BETWEEN THE RAIL HEADS: BUILDING THE MAIN TRUNK LINE.

THE COACH JOURNEY THROUGH THE BUSH.

Like two enormous centinedes. north and south ends of the Main Trunk line are erceping across the land; over fine are creeping across the land; over hill and date, over chasm and roarring river, through swamp and bush creep-ing slowly but resistlessly to the meet-ing spot, the yawning gorge of the Maka-tote. Mother Earth grumbles at the long, narrow, naked sear her children are long, narrow, naked sear her children are making along her green sides. She meets them with rocky barriers, where the daily progress is only measured in inches; with unle-long swamps that swallow up stuff by the train-load; with swallow up stuff by the trans-load; with gaping canyons across which men look mere pigmies; with swift rivers whose waters light every inch with the giant-fonted piers in the builder-strewn bed. Also, the Opposition will tell you she is Also, the Opposition will fell you she is added and abetted by that power in the band of votes, the "en op.", who, some say was born under the fredest sign of the Zodiac. But vain is the resistance! Striding over the level plain, clinding laboriously up the hills, and sliding down the other side, chinging to the sides of the precipiess, fording the streams, leap-ing the same may and having the outer the ing the canyons, and boring through the mountain sides, go the line builders, and behind them trails the space-annihilating parallel of steel.

weatherboards and paint, Tracks become roads, roads become streets, and the straggling houses begin to shufle round line up like a file of recruits when hear, "Dress by the right!"

Right out there in the contest with Nature you get your bearings more easily and with more certainty than you do in the city. It is life reduced almost to its primitive conditions and

robbed of those thousand and one hypocricies and dissemblings which can only live in crowded streets. The folks are rough but genuine, and a week among them is a fine tonic for the city dweller.

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In spite of the remarks about the coop's, leisurely habit of life the stretch of country where the lines are not in place, sleeping quietly on their well-hallasted bed, and waiting for the Wellington-Auckland express, is very short. Two months ago there was a gap between the rail heads of twenty-two miles from Waimarino on the plains of that name to Obakune, to be covered in the coach; last month it was reduced to fourteen miles; and now the hiatus is narrowed down to some ten miles—

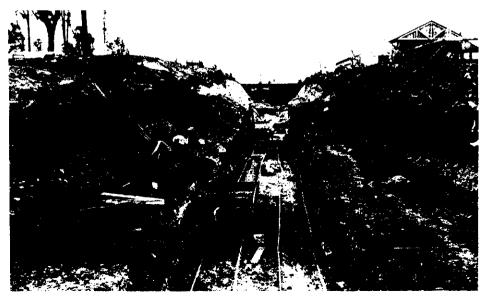


WAIMARINO STATION, LOOKING ACROSS THE PLAINS



COACHES LEAVING WAIMARING STATION TO CONNECT WITH SOUTH RAIL HEAD AT OHAKUNE.

To appreciate the romance of it you want to see the thing in the making, Occasional reports from the Vigitance Committee of the Railbay League, complaints from the "co qu." if his cheque is five minutes late, a police raid on the sty grog fraternity, or an account of the progress of some wandering M.P. who comes through to get the full value of his talismanic little gold pass, don't give you an inspiriting idea of the linking up of the Capital City and her Northern sister. The poetry of it appeals to you when you get right up there on the roof of the island among the snowy mountains, the truckess plains of tussuck, and the stient forests, and watch that strange little mourfal man clasping a circle of steel round the anwilling brows of Mother Eartle! It is good to see a great work when done, but better to see it in the making. For miles the Main Trunk line runs through virgu country, which Nature still haunts, and it is good to see her before man drives her away with his screeching sawmills, his scarring fires. To appreciate the romance of it Nature still haunts, and it is good to see her before man drives her away with his sepreching sawnills, his scarring fires, and, lastly, his unlovely houses. You can trace the evolution of a town. First go the surveyors, whose ardneas work is mover properly appreciated, because it is mover properly appreciated, because it is mover properly appreciated, because it is mover properly appreciated, he avery follows and hews out first the service road, and next the time. Geographical position, fectifity of the soil, or the evigencies of the work are responsible for a cluster of tents at some particular point. The tent gets a wooden floor, by and bye a sheet or two of corrugated from and a few more boards give added permanence, till at last it shoughs its patched skin and appears in all the splendour of and appears in all the splendour of



CUTTING AT MAKATOTE.

On the right is Anderson's Works, where the iron work was made, all the machinery being driven by electricity, viaduct, now in course of construction, is just the other side of the bank in the background. It will be the h in New Zealand when finished—260 feet from the bed of the river to the rails.

from Makatote to Ohakune, so that the opportunity of seeing this work with one's own eyes is rapidly slipping away.

Railway red tape runs as far as Taumarunni, where the line crosses the Wanganni River, 175 miles south of Anckland. Here it is chopped off chort and the Public Works Department takes the traveller under its care. You get your ticket in the train from a good-natured guard, who does not seem to worry much about schedule time, who has silver brail on his cap -the only sign of authority about him—and who carries a bag just like a tram conductor. He hauls out a block of paper tickets like a lottery book, and there is much writing with a stubby pencil and manipulation of small change. You have time to get tolerably well acquainted with him, and the contrast between this section, and the rush and bastle of the line where the Railway Department tries to keep up a time-table is sufficiently marked to give one a sort of personal interest in the matter which is quite refreshing in anything where Government officials are concerned they have such an awsomely haughty they have such an awsomely hanghty