The forests of New Zealand are in part owned by the Crown and in part freehold or Maori land. It is customary in official reports to refer only to the first-named, but this is misleading, since the two latter are equally of national importance, whether as a timber-supply or for climatic purposes. (The maps at the end of this report show the forest areas of the Dominion.)

3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE FORESTS.

Proceeding from the north coast of the North Island to the latitude of Auckland City there is even yet much forest, the greater part more or less "cut out," but still fairly dense; while on the flanks of the higher hills in the west and near the Hokianga and Whangape Estuaries, north and south, is virgin kauri forest. Along the shores of the Northern Wairoa and its affluents is much kahikatea forest, and on the high plateau south of Hokianga there is a great deal of rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*). Forest extends from the Little Barrier Island by way of the Great Barrier to the Thames mountains, and thence almost to Rotorua, nearly meeting the great tree-mass which covers the whole East Cape region, extending thence along the main mountain-chain of the North Island on both sides to Cook Strait. North of Lake Taupo is a fine forest of totara, which extends, more or less broken, westwards, joining west of the volcanic plateau the great Waimarino Forest. This latter is one of the mixed taxad type with abundance of rimu, matai, miro, and totara, but differing in its composition at different altitudes. On Ruapehu on the west and south are extensive beech forests. Much of Taranaki is still forest-clad, with taxad forest on the lower ground and beech on the ridges, except on Mount Egmont, where the latter is absent. Virgin forest still exists in plenty at the head-waters of the Rangitikei.

With regard to the South Island, the whole of the western slopes of the dividing range from north to south up to 3,000 ft. altitude or more, and the coastal plain, are covered with forest, which, except in the settled districts, is virtually virgin. Patches of forest occur in the mountains of north-east Nelson and Marlborough. The Seaward Kaikouras are forest-clad on the east, and the coast ranges to the south have usually their gullies full of trees. The eastern Southern Alps contain many larger or smaller pieces of forest—beech for the most part—but large areas are practically treeless. The Canterbury Plain, Banks Peninsula, the upper river-valleys in many parts of the Southern Alps, and Central Otago are also almost treeless, so far as native species are concerned.* Small patches of forest occur in eastern Otago, but southern Otago contains still large areas (Catlin's, Seaward Bush, Longwood Forest), which join those of the west. Stewart Island is almost all forest up to 1,000 ft. or more. There are many pieces, large and small, in Chatham Island, and the coast-line of the Aucklands, where sheltered, is fringed with low forest.

4. ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE FORESTS.

(*a.*) Timbers.

Ever since the early days of settlement the forests have supplied timber for many purposes. Their great extent, original proximity to centres of population, and excellent timbers have led to their furnishing abundant material for house-building, furniture-making, fencing, mining-timbers, railway-sleepers, and other purposes, and have assisted very materially in the development of the country. But notwithstanding the opening-up of the land by means of roads and railways, the timber which yet remains is not nearly so easy of access as formerly, while great areas, as in southern Westland, are as yet quite too far afield for sawmilling. But settlement frequently precedes the proper opening-up of the country, and in that case forests which would some day yield a valuable return are destroyed.† Cases such as this certainly suggest that very careful consideration should be given before opening up forest lands for purposes of settlement.

Although the New Zealand forests contain more than a hundred species of trees, only about ten are converted in the sawmills at the present time. These are kauri (*Agathis australis*), kahikatea (*Podocarpus dacrydioides*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), matai (*Podocarpus spicatus*), miro‡ (*Podocarpus ferrugineus*), totara (*Podocarpus totara* and *P. Hallii*), silver-pine (*Dacrydium Colensoi*),§ yellow-pine (*D. intermedium*), tooth-leaved beech (*Nothofagus fusca*), the silver-beech (*N. Menziesii*), and a little entire-leaved beech (*N. Solandri*). The uses of these different timbers are too well known to require mention here. It may merely be pointed out that the toothed-leaved and silver beeches are growing in importance for certain classes of furniture, and therefore these forests, hitherto considered of little moment, may become of considerable monetary value.

Many other woods have been used for different purposes, but details are given in the "Forest Flora" and in the body of the present report. Such are the rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*), the puriri (*Vitex lucens*), the kowhai (*Sophora tetraptera*), the northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), the tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*), and others. With the exception of those employed for fencing-posts and for mining, &c., and which are therefore of value even in remote districts, the minor timbers are not generally commercially valuable under present conditions, and the trees are cut down and burned in order to fit the land for grass. That such a procedure is in all cases a wise one or profitable for the Dominion is more than doubtful. Certainly much forest has been felled in the past which might far more profitably have been left standing. Nor can any one say, because a certain tree is not now useful, change of circumstances may not in the future bring it into demand.

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* Banks Peninsula was originally clothed with magnificent forest.

† Forest areas have been taken up, the trees burned, and then the land, not being good enough for farming, has been abandoned.

‡ Miro is frequently sold as rimu.

§ This is frequently known as *Dacrydium westlandicum*, but *D. Colensoi* has many years' priority.