

as it was found with a more complete knowledge that they contained no timber of value, and were, in addition, suitable for settlement; some of them have since been offered to the public, and are now mostly taken up on settlement conditions. Five reserves, containing 1,717 acres, were made during the year, so that the total now stands at 1,367,533 acres. These reserves comprise areas selected for the timber growing on them, for the preservation of the sources of springs, for climatic or plantation purposes. Experience has shown that the reservation of small forest areas in immediate contiguity to lands undergoing the process of clearing and settlement is a mistake: they cannot be preserved from fires due to the annual burning of the cleared areas, and soon become a danger to surrounding properties.

Happily no fires have occurred in the State forests during the year. Those situated in the North are constantly in danger during the summer, owing to the readiness with which the kauri burns, and the ease with which a fire once started spreads by aid of the gum and resinous droppings from the trees. The three Forest Rangers in the North are occupied wholly during the summer in the prevention of fires and trespass in the forests under their care. Proceedings have been taken in a few cases for the latter offence, against individuals who have been tempted by the search for kauri-gum to break the law.

A good deal of dead kauri, killed by fire during previous years, has been disposed of to prevent its becoming a total loss; but the amount is not great, being equal to 1,286,900ft., which sold for £321 14s. In Southland an amount equal to £3,550 19s. 10d. has been realised from the State forests by timber and saw-mill licenses. Immediately connected with the sale of timber from Crown lands, an amount equalling £211 has been realised from timber seized from individuals found cutting on Crown lands not in State forests. Notwithstanding the warning that occasional seizures give, this practice seems to present to individuals of an unscrupulous nature a temptation too great to be resisted; but the cases in which it occurs are, it is believed, much less frequent now than formerly.

During the year an estimate of the quantity of kauri timber within the State forests of the North of Auckland has been made with a good deal of care. It is as follows:—

		Kauri. Feet.		Totala. Feet.
Opuawhanga State Forest	...	7,792,000	...	1,276,000
Hukerenui	" "	2,311,500	...	10,000
Puhipuhi	" "	128,915,250	...	3,587,600
Whangarei State Forests	...	107,661,700	...	...
Hokianga	" "	94,000,000	...	...
		340,680,450	...	4,873,600

Reckoning this at 6d. per 100ft. as it stands, the whole is worth £86,388.

The reported discovery of rich silver-lodes in the Puhipuhi State Forest at the end of 1889 has led to the proclamation of this and a great deal of the adjacent country as a goldfield. During the summer months, therefore, this forest will be more liable to fire than heretofore.

The great fire that took place in 1888 killed trees which are estimated to contain 75,000,000ft., and which is deteriorating in value from year to year.

Up to the beginning of this month 204 licenses to dig gum within the forests had been issued—not nearly so great a number as at the same date last year.

Mr. W. Guffie, Chairman of the Maniototo County Council, has been kind enough to furnish particulars as to the planting done by that county during the year. The county is performing a most useful work in planting and distributing forest-trees at a small cost to all who require them, and has expended £238 8s. 8d. in planting and other expenses, and received from sales £29 17s. 3d. during the year; whilst the total expenditure to date has been over £1,500. It is proposed to plant 50,000 trees this season, and to continue planting about 100 acres annually. Maniototo County sets an example which might be followed with advantage by other counties in the open and treeless parts of the colony.

Waerenga Plantation, Waikato County, which is situated on the railway-line, about forty miles south of Auckland, is in charge of a nurseryman. Operations during the year have been confined to keeping down the fern and scrub, as far as possible, amongst the young trees. The black wattle-trees, of which a large area (379 acres) has been planted, are looking very well, and appear to thrive on the indifferent soil of which the plantation is composed, some of them being now 20ft. high, though only three years old. The eucalyptus plantation of 502 acres is also looking well, many of the trees being 8ft. to 10ft. in height. The red-gum plantation of about 120 acres is, comparatively, a failure, as the growth of fern and scrub has choked the young trees. It is estimated that a return from the wattle-bark will be secured in seven years from the first planting, when, if the crop is anything like an average one, there should be a considerable sum realised from the sale.

Papatawa Nursery, Whangarei.—The nurseryman in charge has added somewhat to the area of ground prepared for seedlings, and shelter-trees have been planted, besides having the care of the young trees in the nursery. There are at the present time about 180,000 plants, of which about 78,000 will be ready for distribution this year. They consist of fifty-five different varieties, mostly of kinds used for economical purposes, with some fruit-trees.

Kioreroa Plantation, Whangarei.—In this place the plantations consist of various kinds of trees, many planted out in permanent positions. The trees planted consist principally of catalpa, black and golden wattles, olives, fruit-trees, gums, oaks, planes, sumach, pines, &c. The nurseryman in charge has devoted most of his time to keeping down the growth of scrub and fern. The orchard contains about 2,900 trees, consisting of varieties of apples, pears, oranges, lemons, citrons, olives, plums, hickory, walnuts, &c. With the present strength of the staff, it is impossible to carry on the operations successfully, as a great deal of work requires to be done in planting out, clearing, &c.