

systematic forestry by the Council, the chief being uncertainty of supply; this being dependent on private nurserymen. There is also the disadvantage of obtaining trees from widely diverse soils and climates—Invercargill, Dunedin, Ashburton, and Christchurch—for planting on poor, dry, high-lying inland localities, subject to intense frost as well as hot drying winds.

The Council's work being thus considerably hampered, it was felt that further planting operations should be undertaken by this Department, and the following letter was accordingly addressed to the Hon. Minister of Lands:—

"SIR,—I have the honour, by direction of the Mackenzie County Council, to respectfully bring under your notice the advisability of establishing a forest-tree nursery in this county—say, at Silverstream.

"My Council would point out that the Mackenzie County is exceedingly favourably adapted to the growing of forest trees, and at present, with the exception of a few plantations, is almost treeless. They would further point out that there are numerous reserves of Crown lands laid aside specially for tree-planting. I am to say that the Council hope you will give this matter your favourable consideration.—I have, &c.,

"R. L. BANKS,

"The Hon. Minister of Lands, Wellington."

Clerk to Council."

The reply to above being favourable, instructions were issued to report on the scheme and submit proposals for the acquisition of a suitable block of land for nursery purposes. Two sites have been inspected—one close to Fairlie, and another some seven miles distant, on the main Mount Cook Road—but neither are deemed altogether desirable. Another area has, however, been under consideration, and no doubt before next report is issued operations will be in progress.

CHANGES IN THE STAFF.

Owing to the lamented deaths of Mr. James Henderson, Forester at Waitapu, and Mr. Manuel Stark, Nurseryman in Charge at Hanmer Springs, several changes were rendered necessary.

Mr. William Cromb, first Assistant at Starborough Nursery, took charge at Hanmer Springs, and was afterwards transferred to Starborough as Nurseryman in Charge, *vice* Mr. N. Craig, appointed to the position of Nurseryman in Charge at Kurow. Mr. T. B. Curle, Assistant Forester at Waitapu, succeeded Mr. Henderson as Forester in Charge at that station for some months before being promoted to Officer in Charge at Hanmer Springs, whilst Mr. Roderick McRae, from Conical Hills Plantation, succeeded Mr. Curle at Waitapu.

REGENERATION OF NATIVE FORESTS.

Last year's report contained proposals for the perpetuation of our kauri forests, but so far the information sought from the Auckland Commissioner has not been received.

During an extended visit to Westland and Southern Nelson particular attention was given to the possibility of regenerating the silver-pine (*Dacrydium Colensoi*—erroneously called *D. Westlandicum* in Kirk's "Forest Flora")—and yellow silver-pine (*Dacrydium intermedium*). As is well known, these timbers are largely used for railway-sleepers and telegraph-poles, for which purpose they are unrivalled for durability.

In Westland the sawmillers and sleeper-getters do not seem to distinguish between silver-pine and yellow silver-pine, both species being utilised for similar purposes. The former extends from West Wanganui Inlet, Nelson, southwards to Martin's Bay, in Otago, and from sea-level to 3,000 ft. altitude; although the largest trees seem to be found at comparatively low altitudes and on swampy, sour land, which is absolutely unfit for any other purpose than the growth of this valuable timber-tree.

It is significant that, during a full month's constant travelling in Westland, I could not find a single silver-pine tree large enough for cutting as a fencing-post, although inquiries were made from the Commissioner and from the Crown Lands Rangers who accompanied me on my visit.

Sleeper-cutters seem to have practically cut out the whole of this timber within reasonable distance of horse-tracks or roads, and in doing so have destroyed millions of young seedling trees in "snigging" or in squaring posts or sleepers, and then putting a match to the tops and chips.

The visitor to a West Coast forest cannot fail to observe myriads of seedling trees of all kinds, which germinate in the vicinity of a recently felled tree. So soon as an opening is made in the forest by removal of trees, thus giving the necessary light for germination, countless numbers of seedlings subsequently appear. Here we find Nature renewing the forest with a lavish hand, while her efforts are frustrated by fire and stock.

The whole of the West Coast Crown lands, whether forest or open, are available as a cattle-run on the payment of a small fee to the local bodies. There are a number of scenic reserves containing magnificent specimens of rimus, kahikatea, matai, &c., in addition to the usual undergrowth, shrubs and ferns; and, although heavy penalties are enforced for the destruction of any plant, shrub, or tree by man, cattle have free access to wander where they please. In the Official Year-book, 1904, page 643, the Commissioner of Crown Lands says, "All over the coastal lands, along the slopes of the lower hills, and in the bottoms of the valleys large herds of cattle are bred and fattened on the dense undergrowth of the forest."

Being in the goldfields area, the Commissioner of Crown Lands has no jurisdiction over ordinary forest lands, the licenses to cut timber being granted by the Warden, while few State forests exist in the district.

In a recent parliamentary paper (C.-6, of 1905) a report was furnished on the "Timber Industry of New Zealand." From this report it will be seen that there are fifty-one sawmills working in Westland, employing 609 hands, and cutting 37,250,000 ft. of timber—chiefly red, white, and silver pine—per annum. No information, however, is given as to the number of sleeper-getters, nor the approximate quantity of timber thus utilised. In 1904, however, 857,777 silver-pine sleepers were cut. (Year-book, 1904.)