

Tamaki River, and the forest is of the same general character, but portions of the totara present some notable points of difference, which it is desirable to point out.

One large patch, consisting chiefly of close-set trees, with trunks from 20in. to 34in. in diameter, at first sight suggested the idea of a grove of young trees; but closer examination showed that this view was incorrect, as in the majority of stems the timber was dense, firm, of even texture, and deep colour, showing that, although of such small dimensions, the timber had attained maturity; but, excepting the remarkably-dense growth of the trees, there was no obvious reason why they should not have attained larger dimensions.

After drawing my attention to these small trees, Mr. Nannestad guided me to a distant part of the block and pointed out a magnificent grove, containing the finest specimens that came under my notice in the district. Unlike the preceding, the trees were somewhat distant, in some places almost scattered; the area over which they grew was considerable, but the short space of time at my disposal prevented me from going over the whole of it so as to form a definite idea of its extent, which has not been ascertained at present. Trees with clean, symmetrical trunks 60ft. to 80ft. high, and from 5ft. to 6ft. in diameter, were common; several specimens were fully 100ft. in the clear, and one, exceptionally gigantic, was estimated at 112ft. Several fine trunks were 8ft. in diameter. One or two monsters showed symptoms of decay, but the great bulk appeared to be perfectly sound, and in the best possible condition for conversion. With a single exception, it comprises the finest specimens I have seen in any part of the colony; but it may be fairly doubted whether they will prove as profitable for conversion as medium-sized trees. Messrs. Nannestad and Richter manufacture sawn totara shingles to a large extent.

WOODVILLE RESERVE.

This small State forest has an area of 5,900 acres, and is situate in the extreme south-western corner of the district, closely adjacent to the gorge of the Manawatu.

The chief timber over a large portion of its area is tawa, much of which is of large size, and suitable for conversion; but in some parts it contains large quantities of rimu and kahikatea, with an occasional matai, all of good size, and well adapted to the purposes of the saw-miller. A few fine pukatea and hinau also occur in various parts of the block, and considerable quantities of fine rata in the higher portions.

Although the quality of this forest is not of the highest class, it contains a large proportion of useful timber, and, with the development of railway communication, will prove of considerable value at no distant day.

The remaining State forests in the district are the Ngamoko Reserve, situate a few miles south of Makarewa, and containing 5,200 acres, the timber being similar to that of the Makarewa Forest, of which it may be regarded as a continuation; also, the Kumeroa Reserve (Puketoi No. 3), containing 8,900 acres, situate on the southern boundary of the district, and covered chiefly with tawa and rata intermixed with a few pines. To these must be added four small sections, containing about four hundred acres, in Blocks I. and IX., Woodville, which find their place in Class III., Timber Reserves.

THE TIMBER INDUSTRY IN HAWKE'S BAY.

From a return prepared by the Commissioner of Crown Lands I find that the district contains eighteen saw-mills, which afford employment to 265 men and boys. The annual output may be estimated at about 15,000,000 superficial feet. This gives an average of rather less than 835,000 for each mill, which I think will be found to be rather over the mark, as but few of the mills are of large capacity, and some are very small. All the mills are supplied with logs obtained from freehold land or from land leased by the Natives, except in one or two instances where the timber on certain blocks of Crown land has been purchased before the land has been thrown open for selection.

It is significant of the increasing value of standing timber that there is no difficulty in obtaining from £2 to £3 10s. and upwards per acre for the timber growing on educational or municipal reserves, &c., even when it is far from being of the first class. There can be no question that timbered land in the district will advance rapidly in value, and, where the timber is of the best quality, will prove a profitable investment.

Several mills obtain a large proportion of their logs from small freeholds adjacent to the railway, paying the owner a royalty of from 3d. to 9d. per 100 superficial feet for the ordinary pines, and from 1s. to 2s. per 100ft. for totara. This, of course, is a great advantage to deferred-payment selectors and others of limited means, as it yields them a small amount of ready money, clears their land of the heaviest timber, and in many cases affords them employment on their own sections. In nearly all cases the logs are conveyed to the mill by rail, sometimes for a distance of over seventy miles. The chief mills in Napier receive the whole of their log supply by rail, obtained chiefly from their own bushes, which are directly connected with the railway; so that the conveyance of logs on the Napier and Tahoraite Railway forms one of the principal items in the general traffic.

The most important are the totara forests held under lease from the Maoris, the holders paying a yearly rent, without any restriction as to the quantity converted. In some cases these leases have been profitably sublet by the original holders. When in Napier I was informed of an instance in which a large block, originally leased from the Natives for a yearly payment of £300, was sublet for £1,500, which would be equivalent to a royalty of 2s. per 100ft. on a million and a half superficial feet of converted timber, or very nearly three million feet in the log. I was assured by two or three of the largest converters that 2s. was not more than a fair royalty for totara.