

A digging "rush" like that at Kumara has scarcely set in before there is one, and now, if I mistake not, two saw-mills on the spot providing for the requirements of the new town, which, if it depended on hand-sawing, would require months or years instead of as now days and weeks to assume quite a habitable and comfortable appearance.

I do not propose to give a description of any individual saw-mills: to do so would serve no good purpose, and the subject is one properly dealt with by itself. The circular saw, with patent feed and latest appliances, is by far the most general in use; and the light and easily-worked pines of New Zealand give little or no trouble in the shape of buckled saws, &c., which forms the chief drawback to the adoption of this description for large logs in other countries. A supply of more or less skilled workmen is also generally available. There are of course breaking-down, frame, and gang saws, but not in general use save in the kauri districts.

I submit the following very incomplete return of the saw-mills at work in the several districts and their out-turn:—

RETURN showing NUMBER of SAW MILLS in OPERATION worked by Steam or Water Power, and their Approximate Out-turn, for Year ending 31st December, 1876.

Provincial District.	No. of Mills.	Approximate Out-turn, super. feet.	REMARKS.
Auckland ... ..	25	46,000,000	
Taranaki ... ..	3	1,049,471	220,000 feet sawn by hand.
Wellington ... ..	10	7,569,954	
Hawke's Bay ... ..	1	561,747	Complete returns not received.
Marlborough ... ..	16	15,465,379	
Nelson ... ..	20	1,583,659	Returns from thirteen mills not received.
Canterbury ... ..	30	15,716,733	35,000 feet sawn by hand.
Westland ... ..	10	6,824,500	100,000 feet sawn by hand.
Otago ... ..	...	...	No returns received.
Southland ... ..	10	8,267,594	Being 4,207,147 feet less than out-turn for year 1875, arising mainly from completion of railways. Twenty saw-mills in district—two on freehold property, eight not working; if all employed, maximum out-turn about 90,000 feet daily.
TOTAL ... ..	125	103,039,037	

It will be observed that, although we have been calling on the Commissioners of Crown Lands for information on this point for the last two months, there is none for Otago; for seven mills only, out of 20, in Nelson; and a very vague return from Hawke's Bay. I was also desirous of exhibiting the maximum out-turn of the mills, provided there was demand, but information on that point is incomplete. We cannot, of course, demand returns from saw-millers working on freehold, but I think the information required might have been obtained with a little trouble; and had I had any idea that the Commissioner of Otago would have found it impossible to furnish it, which I only learned this morning by telegraph, I should have endeavoured to collect it myself through the Rangers and private firms. The out-turn in Otago must be very considerable. Incomplete as the return is, it exhibits a large quantity of sawn material, especially when it is remembered that the past year was undoubtedly one of depression and low prices in the timber trade.

In some localities conversion is still of course executed by hand-sawing in pits, but this is comparatively rare, and daily becoming more so.

The returns of timber sawn in this manner, so far as I have been able to get information, give only 220,000 superficial feet in Taranaki, 35,000 superficial feet in Canterbury, and 100,000 superficial feet in Westland, but, doubtless, the quantities are considerably in excess of those figures.

Of the quantity converted by splitting for fencing, and chopping for firewood, &c., we may be said to know literally nothing, but it must be very large in proportion to the population, if we consider the number of miles of wood fencing in New Zealand, and how often posts have to be renewed.

The firewood supply must also total up to considerable quantities if we take the estimates—for Taranaki, 93,750 tons; Otago, 480,000 tons; and Auckland Town, 25,000 tons—as a guide.

Information on all those points is very much required, and I should hope and expect to know, and be in a position to report, a good deal more about it within a year from the organization of a Forest Department.

#### CONSIDERATION OF PRESENT SYSTEM, ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES, AND ULTIMATE RESULTS.

It appears very necessary to consider the present system under which the forests are treated, I cannot say managed, its advantages, if any, and the probable ultimate results.

I submit an abstract of the reports received from the Commissioners of Crown Lands, and send original reports in manuscript, also a *précis* of the sections of the Waste Lands Acts for the several provincial districts remaining unrepealed which refer to the subject of timber, and contain provisions for its removal from forest lands of the State.