

is applied to use, unless where the forests are close to a town, when the timber is used for fire-wood. But, as often is the case, the area is set fire to, either wilfully or by accident, when the whole is destroyed. These figures confirm the allegation of wastefulness on the part of the wood-cutters or the public, as reported by the Rangers.

It appears evident that no exact account can be had of the operations of the manual sawyers, splitters, and firewood-cutters, owing to the dispersive and intermittent nature of their operations; but as a comparative time for the lasting of the Otago forests is an interesting question, an approximation may be obtained from the known horse power of saw-mills at work.

Taking the saw-millers' own data, viz., four billions of superficial feet in half a million of accessible acres, they have now eighteen mills, aggregating 157-horse power, at work. Allowing them to work 1,200 hours in the year, that is, 150 days of eight hours, they will use up, at 75 superficial feet per horse power per hour, 14,130,000 superficial feet per annum, or take 282 years to finish the whole. Of course this can only be accepted as a very approximate estimate, as the power may increase or decrease, and the manual sawyers' operations may seriously accelerate the result. Judging, however, that most of the forest is far from what is at present considered payable ground, and that great accession to the population may be expected, the above period is over rather than under the mark.

It appears pretty plain that all forest easily accessible will, at the above estimate, be finished in twenty to thirty years, thus leaving the more remote to the latter portion of the period, but which may then be as cheaply brought to market as the present stuff, by reason of cheaper labour and greater carriage facilities. Measures, therefore, are not immediately pressing, but whatever is done may be done with deliberate consideration, having due regard to the present wants of the public, and a reasonable foresight for future generations.

Since the foundation of the settlement, as stated before, 51,262 acres of forest have been sold to private persons, and 26,441 acres have been destroyed by fires or for cultivation. One of the members of this Committee saw 4,000 acres destroyed by one conflagration; but generally speaking, the separate fires have consumed smaller quantities, and these fires may be expected to increase as settlement goes on.

The administration of the forests has hitherto been of the simplest kind, or rather there has been none, licenses to cut and remove being given for a small fee to all applicants; and in suggesting alterations in what has hitherto been a privilege of all settlers, we would rather be guided in the view not to curtail the usefulness of the native forests to the work of colonists and of settlement, but rather to prevent unnecessary waste.

In the course of our inquiries it has been quite evident that while saw-millers can be put under effective control, manual sawyers and wood-cutters cannot. Further, that there are two classes of bush entirely distinct, having heavy and light timber, and while the manual wood-cutters can employ themselves in either, the saw-millers can only do so in the former. A course of regulation is thus indicated by this fact.

We would therefore suggest that the bushes should be detailed solely for each class of sawyers, and that the licenses of each and both classes should be confined within their respective boundaries. Without this being done as a first step to regulation, no effective supervision can be maintained, and in no case should manual wood-cutters be allowed where saw-mills are established, as the latter can more economically furnish all the wants of settlers than the former.

It is evident that the motion of the Waste Land Board must be confined to their powers given in the Act, and these being limited, the practical recommendations of this Committee cannot embrace the whole question of use and renovation of forests. The sections that apply to timber and forest lands are 91, 164, 165, 166, which give power to the Board to allow occupation for cutting and felling, and for prosecuting unlicensed persons, and the power of reservation by the Board or Superintendent from entry and use by runholders. Further, under the 91st clause, the forms in which licenses should be issued may be determined by the Board; and under the 92nd, the extent of land may be specified.

Thus, in determining the forms of saw-mill licenses, we must be guided by the period to which they ought to extend, and the quantity the sawyers can cut. We have seen that only 8,000 superficial feet of sawn timber can be got out of one acre, and that 1 horse-power cuts or may cut 90,000 superficial feet per annum, that is, about eleven acres. Now, it has been the custom of the Board hitherto to allow thirty acres per horse-power, and to charge £5 per horse-power; that comes to about 10s. an acre for three years, or 3s. 4d. per acre per annum.

Considering all circumstances, we think it would be a better principle to license to saw-millers the cutting of actual assigned portions of the primeval forest—after survey if necessary—for three years, at so much per acre, payable in advance. This would give fixity of position and certainty of revenue, and the areas granted per horse-power could be regulated according to the nature and quality of the bush.

In locating saw-mills, they should pay cost of survey or marking, and all travelling expenses necessitated by their occupation. On the completion of the time of occupancy, or abandonment, then it would be competent for the Board to advise Government as to replanting or settlement in small farms, as might be thought advisable.

To bind down the saw-miller to any operation not connected with his immediate profit or interests we think impracticable, and which would always be evaded.

Annually it would also be advisable that the saw-millers furnish a prismatic compass survey of their tramways.