

Although, as before stated, it is not claimed that these figures are absolutely accurate, yet it is believed that they are approximately correct. Constant inspections of forest areas, extending over a decade at least, and the utmost care in estimating the quantity of trees to the acre and the amount of timber in an average tree, combined with the continual checking that ensues when Crown forests are sold to a sawmiller and converted into sawn timber, has shown that in the majority of cases the estimate of the Government officer is as nearly correct as could be expected, and that, although an area may be underestimated, yet, through causes such as the unexpected discovery that standing trees are rotten and unsuitable for milling, that accidental fires often destroy valuable clumps of trees, and that the transport of timber is more difficult than had been anticipated, it is found as a rule that the Government estimate is accepted by the purchaser as being a very fair indication of the timber offered for sale and standing on any particular area. As numerous officers have occasion in the course of years to inspect and report on forest areas, and as the records of each inspection are carefully checked and verified, and seldom vary to any great extent, it can be said with some confidence that, so far as the Department is in a position to judge, the amount of milling-timber stated herein is approximately correct.

This being the case, a comparison of the present estimate with those of past years is of interest as showing to what extent New Zealand is losing its indigenous forests. It is as follows :—

ESTIMATES OF MILLING-TIMBER IN NEW ZEALAND.

Tree.				1905.	1907.	1909.
				Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.
Kauri	..	..	..	1,112,019,000	646,041,094	485,446,989
Rimu	..	..	..	22,334,145,250	17,899,348,364	15,350,474,270
Kahikatea	..	..	..	5,247,025,900	3,914,685,793	2,586,190,763
Totara	..	..	..	1,149,388,050	1,025,481,558	570,561,303
Matai	..	..	..	3,802,848,850	3,823,047,378	3,423,827,164
Birches	..	..	..	4,673,001,000	5,038,406,880	4,394,238,320
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	3,393,146,750	3,448,862,400	6,250,144,623
Totals	..	..	..	41,723,574,800*	35,785,873,467	33,060,883,437

* Quantities in two districts not completely estimated ; probably an addition of 1,500,000,000 sup. ft. necessary.

SAWMILLING.

To show the extent to which these forests are annually being depleted by sawmillers, apart altogether from the recurrent fires and march of settlement, the following table is of interest :—

TABLE C.—SAWMILLS IN OPERATION IN MARCH, 1909.

Land District.				Number.	Hands employed.	Output for Year.	Cutting-capacity per Annum.
						Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.
Auckland	..	..	..	62	2,356	184,145,852	260,324,980
Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	19	481	16,798,482	37,740,000
Taranaki	..	..	..	21*	421	8,945,835	27,620,500
Wellington	..	..	..	88	1,605	73,697,000	126,370,000
Marlborough	..	..	..	13	256	11,408,052	20,700,000
Nelson	..	..	..	83	480	15,090,718	73,200,000
Westland	..	..	..	54	605	48,782,980	106,260,000
Canterbury	..	..	..	8†	50	1,000,000	3,000,000
Otago	..	..	..	13†	160	5,000,000	10,250,000
Southland	..	..	..	62†	1,000	49,000,000	90,000,000
Totals	..	..	..	423	7,414	413,868,919	755,465,480

* Only 18 working. † Estimate only.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS.

In 1886	..	..	..	220	3,890	163,740,546	..
In 1895	..	..	..	299	4,055	191,053,466	..
In 1900	..	..	..	334	6,085	261,583,518	..
In 1905	..	..	..	414	6,912	413,289,742	704,930,600
In 1907	..	..	..	411	7,139	432,031,611	718,940,000

A perusal of the above will reveal the fact that, notwithstanding the distress that has prevailed in the sawmill industry during the past twelve months, and the complaints that have been made against the importation of foreign timber, the output of timber is still very large, whilst more hands have been employed than two years previously. This will doubtless occasion surprise, but, as the statistics have been compiled with much care, and each district has been separately dealt with, it is thought that the figures are fairly reliable, and can be accepted as being practically correct.