worn out and one sold, and thirty-one wagons worn out and damaged, thirteen wagons sold last year and two sold this year, have been replaced by an equal number of new cars, vans, and wagons respectively, all of which have been paid for out of revenue. 1,310 worn-out and condemned tarpaulins were also written off and replaced with new tarpaulins, charged against revenue.

During the year 140 modern steel axles were placed under cars, vans, and wagons in substitution of old iron axles. By this means the carrying-capacity of each wagon is increased by 2 tons, and greater stability given to the vehicle.

The additional twenty-four locomotives taken in conjunction with boiler-renewals of locomotives in service has increased the tractive power by 7.33 per cent.

The new wagons added to the rolling-stock give an increased capacity of 9,889 tons, equivalent to an addition of 1,648 ordinary 6-ton wagons, or 5.93 per cent. in truck capacity.

The rolling-stock actually on order and under construction on the 31st March comprised 58 locomotives of heavy type—viz., 10 Aa superheated tender engines, 10 Ab tender engines, 18 Bb simple superheated tender engines, and 20 Ww heavy tank engines—77 carriages, 30 bogie brake-vans, 104 bogie and 1,286 four-wheeled wagons.

Good progress has been made in respect to the equipment of the rolling-stock on the Whangarei Section with the Westinghouse brake, and it is anticipated the work will be completed at an early date. Instructions have also been given for fitting the Westinghouse brake to the rolling-stock on the Westland Section.