



DEPARTURE PLATFORM, AUCKLAND RAILWAY STATION. SOUTHERN AND ROTORUA EXPRESS LEAVING.

# Completion of the North Island Main Trunk Line

## Something About It and the Country Through Which It Passes

**W**ELL nigh a quarter of a century has passed since the memorable day when Sir William Jervois, the then Governor of the colony, declared that the completion of through railway communication between Wellington and Auckland was a work of vast importance and must be pushed through as quickly as possible. Unfortunately the history of the Main Trunk is a history of indecision, controversy, and repeated delays, some of them perhaps unavoidable, but many of them due to partisan feel-

surveys, Parliament gave serious attention to the matter. Then began the famous battle of the routes.

The survey party had explored three separate routes, the Central route, the Taranaki route with a connection at Stratford, and that by way of Hawke's Bay. The committee's report was in

favour of the Central, and this decision was approved by Parliament. But the Stratford route found many able advocates, and the cry was raised "Stratford or nothing." Work progressed but slowly till 1889, when the line having reached Ongarue at the northern end, the question of route was again revived.

The Auckland members who supported the Central were severely criticised, and at an indignation meeting of Auckland citizens held in Grey Street, a vote of censure was passed upon them. But in 1900 the Government definitely decided for the Central, and pressure was brought to bear to hurry on the building of the line. The Minister for Public Works (the Hon. W. Hall-Jones) stated that he hoped to complete the work in four years, but subsequent events proved that in this respect the Minister was over sanguine. It was not till May, 1908, that the end came definitely in sight. Replying to an influential depu-



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Mayor of Auckland.



THE ARRIVAL PLATFORM, AUCKLAND RAILWAY STATION.



MR. HISLOP,  
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ing and selfish indifference to the best interests of the country. Though the scheme may be said to date from 1884, the idea of railway connection between Auckland and Wellington originated with the late Sir Julius Vogel as far back as 1870. The railway from Auckland to Mercer, and thence to Te Awamutu, was intended to be part of the larger undertaking. This line was completed in 1880, and two years later a million loan was raised towards the completion of the main scheme. But it was not till 1884 that, on the completion of the

tion at Wellington, Mr. Hall-Jones was able to give a positive assurance that the two ends of the line would be brought together before the end of 1908. This pledge has been fulfilled. The vote for the line which was £300,000 in 1906, was increased to £350,000 last year, and the laissez-faire policy so much in evidence at the commencement of the undertaking gave place to feverish energy when the end was at last in sight. It