

PROBABLE DURATION OF LOCAL SUPPLY.

In the report on "The Timber Industry of New Zealand, 1905," it was estimated that "the supply on hand may be reckoned to last seventy years at most." In a subsequent report on the timber industry in 1907 it was stated "that the supply is not likely to last beyond the seventy years estimated in 1905, and will probably fall short of this period to a considerable extent." In a later report on "The State Nurseries and Plantations, 1908," it was thought that "the present supply of indigenous timber may be reckoned at about fifty years at the existing increasing rate of consumption."

From the more accurate information that is now available, it will be seen that there is ample justification for the diminished estimate of our timber-supply. An impression prevails that, owing to the increasing use of substitutes for timber in the construction of buildings, &c., the future demand may not be so great as is anticipated; but, as the population of this Dominion is steadily increasing, and experience in other countries has shown that, despite the large use of such substitutes, there is a rapidly advancing demand for timber in every branch of industry, we must realise that our timber resources will be taxed to their utmost capacity in a very few years, and that future generations will have to face a serious problem that, up to now, has not been regarded with much concern.

Out of the gross amount of 33,060,883,437 sup. ft. of milling-timber estimated to exist on Crown or alienated land at the present time, it will be noticed that 10,664,382,948 sup. ft. (or nearly one-third) is composed of timber not commercially used to any appreciable extent, such as birches, miro, tawa, rata, kowhai &c. This reduces the immediately available total quantity to 22,416,500,489 sup. ft., and of this a large portion is situated on land too difficult of access to be profitably worked for many years to come. The net quantity of timber now used for commercial purposes, and likely to be available for sawmilling, would therefore amount to about 16,000,000,000 sup. ft.

As the present output of timber is over 400,000,000 sup. ft., it is a fair assumption that the average output for the next generation will be about 450,000,000 sup. ft. If the present estimated supply is divided by this amount, it will be seen that there is only sufficient timber to last the sawmiller for about thirty-five years, and this is without taking into account the inevitable loss that periodically occurs through accidental fires. At the end of twenty or twenty-five years it is expected that the annual output (or, rather, the demand for timber) will average 500,000,000 sup. ft.; but by that time some of the surplus timber that is now difficult of access may be more easily worked, and would be included in the quantity available for sawmilling, whilst no doubt timber such as *Fagus fusca*, miro, and other woods not at present used to any great extent will be in more favour and will be utilised to supplement the decreasing supply.

Taking all these considerations into account, it does not appear an unreasonable assumption that the indigenous forests of New Zealand will not cope with the full demand for sawn timber for a longer period than thirty-five to forty years. It must be remembered that during this period large supplies of foreign timber may be expected to arrive, and thus reduce the strain on our local forests; but, as every country in the world will be feeling the effects of the universal demand, it is not to be expected that such timber can be procured after the next ten or twenty years, save at much higher prices than now are current, and in gradually decreasing quantities.

It is therefore evident that our forest resources must be husbanded with the greatest care, and every precaution must be taken to insure that they are utilised to the greatest possible extent. No unnecessary waste must be permitted, and the occurrence of bush-fires must be scrupulously guarded against. It is only by working on these lines and by systematically taking stock of our resources that we can prevent a future timber-famine and much unnecessary distress and disorganization in the timber trade.

SAWMILLING IN CROWN FORESTS.

It may be of interest to describe briefly the methods by which the Crown forests of New Zealand, containing milling timber available for sawmilling purposes, are dealt with. Such forests comprise:—

- (1.) State forests proclaimed under the State Forests Act of 1885 (now consolidated into the Act of 1908).
- (2.) All other forest or bush standing on unselected Crown lands.

The two classes of forest land are under the same conditions, and administered under practically identical regulations by the Lands Department.

The Minister of Lands is also Commissioner of State Forests, and deals with those forests under the State Forests Act of 1908, and forests on Crown lands under the Land Act, 1908. The Department of Lands administers the Crown forests, the district Commissioners of Crown Lands being also the Conservators of Forests under the State Forests Act, and the Crown Lands Rangers being the Forest Rangers. In 1896 the Afforestation branch of the Department was established, mainly with the object of afforesting the treeless and in some respects waste lands of the colony.

No timber can be felled, removed, or sold without license or permit. Unauthorised possession of timber is finable up to £5, and unauthorised occupation of Crown lands, or felling, entails a fine up to £20, with the alternative of imprisonment up to one month.

After the marketable timber is cleared off the forests, the land is either replanted or disposed of under the usual provisions of the Land Act. In the case of State forests, the reservation is first cancelled.

Disposal of Timber, &c.

Timber and its products are disposed of by—(1) Sawmill license on application; (2) public auction or tender; (3) special license to fell, saw, split, strip bark, &c.