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# NATIVE FORESTS AND THE STATE OF THE TIMBER-TRADE

(REPORT ON), BY T. KIRK, F.L.S.

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

Professor KIRK to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 16th November, 1885.

In compliance with your instructions I have the honour to inclose herewith a report on the general character and condition of native forests and the state of the timber trade, so far as my examination has extended.

In my final report I purpose describing the forests of the East Cape and the southern districts of the North Island.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

I have, &c.,

T. KIRK.

## PART I.

### SOUTHLAND.

THE total area of Southland is 2,279,657 acres, of which 345,197 acres, covered with timber of greater or less value, were reserved by the Crown. The proportion of this area denuded by the sawmiller is estimated by the Crown Lands Commissioner at 32,730 acres, leaving 312,467 acres of so-called virgin forest, which, however, in many cases has been indented upon by settlers. If we deduct mountain-forest and light lowland areas, where the timber is too thinly scattered to pay for the erection of mills, the area comprising convertible timber will be reduced to less than 200,000 acres; and of this, again, there are large sections which are not likely to be rendered available for many years to come—such, for instance, as the Takatimos Forest and the Eyre Mountain bush, the two together containing nearly 70,000 acres; the Takatimos, which I was unable to visit, being said to contain a large proportion of good timber, although in situations not easy of access.

The area reserved as Crown forest does not include all the timber-land in the district, portions having been alienated from time to time. Much of this has been cleared, but in a few cases the purchasers had the foresight to preserve the timber, and are now reaping the benefit of their prudent conduct. About seven sawmills are being worked exclusively in private forests.

### DISTRIBUTION.

The greater portion of the forest lies in the southern part of the district: nearly one-half is found between the Waiau River and the Oreti, the remainder between the Oreti and the Mataura. The most extensive forest is the Longwood, which occupies the south-eastern corner of the district between Riverton and the Waiau, extending for fourteen or fifteen miles along the eastern bank of the river, with several outlying bushes in the Wairio District and small isolated patches in the Waiau Valley. Crossing the Wairaki River and skirting the western slopes of the Takatimos a nearly treeless district is entered, patches of forest being found at two places only, Bellmount Station and Blackmount.

Southwards the Takatimos Forest occupies the western slopes of the range, several isolated patches being situate on the lower ground. Still farther to the south Spar Bush and Waimatuku Bush will complete the enumeration of Crown forests in the western half of the district. On the eastern side Seaward Forest extends irregularly from the New River to the Mataura River. On the western side of the estuary the Otatara Bush, now cut out, nearly joins the Makarewa Bush on the north. Grove Bush, with the Titipua and sundry smaller bushes, lie to the eastward. To the north, Forest Hill and Winton Bushes cover a large area, but are excelled by the Hokonui or Dunsdale Forest, with Croydon Bush extending nearly to Gore. In the extreme northern part of the district is the Eyre Mountain Bush, chiefly consisting of mountain-beech.

The proceeding statement is sufficient to show that large tracts of country in the interior, between the Oreti and the Waiau, are destitute of timber, and that the same condition is characteristic of the north-eastern portion of the district from Dunsdale Forest to the northern boundary of Southland.