

678. You say about 18,000 acres of profitable forest?—Yes.

679. Consisting of what kinds of timber?—Red- and white-pine principally, mixed with silver-pine and birch.

680. Is that timber of first-class quality?—It is excellent timber.

681. And that, of course, would be carried over this railway?—Yes; the country has a fall towards the line of railway, and the cost of haulage would not be excessive.

682. Now, crossing to Nelson Creek, and continuing in a north-easterly direction, can you describe any area lying there?—There are about 9,000 acres.

683. To what point?—To the Ahaura River, running back in the direction of Lake Hochstetter.

684. About how far back from the line?—Four to five miles.

685. Mixed forest?—Yes.

686. What area?—I think about 9,000 acres.

687. What kind of timber is this?—I think fully one-half is birch; the rest is red- and white-pine with silver-pine.

688. Is it easy country to tram?—Yes, it all falls to the railway.

689. From the Ahaura River, travelling beyond the open lands which are termed the Ahaura Plains, what do you find?—A very extensive forest reaching to the Kopura.

690. What area?—I think that which would be utilised in the next few years would contain about 12,000 acres, but beyond that distance the forest is very extensive in the Kopura district. It is principally red- and white-pine, with a large silver-pine forest.

691. Why do you not include that in the area?—It would mean a much greater distance. It would reach some sixteen miles, and at present that, of course, would be beyond the means of a private line to haul timber.

692. But if prices rise, as they promise to do?—If they rise from 1s. to 2s. a hundred that Kopura forest could be worked profitably.

693. Can you give me the area?—I have not gone through it, and I cannot give you the area.

694. Can you fix a rough minimum?—I think from 12,000 to 14,000 acres.

695. Now, starting at a point opposite Brandy Jack's, on the east side of the railway, and continuing to the Big Grey River, what do you find?—Mixed forest, the larger proportion being birch—red-, and brown-, and white-birch.

696. What is the area?—Some 6,000 acres.

697. Is there a further area of 4,000 acres near Ikamatua?—Yes; after crossing the Grey River, and still on the east side of the line, I find an area of 4,000 acres; it continues from the Big Grey to the Little Grey.

698. What kind of bush?—Principally birch.

699. Does the same class of forest continue up to Reefton?—Yes, brown-, red-, and white-birch.

700. Commencing on the other side of the Grey River, near Stillwater, what general description of the country can you give us?—There is a width of about a mile to a mile and a half, and that goes a distance of about twenty-three miles, after which you reach Burton's Creek, beyond Mawhera-iti.

701. Is it good timber?—Yes, there is some excellent timber.

702. Can you give me a rough idea of the area?—I should say from 12,000 to 15,000 acres. There is an excellent quantity of silver-pine, as well as a good crop of red- and white-pine, on this area. They are cutting silver-pine there now.

703. On both sides of the Jackson's line of railway, in addition to what you have already referred to, is there not an immense area of forest?—Yes.

704. What do you estimate the area to be?—I should think from 150,000 to 160,000 acres.

705. What kind of timber?—Mixed forest. There is a large quantity of red- and white-pine on the lower spurs of the country.

706. And on the higher spurs?—Beyond a certain altitude you get into dwarf birch.

707. Is there any silver-pine?—Yes, there is some silver-pine.

708. Now, you necessarily know something of the output of the mills: what number of feet per acre on the average have you found the mills extract?—I have tested it in many instances and the average is about 14,000 ft. I think you may take that as a fair and just average. It comes down as low as 5,000 ft., and it goes as high as 65,000 ft. Where you get a thick forest of pines it is almost incredible the quantity of timber you get per acre. I may say these are rare instances.

709. You say 14,000 ft. is about an average, taking it all over?—Yes, I have made very careful tests.

710. I think you have told us that the present export from Greymouth is about 15,000,000 ft. per annum?—Yes.

711. Is there a growing demand for these West Coast timbers in Canterbury?—Yes. The red-pine is superior to that from Southland; it is less knotty, and an easier kind of timber to manufacture. It is driving Southland timber completely out of the market.

712. And you say there is a demand rising in Wellington?—Yes; on several occasions quite lately timber merchants have asked me if I could place some large orders for them here, but the mills were too full of orders, and could not accept them.

713. Now, taking these prospects, what is your best judgment as to the increase of the export of timber from Greymouth during the next six years?—Well, hitherto the increase has been equal to about two millions a year. There has never been the number of inquiries for timber that there are at the present moment, and in consequence of that I assume it is not unreasonable to imagine that in the next six years the increase will exceed 2,000,000 ft. per annum.