

A successful sale of white-pine timber, growing on the Tokatoka Swamp, which has been drained and partly settled, took place in Auckland, when 98,000,000 ft. were disposed of at auction for £24,533, the payment being distributed over twenty-one years. The land is to be cleared systematically, and then handed back to the Land Board for settlement purposes. The conversion of this timber will give a large amount of employment.

The area reserved to date under the Kauri-gum Industry Act is 205,359 acres.

As to the operations carried on at the nurseries and plantations under the control of this department, reference should be made to Chief Forester Matthew's report in Appendix VI., attached hereto, which is very full of information on the subject. There are three principal nurseries—at Eweburn, at Tapanui, and at Rotorua—all of which are making good progress, notwithstanding a bad winter experienced in the South; the stock of trees, shrubs, &c., now in hand being over four millions. As time and other circumstances admit, these trees will be planted out in the plantations already started, and in others to be made, whilst the ornamental plants will be utilised for public gardens, recreation-grounds, sanatoria, &c. During the coming season it is proposed to plant out permanently, in various localities, about 400,000 trees, and also to grow a stock of plants sufficient to afforest about 400 acres per annum with, say, one million trees.

The plantations are all doing well. That on the bare Kaingaroa Plain, along the road from Rotorua towards Galatea, has satisfactorily shown that certain species of exotic trees will do well in this pumiceous soil. It is a matter for consideration if this plantation should not be largely extended for the growth of timber-trees, and others be started on the same plains.

The total revenue from State forests last year was £8,845, and the expenditure amounted to £4,002.

RESERVES, PARKS, SANCTUARIES FOR NATIVE FAUNA, ETC.

The reserves made for various purposes during the year 1899–1900 are summarised as follows (they include only gazetted reserves, and exclude lands merely withheld from sale, &c.):—

	A.	R.	P.
Cemeteries	104	2	7
School-sites	333	2	17
Recreation	1,008	3	3
Plantations	633	1	14
State forests	692,886	1	3
Preservation of native fauna and flora	1,439	0	38
Stock	4,016	0	6
River-protection	1,682	0	0
Miscellaneous	370	2	1
Total	702,474	1	9

The above is a much larger amount than usual, which is due to the large areas set aside as forest reserves, alluded to in the preceding paragraph.

The Tongariro National Park, which was set aside by legislation, is under the administration of a special Board, but no question has as yet arisen necessitating its being called together. The bridle-road made last year has rendered access to the hot springs of Ketetahi and to the mountain-top of Tongariro much easier, advantage of which has been taken by several visitors. Red-deer were turned out at the base of the mountain some two years ago, but it is not known if any increase has taken place; indeed, the buck became so dangerous that it had to be killed, after it had attacked and injured a Maori woman.

The Little Barrier, or Hauturu, Island, situated in Hauraki Gulf, is a reserve for the preservation of the native fauna and flora. The Auckland Institute has the charge of the island. The secretary, Mr. T. F. Cheeseman, has furnished a report, to be found in the Appendix. It will be gathered therefrom that no depredations on the native birds have taken place this last year, and that they are increasing, and a strong hope is experienced that this secluded island may be the means of preserving to the future some specimens of rare birds now extinct on the mainland.

Resolution and the adjacent islands are also reserves for the above purpose. The usual reports from the caretaker, Mr. Henry, will be found in the Appendix.

A vote was taken last session for the purchase of Section 39, 164 acres, Parish of Karangahape, in order to secure to the public some fine kauri groves in a locality easily accessible from Auckland. This has been done, and the land is now Government property.

Last year, 500 acres of land near Waikanae were handed over to trustees as a sanctuary for native and imported game. A small part of the property continues to be utilised as a game-farm, for the breeding of deer, pheasants, &c. The rest of the ground is being enclosed, and will be strictly preserved. Particulars will be found in the report in the Appendix as kindly furnished by the Wellington Acclimatisation Society.

THERMAL SPRINGS, SANATORIA, ETC.

The thermal springs, the property of the colony, are very numerous, and from year to year are attracting an ever-increasing stream of visitors. It is, perhaps, scarcely appreciated by the public generally what this stream of tourists that every year visits the colony to see our scenery and natural wonders means to the people of the colony. Estimates made by people who have opportunities of gauging its volume make the sum annually spent in New Zealand by these people over £100,000 in hard cash, besides the indirect contributions to the Customs revenue. The thermal springs of the country contribute in no small degree to the attractions, either as natural wonders or as health-giving waters, that allure this tourist stream to our shores. We are in the very early stages of this traffic; its future proportions no one can foresee, but it is not at all rash to predict that, ere the first half of the twentieth century shall have passed, our annual visitors