

REPORT ON AFFORESTATION OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH ISLAND.

(By the Superintending Nurseryman for North Island, Rotorua.)

I have the honour to forward herewith the annual report upon the afforestation work in the North Island.

Although the normal rate of progress has not been maintained, a perusal of this report will show that the results achieved are satisfactory. Owing to causes which are attributable to the war the operations have had to be largely curtailed and considerable difficulty has been experienced in adjusting matters to suit the altered circumstances. When it is realized that a period of three years is required to obtain seed and produce plants fit for sending to the plantations it should be readily understood that the curtailment had necessarily to be a gradual one. The quantity of seed sown during the past two years has been reduced to a bare necessity, but as there were about 10,000,000 young trees in the nursery at the commencement of the war it has been possible to arrange the planting in such a way that no sudden cessation of operations has occurred. It has been increasingly difficult to secure labour, and but for the fact that prison labour was available a serious loss of young trees must have resulted. Under the circumstances the protracting of the planting may be regarded as a good thing, inasmuch that no sudden break in the work has occurred to disorganize the staff. Although the trees raised from seed during the year number only 738,000, the number of trees in the nursery at the 31st March was 5,202,000, or about half of the usual stock in normal times. The present stock includes trees which were in the nursery when the war started, these being held over in pursuance of a policy to plant only to prevent waste. During the year an additional area of 1,918 acres was planted, thus increasing the total area planted in the North Island to 20,159 acres.

PRISON LABOUR.

The results obtained by the employment of prison labour continue to be satisfactory. During the year the value of work performed at the two camps by an average daily number of 34·81 prisoners employed was £3,119 6s. 8d., or an average value per man of £89 12s. 3d. Owing to the completion of the planting of the Whakarewarewa Plantation Reserve and the impossibility of securing further land within easy walking-distance of the prison camp at that plantation it was necessary to shift the prisoners on to a new site. At the end of December, 1916, all the prisoners and the necessary camp equipment were transferred to the Kaingaroa Prison Camp. The amalgamation of the camps was deemed expedient for financial reasons, and further because means were thereby afforded for allowing a number of officers to join the Expeditionary Forces.

The following table summarizes the work done by the prisoners :—

Summary of Prison Labour.

Station.	Year.	Period.	Total Value of Work performed.			Average Daily Number of Men employed during Period.	Average Value of Work per Man.		
		Years.	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Waiotapu Plantation ..	1900-13	12·08	25,274	17	6	30·35	68	18	9
Whakarewarewa Plantation ..	1916-17	0·83	1,001	0	3	12·33	81	3	8
..	1904-17	12·58	12,618	8	9	12·86	78	0	8
Kaingaroa Plains Plantation ..	1916-17	1·00	2,118	6	5	22·48	94	4	8
..	1913-17	4·00	6,692	12	5	17·88	93	11	7

SALE OF TREES TO FARMERS.

The applications received for trees were more numerous than was anticipated, and towards the end of the season a fairly large number had to be refused owing to the stock of trees having become exhausted.

There can be no doubt but that the decision of the Government to provide farmers with trees at a low price has greatly stimulated the interest in planting for the purpose of shelter and future timber-supply. It should be the aim of every farmer to grow his own fencing-timber and fuel, and if the encouragement given by the State will assist towards this end it will have served a most useful purpose.

The articles upon *Eucalypti*-growing from the pen of the Rev. J. H. Simmonds, which appeared in the *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*, contain a valuable record of the author's experience with this useful class of trees, and it is evident from the numerous inquiries received by this Department that the articles mentioned have been widely read, and have greatly encouraged many who have hitherto had disappointing results with the planting of eucalypts. The inquiries for *Eucalypti* plants and seeds showed that the species described in the articles mentioned were chiefly in demand, and steps were therefore taken to produce the kinds likely to be asked for. During the coming year the price-list of trees available for farmers will include ten of the best species of *Eucalypti*, and also *Pinus radiata* and *Cupressus Lawsoniana*. Mossed plants of *Eucalypti* will also be offered, because a number of the species—principally the stringy-bark—are difficult to transplant, and for the further reason that the plants are better able, when mossed, to endure a lengthy journey.