

While referring to this topic, it may be well to insert the following "itinerary," extracted from the 'Wakatip Mail,' a newspaper published on the gold-fields:—"The shortest route is *via* Invercargill, which is at least one day nearer Victoria than Dunedin. The steamers Gothenburg and Edina call regularly at Invercargill, and the Aldinga and Omeo at the Bluff, which is distant from town twenty miles. From Invercargill, the North road is followed, beginning at Dees street. About four-and-a-half miles from town the road turns to the left, and from thence to Winton Bush the dray track should be kept; then the survey line to the River Oreti, and from thence the dray track should be kept to the foot of the lake. If the Oreti is high, the east bank can be kept all the way. There is a track leading back from the accommodation house on Roger's station, which saves fording twice. By this route the distance is only ninety-two miles from Invercargill, the road perfectly level, and there are accommodation houses all the way. From Dunedin *via* Kingston (foot of the lake) the distance is 220 miles; *via* the Dunstan, 150 miles. This latter road is mountainous to a degree."

An extensive stone quarry has been opened at the Mokemoko, distant about nine or ten miles below Invercargill, to and from which there is easy access by water past the town many miles inland, so that the raw material for road metal may now be conveyed by boat direct to those portions of the Great North and Gold-fields-road, where it is most required. Active exertions have been made to facilitate this transit, and already a fair amount of metal has been brought up, and deposited at the various depôts.

Of our three principal towns—Invercargill, Campbell-town, and Riverton, the former has received the lion's share of the benefit derived from the improved state of the Province. Within the past year the town has nearly doubled in extent and population, with a corresponding improvement in external appearance. The scattered farm-like looking buildings have been raised, or such additions and improvements made, as to place Invercargill on a par with the oldest towns in the colony. Most of the new buildings have been constructed lofty and capacious, while many of them may be called not merely neat, but elegant in architecture. The main streets are now being reduced to a uniform level, and lighted at night with kerosine lamps.

Nor has the shipping interest been neglected. The main wharf, which stretches out into the river upwards of 14,000 feet, has been doubled in width, and lofty sheds have been erected for storing goods, and several dolphins constructed for mooring vessels.

At Riverton and the Bluff operations have been actively carried on, and at each of these ports a rapid progress has been made during the last year.

The Mokemoko, which until lately was but a name, has now taken a decided start, and its central position between the Bluff harbour, the lower anchorage of the New River and Invercargill, leaves but little doubt but that it will become a thriving township.

As to general topics, limited space compels us to be brief,

The report of the discovery of the diggings at the Wakatip reached town towards the latter end of 1862, and the probability, if not certainty, that this Province was so situated as to command the gold-field trade, infused new life into every section of our population—new life which steadily maintains its vitality up to this time, and shows no sign of abatement.

The second show of the Southland Agricultural Association was held on the 8th April. There was, for a young Province, an excellent exhibition of stock; and in some classes, both of sheep and cattle, Southland showed that she need not fear to compete with any other Province—even Canterbury.

Southland has now its Chamber of Commerce, and the Supreme Court has also voyaged "thus far south." Mr. Justice Gresson presided at the first

sitting, but Mr. Justice Richmond will, for the future, have charge of this circuit.

During the past thirteen months, seven immigrant vessels have arrived from Great Britain, bringing 750 immigrants, assisted by the Provincial Government. These immigrants have been of a superior class, and, with one exception, the vessels have all been well furnished with due regard to the comfort of the immigrants, and in excellent order.

On October 10, the fifth session of the Provincial Council was opened by the Superintendent, who stated in his opening address that—"The continued prosperity of this Province is a source of much gratification to the Provincial Government. Since the last meeting of this Council it has steadily advanced, and the Province is rapidly attaining an important position in point of material wealth. The returns of Customs revenue afford ample evidence of the great extension of its commerce, as a comparison with preceding years will show. The gross Customs revenue, in round numbers, was, in 1861, £4,500; in 1862, £11,700; in the past nine months of 1863, above £40,000.

"The territorial revenue has not quite amounted to the sum estimated in October last. During the year ending 30th September, 1863, stated in round numbers, the receipt from land sales has been £52,000. The gross revenue of the Province has been £104,000, thus considerably exceeding the estimate of £96,846. The expenditure, in the same period, has been over £144,000, also exceeding the estimate, which was £111,333; in addition to which sum, however, an expenditure of £23,000 on roads was sanctioned by this Council in the session held in February. The report of the Chief Surveyor explains that the large amount of extra work—especially re-surveys in correction of old erroneous ones—performed by the members of the survey staff, impeded their progress in carrying on the special work of that department, and so the amount of surveyed land mapped and ready for sale has not kept pace with the demand, in consequence of which the land revenue has not equalled the estimate. The maps of a large extent of land are in course of preparation, which, when completed shortly, will permit the throwing open for sale a wide tract of country.

"During the recess, on the application of the Provincial Government, his Excellency the Governor has proclaimed two Hundreds in the Province, which will render available for settlement about 56,000 acres of agricultural land, the greatest part of which is perhaps the best in the Province, the Aparima Hundred being situated in a district in which land is always in eager demand, while the excellence of the land in the Mataura Hundred is so generally recognized as to require no further reference. Under these circumstances, the Provincial Government has reasonable grounds to anticipate that the estimate of land revenue for the ensuing year will be fully realized.

"When the estimates for the past year were prepared, the Provincial Government did not anticipate that such an urgent necessity would arise in the course of the succeeding financial year for pressing forward so many important public works; but the great increase of population and trade imperatively demanded the immediate prosecution of works which, under ordinary circumstances, might not have become necessary for years, and the construction of which involved much unauthorised but unavoidable expenditure. The departments in which this has chiefly occurred are those of the police, gaol, and harbour. The works executed have been most useful, and the staff of officials in each is in a highly efficient state; but the greatest excess of expenditure over appropriation has been in the Roads Department, rendered necessary in order to endeavour to provide all facilities for the conduct of the traffic with Wakatipu. The roads leading thither have been kept in a good state throughout a remarkably wet winter at a heavy expense, and chiefly by means which, though answering the purpose for the time, were essentially of a temporary character. In an elaborate report which is laid before you, the Provincial Engineer points out that, unless