

triangular outline, in its widest part enclosing large open areas. A few small, isolated patches of timber are dotted over the eastern side of the district, but are of no great importance. The Napier and Wellington Railway is opened as far south as Tahoraite, a distance of seventy-six miles; from Takapau to its present terminus, about seventeen miles, it runs entirely through forest-country, large areas of which, however, are already cleared or are in process of clearing. The section from Tahoraite to Woodville, on the southern border of the district, is expected to be ready for traffic about the close of the present year: it runs chiefly through open or cleared land, bounded by forest on the east and west.

CHARACTER OF THE FOREST.

The area of forest containing any large proportion of convertible timber is small. In all parts of the district the forest comprises an unusually large proportion of shrubby growth, such as mahoe (*Meliccytus ramiflorus*), small tawa and tawhero, &c., of no value to the saw-miller. With the exception of the Taranaki forests, no others in the North Island contain so small a proportion of valuable timber. It is, however, commonly stated that much of the timber destroyed during the progress of settlement in the Norsewood and other districts comprised a large proportion of really good totara, rimu, and matai; and, although in all probability the total quantity has been over-estimated, there can be no question that some of the best forest in the district has been destroyed without yielding the slightest return to the colony. In a few cases it has passed into private hands, its conversion affording profitable employment for a large amount of well-remunerated labour.

The puriri, pohutukawa, mungeao, and other trees common in the Auckland District find their southern limit on the East Cape; so that the forests of Hawke's Bay, which are destitute of any peculiar species, produce a somewhat monotonous effect when compared with the more varied forests to the north of Auckland.

The following are the chief timbers used for conversion in the district: Totara (*Podocarpus Totara*): this often attains a large size, and usually occurs in clumps, patches, or groves, but rarely forms continuous forest, although single trees or small clumps may often be found scattered through a large forest area. Rimu (red-pine) (*Dacrydium cupressinum*): this is plentiful in many places, but rarely attains the largest dimensions. Like the totara it is often restricted to patches of greater or less extent, but more frequently it is sparsely scattered amongst other trees. Although it sometimes occurs in considerable quantity, there is nothing in the district that will compare favourably with the red-pine forests of Southland. Matai (black-pine) (*Podocarpus spicata*): the black-pine is plentiful in some localities, and is extensively converted. In some places it is below the average dimensions, although nearly always straight and well grown. Kahikatea (white-pine) (*Podocarpus dacrydioides*): this also is not unfrequent, but, like the preceding, is often below the average size: it is converted to a small extent only. Miro (*Podocarpus ferruginea*): this is not uncommon, but seldom occurs in large quantity; it rarely attains large dimensions. Tawa (*Beilschmiedia Tawa*): the tawa is plentiful in low-land forests, and often attains a large size, straight and well grown: except for firewood, it has not at present been utilized in the district. Rata (*Metrosideros robusta*): a common tree, but generally little valued, except for firewood, fencing-rails, and telegraph arms. Black maire (*Olea Cunninghamii*): this is somewhat rare, and local, but is in demand for bridges and other special purposes on account of its great strength and durability. It is, however, difficult to procure in a sound state, being liable to the ravages of a large boring larva, which forms long galleries three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Tooth-leaved beech (*Fagus fusca*) and entire-leaved beech (*Fagus Solandri*): these fine trees are plentiful on the slopes of the Ruahine Mountains and in other places in the low-land portions of the district. They rarely attain dimensions above the average, and are frequently small and scrubby. Both kinds are utilized for sleepers and fencing material, &c., the tooth-leaved beech being considered the more durable. Mountain beech (*Fagus Clifortioides*): this species is abundant on the middle slopes of the Ruahine Range and in other mountain districts up to 4,000ft., but has scarcely been utilized at present. Rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) and toro (*Myrsine salicina*): these and other ornamental timbers are more or less frequent, and are occasionally converted for ordinary purposes where rimu and similar timbers are not to be procured. Towai (*Weinmannia racemosa*): although of common occurrence, this species is not abundant, and but rarely attains good dimensions. With the preceding, it is occasionally converted, in the absence of more valuable timbers. Hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*) is of frequent occurrence in certain parts of the district.

The totara affords the most valuable timber produced in the district; next in order must be placed rimu, matai, kahikatea, tooth-leaved and entire-leaved beeches: except for firewood no other timbers enter into general consumption. Wherever totara is found it is applied to general building purposes, constructive works, railway-sleepers, and fencing; in fact, totara, in Hawke's Bay, occupies the same pre-eminent position with regard to all other timbers that is held by the kauri in Auckland.

KAIMANAWA BUSH, TARAWERA.

There is a considerable area of forest about Tarawera, which, although generally of a mixed character, has occasional large patches of good timber adapted to the use of the saw-miller. In some places it consists chiefly of rimu, above the average size and of good quality; in others the rimu is replaced by matai, not generally equal to the rimu in excellence of quality. Kahikatea occurs in low places by the margins of streams: fine tawa and rata are abundant. I was informed that most of the land in the vicinity of Tarawera had passed into private hands, but there can be no question that the best portions of the timbered country would pay for conservation, as the development of railway communication between Napier and Taupo is only a question of time, and when carried out will at once increase the demand, and afford facilities for profitable conversion.