

Both nursery and plantation free employees are paid at the rate of from 7s. to 9s. per day, according to length of service and abilities; whilst from a general return recently drafted it was ascertained that contractors in executing the various works earned an average of slightly over 8s. per day individually. This reveals a decided advance in the rate of wages paid by the Department since the initiation of the present afforestation scheme some fifteen years ago, when tree-planters were available at from 6s. to 7s. per day.

By the inclusion on the staff of one or two men skilled in carpentry, horse-shoeing, blacksmithing, and saddlery-work much time is saved, besides providing steady employment to those who would otherwise be idle through wet weather. As a rule, very little difficulty is experienced in securing the desired number of tree-planters, although during the harvesting and shearing periods specially attractive offers from farmers occasionally induce our employees to temporarily leave the service of the Department, only to find on again making application that the vacancy thus created has been filled.

The arrangement of controlling the technical work at each station may be briefly described as follows: At each plantation a foreman is appointed, and is made responsible to the local Nurseryman in charge for work carried on. By periodical visits to nurseries and plantations, the Superintending Nurseryman (who is also Nurseryman in charge at Tapanui) is able to direct operations and account to the Departmental Under-Secretary for all results obtained.

An assistant Nurseryman, or leading hand, is also retained at each nursery to supervise the work during any temporary absence of the officer in charge. Whilst a foreman may confidently direct tree-planting work with a gang of twenty-five or even thirty skilled men, he could not reasonably be expected to maintain the necessary hold upon a similar-sized inexperienced gang of workers, some of whom, however, speedily become quick adept planters, while others require rather more training.

The Gaoler in charge at Hanmer Springs Camp is responsible to the Justice Department for the welfare of the prisoners; and, on becoming acquainted, through the plantation foreman, with the desires of the Forestry Branch, apportions a warder to each working-gang of from four to ten prisoners, according to the nature of the labour undertaken and the numerical strength of the camp.

Much aid is rendered the plantation foreman by warders, who soon become competent overseers, and, as a rule, willingly assist in keeping the records of work daily performed.

SUMMARY OF COSTS.

In computing the anticipated returns from our afforestation-labour, a vast amount of speculative matter requires to be presented. As milling from private artificially raised forests in the Dominion has been carried on in an extremely limited scale, little or no practical experience has been gained in this direction by officers, and it necessarily follows that in referring to any future yields, &c., we endeavour to judiciously blend our knowledge of tree-culture with the most advanced principles of sylviculture.

This paper is merely designed to illustrate what has already been accomplished by the Department, and space forbids submitting a detailed statement of what revenue might eventually be expected from the outlay. The following information will serve to show at a glance the actual average expenditure now incurred in raising trees, establishing a plantation, and the general upkeep of same for a period extending over ten years. No provision is made for the initial value of the land or buildings, and the fencing item is based on the assumption that an area of about 1,000 acres is being afforested:—

<i>Nursery-work.</i>			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Initial expenses in formation of nursery	..	..	..	0	0	9		
Tree-seed cost	..	..	..	0	2	4		
Seed-sowing	..	..	..	..	0	0	5	
Tending one- and two-year-old seedlings	..	..	..	..	0	0	11	
Lifting and lining out seedlings	..	..	..	..	0	1	10	
Tending lined-out seedlings	..	..	..	..	0	3	4	
Lifting and bundling for plantations	..	..	..	..	0	2	5	
Transport of trees	..	..	..	..	0	0	5	
Tools, implements, repairs, &c.	..	..	..	..	0	0	3	
General maintenance-work	..	..	..	..	0	1	6	
Supervision	..	..	..	..	0	0	4	
Cost of raising 1,000 trees for plantation	..	..	..	..	..	0	14	6
Fencing	..	..	..	..	0	3	2	
Rabbiting and clearing	..	..	..	..	0	5	6	
Pitting for tree-planting	..	..	..	..	0	12	4	
Tree-planting (including distribution of trees)	..	..	..	..	0	13	2	
Formation of roads and fire-breaks	..	..	..	..	0	0	11	
General maintenance for ten years	..	..	..	..	0	12	2	
Tools, implements, repairs, &c.	..	..	..	..	0	1	3	
Supervision	..	..	..	..	0	5	3	
Cost of planting and upkeep of 1,000 trees	..	..	..	..	..	2	13	9
Total raising and establishing cost	..	..	..	..	..	£3	8	3

As about 2,722 trees are usually planted over an acre of ground, it will thus be seen that the total estimated expenditure connected with the creation and subsequent maintenance of an acre of plantation up to ten years old will approximately reach £9 5s. 9d., and the corresponding value for a well-grown plantation of forest trees cannot reasonably be reduced below £15 to £20.