

The importance of the timber industry to the colony is shown in the following :—

TABLE showing Number of Sawmills in Operation, Hands employed, Wages paid, Quantity and Value of Timber Sawn, Value of Posts and Rails, and Total Value of all Manufactured Timber for 1900; also Comparison with 1895.

Year.	Number of Mills.	Hands employed.	Wages paid.	Sawn Timber.		Value of Posts and Rails.	Value of all Manufactures.
				Quantity.	Value.		
1900 ..	334	6,085	£ 514,088	Ft. 261,583,518	£ 971,048	£ 19,277	£ 1,268,689
1895 ...	299	4,055	323,223	191,053,466	627,959	10,998	898,807
Increase during five years	35	2,030	190,865	70,530,052	343,089	8,279	369,882

TABLE showing Quantity and Value of Timber exported from 1888 to 1900, inclusive.

Year.	Quantity.		Value.	
	Superficial Feet.		£	
1888 ...	...	43,474,434	...	177,877
1889 ...	...	42,568,600	...	176,608
1890 ...	...	42,098,863	...	181,689
1891 ...	...	42,824,365	...	182,431
1892 ...	...	22,860,551	...	87,581
1893 ...	...	26,718,046	...	101,082
1894 ...	...	31,901,415	...	116,116
1895 ...	...	38,297,905	...	141,892
1896 ...	...	34,984,414	...	133,511
1897 ...	...	39,326,396	...	156,289
1898 ...	...	40,721,632	...	167,510
1899 ...	...	50,425,741	...	199,231
1900 ...	...	57,517,085	...	233,659

The value of the timber imported into the colony from 1890 to 1891 was £104,927.

The foregoing figures show that the forests are at present yielding timber to the value of over a million and a quarter sterling per annum, one-fifth of which is exported, and we are importing timber which could well be grown in the colony to the value of £100,000 per annum.

The four nurseries at present established will produce sufficient trees to plant approximately 700 acres per annum, and allowing sixty years for the trees to mature we cannot reasonably expect that more than 20,000 superficial feet of timber will be produced per acre, or about 14,000,000 ft. in all. This is probably a low estimate, but as no artificial forests have yet matured in this colony we must be guided by results obtained in Europe, where forestry operations have been conducted under scientific principles for some hundreds of years, and where records have been kept of the produce from first thinnings to the matured crop.

Take, for instance, the Hanoverian forests, containing a mixture of oak, larch, beech, spruce, scots pine, and alder. Here we find that an acre has produced on an average 30,000 superficial feet of timber per century, equal to 300 superficial feet per annum. Of course, the thinnings from the above area will be available as fencing-posts, sleepers, and other purposes where large diameter is unnecessary from, say, the fifteenth year up to the fortieth; but this cannot be considered as milling-timber, of which we are now (1900) cutting 261,500,000 ft. per annum. No allowance has, however, been made for possible destruction through fires, disease, or non-success of these artificial plantations during their period of rotation—viz., sixty to eighty or even one hundred years, depending on the variety of tree, class of soil, and aspect of the plantation. In order, therefore, to maintain the present output of timber, an area of over 13,000 acres would require to be planted annually, necessitating the establishment of thirty-five nurseries of a producing-capacity of a million trees each per annum. We have therefore only made provision for a continuous supply of timber amounting to 14,000,000 superficial feet per annum—about one-nineteenth of the quantity at present being milled; or, in other words, we are denuding 20,000 acres of forest, reckoned at 10,000 superficial feet per acre, for our annual supply of 200,000,000 ft. (during the last nine years), and have made provision for the planting of only 700 acres, estimated to produce 14,000,000 ft. in from sixty to a hundred years from the time of planting. The above figures show the gravity of the situation and the rapidity with which the colony is being stripped of its forests without a corresponding increase of planting operations. We cannot too soon take active and vigorous measures to prevent—or, at least, to mitigate—the calamity which will befall this colony should our natural forests become exhausted before artificial plantations are matured for felling.

One great evil that exists in the timber business is over-production, and there cannot be a greater waste of any marketable commodity than through this cause. In the face of glutted markets we persist in our over-production as if we expect to relieve the market by glutting it still more. Over-production in the timber trade is a greater evil than in any business, as the raw material cannot be replaced for generations. Each one is ready to admit that he—or, rather, his neighbour—is milling too much timber and that more profit would be made by putting through a less quantity. The fact is we are encouraging this over-production by selling our timber for many times less than the price at which it can be produced artificially. Take the Pelorus Valley, for instance. According to Mr. Perrin's report one mill is producing 3,000,000 ft. per annum from 300 acres, equal to 10,000 superficial feet per acre. The royalty on this timber—principally rimu—