

CANTERBURY.

(W. H. Skinner, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The timber industry has practically ceased so far as Canterbury is concerned. There is one mill which works spasmodically when orders arrive and when the licensee can secure men to work the bush. *Fagus solandri* (entire-leaved beech) is the only timber cut. There are two or three travelling mills cutting *Pinus radiata* and *Eucalyptus* from out of plantations for local requirements, and a few splitters in old workings and burnt forests producing fencing-posts and stakes, otherwise the public are using imported timber for buildings, bridges, wharves, and fencing. Kauri from Auckland, pine from the west coast of the Island and Marlborough, Oregon pine, and jarrah are extensively used for buildings; iron-bark, jarrah, Tasmanian hardwoods for bridges, wharves, &c.

The royalty received from timber cut on State forests was £16 15s. 3d., and from Crown lands nil.

The present market prices for timber are: New Zealand timber—Rimu, unseasoned, 23s. 9d., per 100 superficial feet; dressed weatherboards, 28s.; flooring, 31s. (these prices are approximately 3s. per 100 ft. above the ruling values in 1915); white-pine, according to sizes, 25s. to 29s.; black-pine, 33s. (mostly flooring); totara, 35s. to 40s.; kauri ditches, 40s. 6d.; dressed flooring, 45s. Foreign timbers—Oregon pine, for lengths over 30 ft. and under 40 ft., 31s. 6d.; over 50 ft., 33s. 6d. to 38 ft.: jarrah, under 25 ft., 40s.; 25 ft. to 30 ft., 42s.: Tasmanian *eucalyptus*, stock sizes, 28s. per 100 ft. All the before-mentioned prices are subject to 5-per-cent. reduction to builders and contractors, and a further 2½-per-cent. discount for cash payments.

All the available native timber which can be profitably worked except a little in the reserves and plantations has been exhausted, and until the West Coast Railway is completed supplies for the public will have to be brought oversea.

During recent years only an occasional fire has scorched the fringes of some of the forest reserve in the back country. The front reserves have not suffered any damage recently.

In view of the rapid consumption of kahikatea and tawa for butter and cheese casings, it may be desirable to plant tasteless and rapid-growing timber as substitutes for these vanishing woods. There are large areas of waste and unprofitable land in Canterbury which could be utilized for such a purpose without encroaching on fertile land or putting what is now producing out of action.

OTAGO.

(R. T. Sadd, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The timber industry in Otago has suffered a set-back to some extent through the influence of war conditions. None of the mills has actually stopped working, but, on the other hand, no mill is working to anything like its full capacity. The slackness in the building trade is no doubt accountable for this, and the serious shortage of first-class labour has also an important bearing on the position. The price of timber, following on the formation of a sawmillers' association, has been raised to some extent, but probably the most direct effect of the association was to distribute more equally the orders coming to hand.

There are ten mills of various sizes working in Otago at present, and these are all in what is known as the Catlin's Bush (at the extreme southern end of this land district), which comprises parts of the survey districts of Glenomaru, Catlin's, Woodland, Tautuku, and Rimu. Though the bush being worked might be generally described as mixed, the principal timber is rimu (red-pine). Matai (black-pine), kahikatea (white-pine), and miro are also worked in smaller quantities, but their proportion in the native bush is smaller. To give the output during the year of each class of timber would necessitate a visit to each mill, and would delay this report for some time. It might even then be very difficult to obtain reliable figures from the sawmillers. It may, however, be concluded that the output of rimu is equal to that of all the other timbers put together, and taking that as a basis in conjunction with the output of each mill, the following would closely approximate the yearly production in superficial feet: Rimu, 4,000,000; matai, 1,000,000; kahikatea, 250,000; miro, 1,750,000; totara, 100,000; beeches, 900,000: or a total of 8,000,000 superficial feet.

No fires have taken place in the bush in Otago during the past year. It would be very difficult for a fire to run through any extent of the bush in the Catlin's district because of the wet nature of the climate and soil. Occasionally a burning moss-bank—and some of these continue to smoulder and burn for a considerable time—may destroy a few trees, but such does not extend over any very great area. In the Lakes district much destruction was done by fires in the beech bush in years past, but the native forest there was generally on dry hillsides subject to a dry climate, where fire would carry much more readily.

During the past very little attention has been given by sawmillers to the various beeches. Lately, however, this timber is being more extensively used. The fruit-growers will probably be forced to use it more and more in the future as the supplies of white-pine run short. Beech is somewhat heavier than white-pine, and that seems to be the chief reason why its use in fruit-cases is not more general.

There seems to be an inclination in bush districts to agitate for the immediate cutting-up and disposal for settlement of all bush reserves and unsurveyed bush lands. The result of settlement in virgin bush is to destroy much valuable timber in order to clear the land for grass. In view of the very great value of timber and the prospect of an early shortage of supplies, it would seem to be a great pity to destroy a single tree that can be turned to sawmilling account. To