

value of £68 16s. 5d., whilst the combined efforts of the gang were equal to an expenditure of £992 14s. 1d. (details of which appear in the associated report). The total value of tree-planting work done by prison labour in the South Island to date now reaches £5,254 3s. 10d., and the flourishing state of the plantation generally surely proves the excellence of the methods and labour applied.

One of the chief drawbacks in the successful utilization of prison labour in tree-planting over small areas, where extension-work is uncertain, is the impossibility of selecting a central camp from which speedy access to all points of the reserve can be given. The camp at Hanmer Springs has, up to the present, occupied a fairly convenient site; but with the gradual acquirement of ground the workers are compelled to walk almost unreasonable distances, which necessarily interferes with the average costs in pitting and tree-planting.

EDUCATIONAL.

Correspondence Class.

An attempt was made to resume the correspondence class conducted last season; but frequent absence from headquarters, together with increased duties, insisted upon at least a temporary cessation of this useful work. During each visit to the various stations, however, officers are invited to openly debate any question affecting the management generally of their nursery or plantation; and, needless to state, the benefits arising from such interchange of ideas is oft-times considerable.

Specimens of Seeds and Timbers.

Interrogations regarding the appearances and characteristics of seeds and timbers of the various trees have opened up a further field for study, and spare time has been partly devoted to the creation of a miniature museum of timber and seed specimens, which will be at all times at the service of those in need of associated information. A well-represented collection can only be gathered after years of perseverance, but the possession of even the more widely known kinds gives greater scope for practical and otherwise intelligent replies.

Library.

The reference library of forestry literature is availed of repeatedly by officers, who recognize the importance of studying the afforestation problem from its many aspects. Several excellent publications were added to the already lengthy list, but the large amount of outside work involved upon nurserymen and foremen in charge frequently forbids their studying to the extent desired by them.

SAND-PLANTING IN CENTRAL OTAGO.

A series of applications from landowners to the Government for assistance in checking the spread of sand over their affected properties led to a subsequent inspection of Sandy Point, Tarras, by Dr. L. Cockayne and myself. Indications pointed almost conclusively to the natural clearance of sand-particles from the locality through the agency of strong north-westerly winds; but by the concentration of efforts upon the fixation of sand along the terraces, and creating live barriers near the original source and also at intervals along the course of the drift, it was anticipated that the period of direct injury to tenants of adjacent holdings would be shortened. From the outset the presence of rabbits made tree-planting somewhat speculative, notwithstanding provision being made by the formation of wire-netted enclosures. On the other hand, no concern was felt for the safety of unprotected marram-grass; and exceedingly fine results attained in the latter planting demonstrates the needlessness of attempting the extermination of the pest when undertaking this phase of dune-reclamation.

Two employees were occupied for six weeks in carrying out the following works, the total cost of which amounted to £66 9s. 6d.: Lifting and planting 36,850 marram-grass sets; planting 2,200 *Pinus muricata*; planting 750 *Populus fastigiata*; planting 750 *Salix viminalis*; planting 70 various experimental trees; lining out 5,000 *Pinus radiata* seedlings; erecting 90 chains of wire-netting fencing. The marram-grass was planted about 3 ft. 6 in. apart each way, in straight lines along the terrace-faces, each man separating 1,200 sets from the parent plants, and duly planting this number daily.

Promises were extracted from local interested persons to keep the wire-netted enclosure free from rabbits; but a recent inspection revealed the presence of the pest in such strength that many of the trees had been destroyed after success seemed assured. The isolation of the planted area, and consequent inconvenience of officially attending to requirements of such semi-experimental works, make a repetition of expenditure of a similar nature undesirable, unless the services of a reliable honorary caretaker is available.

SELWYN PLANTATION RESERVES.

In accordance with the wishes of the Selwyn Plantation Board, and as directed by the Under-Secretary of Lands, advice was tendered relative to the plantation-extension work throughout Selwyn County; and, although unavoidable circumstances necessitated a somewhat lengthy delay in commencing the season's operations, the anticipated measure of success in planting has been obtained.

With a view to becoming conversant with the Board's requirements, a complete inspection of the reserves was undertaken in December, and a general illustrated report, embodying a policy for future guidance, duly presented. The Board realizes the increased initial expenditure essential in the conversion of the smaller reserves into forests; but the possession of this knowledge has not hindered members from drafting a thoroughly practical programme, which will be carried into effect during the coming season. Another function of the Board is to protect certain reserves from becoming inundated with sand; and in this connection a reclamation scheme of dune-planting, embracing the fixation and final afforestation of the dunes, has been outlined, and every effort will be made to also include this useful work in the year's operations.

DISTRIBUTION OF SURPLUS TREES, AND ADVICE TO PUBLIC BODIES.

Rarely is it possible to estimate with perfect accuracy the number of trees available in nurseries for transportation to our State plantations, and occasionally surplus plants remain after requirements are fulfilled. Requests from public bodies for a limited number of any such stock are usually complied