

SESS. II.—1884.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# THE CULTIVATION OF THE WATTLE

(MEMORANDA RESPECTING).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

Mr. T. THOMPSON, M.H.R., to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—Wellington, 23rd October, 1884.  
I have the honour to ask your attention to an extract from a letter forwarded to me by Messrs. Potter and Co., merchants, of Auckland, covering certain information in connection with the production of wattle bark for tanning purposes.  
The Hon. the Premier.I have, &c.,  
T. THOMPSON.

## Extract.

I ENCLOSE copies of some information *re* wattle-growing in Victoria, also the result obtained from a tree cut down by Mr. Bell, manager of the Riversdale Manufacturing Company, Avondale, Auckland. I may mention that this company have 10 acres planted with wattle. The trees have been planted three years, and are now 12ft. high. Other 30 acres were planted last year, and are doing well. We venture to think that this is a matter of sufficient importance to the colony to warrant you in asking if the Government will cause the enclosed information to be printed and circulated amongst members of Parliament.

MEMORANDA from Mr. BELL, Avondale. (Mr. Bell is Manager of the Riversdale Manufacturing Company, Avondale, Auckland.)

I CUT one of the wattle trees growing by itself on the Riversdale property, stripped and dried the bark, and it weighed when dry 56lb. This would give about 90 tons per acre for four or five years' growth. The tree I cut down would be four years old.

WATTLE-GROWING.—Information collected by, and Personal Experience of, F. N. REED, Tanner and Bark Merchant, Hawthorn, Victoria.

THE evidence given before the Wattle Bark Commission appointed by the Victorian Government was all to the effect that the wattle came to maturity at from eight to ten years; that trees of 8in. diameter, 2ft. from the ground, gave from 30lb. to 40lb. of bark, and that first-class trees gave  $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.

The Commissioners cut down a tree six years old, 29ft. high, 1ft. in diameter, at 3ft. from the ground, and it yielded over  $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of bark. It has been frequently stated by experts that, with a proper system of training and pruning, mature trees may be made to produce 50 per cent. more bark than in the wild state. One man, who paid a great deal of attention to wattle-growing, supplied the Commission with the following information: With cultivation you will have 19,360 trees, 15ft. high, per acre, averaging 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter. At the end of four years one-half must be thinned out, from which would be obtained 4lb. of wattle per tree; this would give 17 tons per acre, and each year every alternate tree should be removed, producing about or over 17 tons per year, until, at the end of the tenth year, the yield would stand at 122 tons per acre.

It is very difficult to get any reliable figures with respect to the actual yield of cultivated wattles. The above statements are the best that can be had, but must be accepted with caution. The wattle requires to be drawn up long and tall, hence they are best sown very thickly. They should not be left without supervision. The plough should pass between the rows as they grow. They should be pruned carefully, not haphazard, as they may bleed to death, or be checked in the growth; and, again, the trees must be periodically thinned out. By attention to these directions an even sample of bark is procured, which would command a top price.

The following is an estimate of a bark-growing company proposed to be floated in Melbourne. Trees planted 6ft. x 6ft., 1,200 trees to the acre. Estimate for 200 acres:—

|                                             | £           | s.       | d.       |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Cost of clearing land, @ £1 per acre ... .. | 200         | 0        | 0        |
| Planting, @ 5s. 8d. per acre ... ..         | 66          | 13       | 4        |
| Pruning, @ 10s. per acre ... ..             | 100         | 0        | 0        |
| Miscellaneous, @ 3s. 4d. per acre ... ..    | 33          | 6        | 8        |
|                                             | <u>£400</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |

Proposed that 200 acres be planted every year for four years, the expenditure of which would be as follows:—

|                                        | £             |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| Cost of land, 1,580 acres, @ £3 ... .. | 4,740         |
| Clearing first 200 acres ... ..        | 400           |
|                                        | <u>5,140</u>  |
| Clearing second 200 acres ... ..       | 400           |
|                                        | <u>5,540</u>  |
| Clearing third 200 acres ... ..        | 400           |
|                                        | <u>5,940</u>  |
| Clearing fourth 200 acres ... ..       | 400           |
|                                        | <u>£6,340</u> |

Bark off 600 trees per acre, thinned at four years, say 14lb. per tree = 75cwt. per acre, or 750 tons from the 200 acres, at £5 per ton on the tree = £3,750; so that from the four blocks there will be £15,000 of bark off the trees thinned out, and the trees left to mature, 600 per acre, should give all round considerably over  $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. each. We have 15 tons per acre, or, on each 200 acres, 3,000 tons of matured bark, at £5 per ton, £15,000.

|                                                            | £              |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Total of thinning out 800 acres, 3,000 tons, at £5 ... ..  | 15,000         |
| Total of clearing off 800 acres, 12,000 tons, at £5 ... .. | 60,000         |
|                                                            | <u>£75,000</u> |

The advantages of cultivating the wattle are manifest. The yield is much larger, and, the trees having been pruned, the bark can be stripped with much greater facility, and the sample of bark would be a very even one.

After the removal of the bark and wood, the *débris* should be burnt off, and no further sowing or planting would be required, as the young wattles would spring up after burning as thick as a crop of corn, and would simply require thinning out. Last April some of our men who were stripping for us burned off a lot of rubbish from the stripping, and just after a shower or two fell, and a fortnight after there were thousands of young wattles 6in. high.

The wattle wood is highly prized by bakers on account of its great heating powers, leaving little or no ash. It is urgently sought after at all times, and is worth in Melbourne, in 2ft. 6in. lengths, 11d. to 1s. per cwt.

From the straight trunks there are very superior staves split for coopers' work. For beef tierces no other colonial wood is used, it being the only wood that will not stain the meat. It is also coming into use for cabinet purposes, and looks very handsome when polished.

We pay for stripping and bundling, including drying, from 30s. to 40s. per ton; but on cultivated wattle plantations the price should not exceed 20s. per ton, because the trees are all together, and are much easier stripped on account of being pruned.