

At the Turua Mills the supply is obtained from freehold land held by the proprietors, or from land leased by the Natives, or from the settlers; in the latter case the timber is purchased standing, and a royalty of 3d. per 100ft. is paid upon the measured logs, the expense of felling and rafting being defrayed by the purchaser. The cost of felling, conversion and haulage may be estimated at 2s. 6d. per 100ft. for labour only.

The Auckland sawmills must be classed amongst the best in the world; the largest are considered to be unequalled in the Southern Hemisphere. In one or two cases employment is given to nearly five hundred men and boys, and the annual output of each is stated to exceed 8,500,000ft. per annum. At the present time there are numerous mills with an output of 5,000,000ft. and upwards. They are fitted with the most approved machinery, not only for general conversion, but for the manufacture of doors, window-sashes, &c. A readiness to adopt improvements is shown in all directions, and no expense is grudged to secure the most efficient appliances. The large mills in most instances are worked by joint-stock companies, who have managed to secure sufficient kauri to keep their mills supplied for the next fifteen or twenty years at the present rate of consumption. One mill, with an annual output of 5,000,000ft., is stated to have sufficient timber to last for over thirty years, but this is an exceptional case. Large blocks of Native Land on the Cape Colville Peninsula were purchased by the Crown a few years back, subject to the rights of mill-proprietors. I believe that, with possibly two exceptions, all the large mills have sufficient standing kauri to keep them going for the next twelve or fifteen years at least at the present demand.

I have been unable to ascertain the amount received by the Government for the right to cut timber in kauri-forests, but was informed by the Commissioner of Crown Lands that it was very small.

DURATION OF KAURI FORESTS.

Estimating the total extent of available kauri-forest at 200,000 acres (an area greatly in excess of that stated by the best authority Mr. S. P. Smith), and placing the average yield at the high rate of 15,000 superficial feet per acre for all classes, the present demand will exhaust the supply in twenty-six years, making no allowance for the natural increase of local requirements. If, however, the demand expands in the same ratio that it has shown during the last ten years, the consumption in 1895 will be upwards of 240,000,000 superficial feet per annum, and the kauri will be practically worked out within fifteen years from the present date.

Under these circumstances the best interests of Auckland and the colony at large demand the strict conservation of all available kauri-forest. The progress and welfare of the northern district have been largely due to her magnificent forest-resources, and their conservation will prove an important factor in the permanence of her prosperity. The utilization of the ordinary timbers should be encouraged, and it should be an axiom with the settlers not to use kauri when red- or white-pine can be made to answer the purpose. Any steps tending to postpone the period of exhaustion will be of the greatest benefit to Auckland, as a longer period would be allowed for the growth of timber to take the place of the kauri within the restricted limits in which replacement is possible. Should this warning be unheeded, a large displacement of labour will result, and the prosperity of the north will be greatly retarded.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; Printing (1,225 copies), £16 1s. 6d.]

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1885.