

APPENDIX II.—THE TIMBER INDUSTRY.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKEET, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

DURING the year, owing to the war and the consequent stringency of the money-market, the prolonged briskness experienced in the timber trade for the past number of years has somewhat received a check so far as the local market is concerned. This, however, in the general opinion, is considered to be but of a temporary nature.

The export trade is still considered fairly satisfactory, and large shipments of timber have been made and are on order for Australia and the United Kingdom, and from a report published by a large timber-business firm in London the latter market is stated to be very firm. The constant demand for kahikatea timber is most noticeable, and this again raises the question of the necessity for taking steps to conserve this timber for the future requirements of the Dominion. The decrease of trade has caused many of the mills to shorten time and reduce hands, while in other cases the work has been carried on by shortening time only. It has also been found necessary in some cases to cease bush operations, partly owing to the decrease in the local demand for kauri timber, but principally on account of the increased kauri log supplies obtained towards the latter part of the year through heavy freshes experienced. In the Hauraki Peninsula alone it is estimated that about 14,000 kauri logs were received at the booms, representing approximately 28,000,000 ft. of timber, valued at about £140,000.

Sawn-timber Business.—The high market prices ruling for sawn timber of all kinds are still being maintained, although varied discounts are allowed by the sawmillers to builders and others where it is desirable to reduce the accumulated stocks of the classes of timber of the lower grades unsuitable for export.

During the year the Leyland-O'Brien Timber Company (Limited) have erected in the city a new sawmill, factory, offices, stores, stables, and yards, at a cost of about £20,000. In this mill a new feature has been adopted for the purposes of driving the planing-machines, &c., by the installation of electric motive power generated by the mill engine consuming the mill waste. The Kauri Timber Company have also effected considerable improvements and alterations to their Auckland mill and yards.

Considerable activity has taken place in the Tauranga district in the purchasing of rimu timber, one company that has recently been promoted having cutting-rights over about 252,000,000 ft. of timber. It is the intention of the company to erect a large sawmill at the terminus of the Tauranga-Gisborne Railway. The bulk of the timber owned by this company is adjacent to heavily timbered Crown lands, the principal of which is known as the Maungatotara Block, recently measured and found to contain about 28,000,000 ft. of valuable timber.

Sales of Timber.—The further withholding of timber from sale, as in the past year, is considered desirable, and sales should only be effected when sufficient demand arises to render these necessary. The following are the sales effected in the various kinds of timber during the year ended the 31st March, 1915 :—

—	Kauri.	Rimu.	Kahikatea.	Totara.	Matal.	Miscellane- ous.	Total.	Amount realized.
	Ft.	Ft.	Ft.	Ft.	Ft.	Ft.	Ft.	£ s. d.
Crown lands ..	437,390	76,912	151,254	98,793	31,331	74,981	870,661	895 6 5
State forests ..	10,221,651	521,378	117,932	54,603	..	..	10,915,564	22,367 1 0
Totals ..	10,659,041	598,290	269,186	153,393	31,331	74,981	11,786,225	23,262 7 5

Timber-measuring.—Four parties have been kept constantly engaged measuring timber during the year, in addition to that the Crown Lands Rangers have measured several minor lots urgently applied for within their respective districts.

The following shows the various kinds of timber measured, cost of measuring, and approximate value of same: Kauri, 12,257,127 ft.; rimu, 9,382,080 ft.; kahikatea, 2,213,267 ft.; totara, 10,411,918 ft.; matai, 3,489,643 ft.; miscellaneous, 1,496,206 ft.: total, 39,250,241 ft. Approximate total value, £37,754. Total cost of measuring, £1,187 2s. 7d. Cost per 100 superficial feet, 0.727d.

Fires.—Notwithstanding the exceptionally long dry season, all the Crown forests were free from fires this year with the exception of one instance, when assistance was obtained and the fire extinguished without damage to the standing timber. This satisfactory state is mainly attributed to the prompt action taken by the Department in prosecuting Austrian and other gum-diggers for trespassing in Crown forests. Several kauri forests, however, owned by sawmillers have suffered from fire, which will necessitate the early felling and working of the timber