

I have before pointed out that in regard to kauri-gum New Zealand possesses an absolute and unique monopoly, and that the State is by far the largest shareholder in this monopoly, for the reason that more than half the gum-producing lands still belong to the Crown. It is well known that the gum lands have been in a measure laid waste owing to the methods practised in digging for gum.

Besides having a large interest in this monopoly I am thoroughly convinced that in the gum lands the State possesses an asset of very high value. It is now well established that there is not one product of the kauri-peat swamp which cannot be profitably utilized. But in order to get the best results machinery must be used in all stages in the process of production, saving, cleaning, and in the preparation of the gum for export.

KAURI-GUM EXPORTED.

Up to the 31st March, 1917, the value of kauri-gum exported was £17,919,255, and of this large sum perhaps fifteen millions would represent money expended in labour.

The average quantity exported for the twenty years 1895 to 1914 was 8,493 tons, and the average value £499,613. The following table gives particulars of the export for the last eleven years :—

Particulars of Kauri-gum exported from New Zealand from 1907 to 31st March, 1917, inclusive.

Country to which exported.	1907.		1908.		1909.		1910.		1911.		1912.	
	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£
United States of America	5,171	381,566	2,855	215,291	5,127	375,126	4,149	263,375	3,514	209,216	3,894	232,566
United Kingdom	2,468	162,121	1,799	123,011	2,290	140,235	3,253	151,319	2,378	130,767	2,468	114,640
Germany ..	936	27,473	667	23,841	639	24,111	913	28,016	1,142	34,062	1,053	32,964
Canada ..	53	4,512	21	1,646	24	2,555	66	7,687	9	1,061	40	3,370
Australia ..	42	2,216	155	6,458	149	8,576	66	4,465	75	2,559	39	2,487
Belgium ..	21	821	22	1,572	17	1,770	29	1,899	78	3,990	123	5,088
France ..	9	918	10	875	1	85	19	1,656	75	5,774	37	3,037
Austria-Hungary	..	..	1	104	1	68	124	3,011	131	3,968	159	4,611
Russia ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	1,976	80	1,859	2	184
Netherlands ..	1	114	..	..	..	..	6	133	55	1,206	42	974
Sweden ..	7	147	..	..	2	172	30	720	35	803	35	952
Italy ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	23	779	15	417	15	410
Japan ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	25	1	22
Fiji ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Argentina ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	..	..	..	..
Totals ..	8,708	579,888	5,530	372,798	8,250	552,698	8,693	465,044	7,587	395,707	7,908	401,305

Country to which exported.	1913.		1914.		1915.		1st January to 31st March, 1916.		1st April, 1916, to 31st March, 1917.	
	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£
United States of America	3,995	308,456	4,531	316,200	3,312	222,856	974	60,010	3,158	218,214
United Kingdom ..	3,390	187,547	3,335	148,370	1,172	48,585	336	13,548	1,484	68,378
Germany ..	833	27,880	373	21,193	..	..	..	..	..	..
Canada ..	62	4,618	70	2,114	56	4,550	118	8,972	133	7,718
Australia ..	80	3,933	19	1,720	9	594	5	314	29	1,982
Belgium ..	126	5,120	34	1,519	..	..	..	..	..	..
France ..	45	3,995	42	3,599	5	430	..	..	..	..
Austria-Hungary	112	2,617	14	329	..	..	..	..	..	..
Russia ..	53	1,725	3	225	21	2,118	..	..	50	3,440
Netherlands ..	60	2,495	8	664	..	..	..	..	..	..
Sweden ..	15	420	20	560	..	..	..	..	..	..
Italy ..	9	300	23	855	..	..	..	..	..	..
Japan ..	..	..	1	96	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hong Kong ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	539
Argentina ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals ..	8,780	549,106	8,473	497,444	4,575	279,133	1,433	82,844	4,862	300,271

It will be noticed that the quantity of gum exported for the year 1915 was only 4,575 tons, of the value of £279,133, being a little more than one-half the normal output. A good recovery has taken place for the past financial year, the quantity exported being 4,862 tons, of a value of £300,271.

THE NUMBER OF MEN EMPLOYED IN GUM-DIGGING.

It was estimated by the Royal Commission before referred to that in 1914 there were 6,000 men employed in gum-digging, the majority of whom devoted the greater part of their time to the work. In that year the number of gum-diggers' licenses taken out was 3,538, of which 534 were taken out by aliens. The Commission, explaining the disparity between the number of licenses—viz., 3,538—and their estimate of 6,000 men engaged in gum-digging, said, "It is well known that in the northern districts there are a good many diggers on the Crown lands who do not take out any license, so that the number of licenses issued does not give the actual number of diggers on the Crown lands alone. In addition to the men digging on the Crown lands there are those working on privately owned gum lands the number of whom it is estimated amount to about 3,000." (C.—12, 1914, p. 18.)