

1885.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

NOTES ON THE BLACK-WATTLE AND THE GOLDEN WATTLE.

(SPECIMEN OF PAMPHLETS FORWARDED TO NATIVE SCHOOLS.)

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Stout, with the Leave of the House.

WATTLES grow in almost any soil, but their growth is most rapid on loose sandy patches, or where the surface has been broken for agricultural or other purposes. If the ground is hard, a plough furrow should be made for the reception of the seed, but on any land the surface of which has been broken, as for instance on old cultivations, the seed might be thinly sprinkled broad-cast. When wattles are six months old, stock may be turned in amongst them without doing injury to the young trees. They are fit for stripping when four years old. At that age each tree thinned out would yield at least 14lb. of bark, while those removed during the fifth, sixth, and seventh years, together with those left till they reach maturity at the end of eight years in all, say 600 per acre, should yield at least 56lb. of bark on the average; 40 trees would thus yield a ton of bark, the value of which would be from £5 to £7 10s. An acre would therefore yield bark to the value of at least £75 during the eight years between the sowing of the seeds and the completion of the stripping of the bark from the mature trees. Planting may be done in autumn or in spring. The outer covering of the seed is very tough; the seed, therefore, should be soaked in hot water until it becomes soft. As the seeds are small, a very slight sprinkling of earth over them is sufficient. The wattle is very hardy, and when once established flourishes under what might be considered very unfavourable conditions.

Besides the returns obtained from the main crop of bark, income could be derived from a wattle plantation in the following ways: Wattle wood is the very best of firewood; it burns with a bright, clear flame, and leaves little or no ash. In Melbourne this wood is always worth £1 per ton. Wattle timber is one of the best for cooper's work. For beef casks it is very useful, as the wood will not stain meat. It is also much prized by cabinetmakers, as it looks very handsome when polished. The wheelwright finds the wood most useful for spokes and shafts. It makes, too, the best of axe- and pick-handles, and is very suitable for moss articles that require to be made of wood, having a tough, durable grain. Top-rails made from wattle leave nothing to be desired: it would be a strong horse or bull that could break down a wattle top-rail. Gum exudes from the tree, and the supply can be increased by puncturing the bark, the quality of which is improved by the process. This gum is worth about £25 per ton in London.

On the whole, if we take into account these subsidiary sources of income, and also the value of the bark obtained from trees taken out at the end of the first four years, we may safely say that a clear return of £80 per acre in eight years could be depended upon.

The advantages of cultivating the wattle are manifest. The yield of cultivated trees is very much larger, pruned trees can be stripped more easily, and the bark produced is of better quality. Also, when the trees are all together in a cultivation, it takes much less time to strip them than it does when they are scattered.

The best descriptions of wattle are *Acacia pycnantha*—the golden or broad-leaved, and *Acacia decurrens*—the black or feather-leaved. Black-wattle gives good bark and is the

hardier of the two, but the golden wattle is by far the most useful for the tanner's purposes; and this is, of course, the main consideration, seeing that it is from the sale of the bark to the tanner that the greatest part of the revenue is to be obtained. The golden wattle will probably thrive in many portions of the North Island, and especially where the soil is sandy. The black-wattle will be likely to succeed nearly everywhere on the coast of both Islands.

As was said in the former paper, it is desirable that teachers should endeavour to disseminate amongst the Natives the knowledge to be gained from these notes, and that, as far as may be, the Natives should take part in the operations necessary for sowing the seeds that are being sent to their districts almost exclusively for their advantage. About three ounces of seed will be sent to each school. As the seeds must be sown where they are to grow, it is expected that the Natives will select suitable pieces of ground for small wattle plantations, and that they will in every district make suitable arrangements for utilizing the chance that is now afforded them of trying an experiment that will, if successful, add to their resources very materially. It is desirable that in every case a small plantation should be made in the school-
glebe, but the seeds are intended mainly for the use of the Natives themselves.

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