

thousands of fencing-droppers have been obtained from the same source. These supplies have been drawn mainly from uprooted trees in these reservations, the result of the terrific north-west gales that from time to time sweep the Canterbury Plains.

No forest-fires have been reported during the year.

As the prices of the various timbers, indigenous and imported, have materially increased of recent years, it may be both interesting and useful for a comparative review to record the present prices in Christchurch for other building-materials: Poilite (asbestos sheeting), in sheets 8 ft. by 4 ft., 13s. 6d. each; corrugated iron, £85 per ton (sheets 5 ft. to 8 ft. by 2 ft.); cement, 5s. 3d. per bag (18 bags to the ton); builders' lime, 4s. 8d. per bag (16 bags to the ton); sand, 7s. per cubic yard; bricks, £3 per thousand.

WESTLAND.

(Thomas Brook, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The output of sawn timber for the twelve months ending 31st March, 1918, is 3,450,000 ft. less than that for the preceding year. The shortage is due principally to the lack of labour, but operations are also hampered by the difficulty of procuring iron rails and other necessary material. There is good reason for satisfaction with the shipping which was available. There were occasions when some inconvenience was caused by all storage-space at the mills being filled, and one or two mills were compelled to cease work for a short period, but the timely arrival of vessels relieved the position before the trouble became acute. Notwithstanding the difficulties created by war conditions, there has been and is now an exceptionally keen demand for timber areas, all accessible supplies being readily taken up. The better prices now obtained are no doubt responsible for this, and, although the cost of production has increased considerably, the industry is now on a better footing than for many years past.

There are forty-three mills in this district. Three are operating on freehold lands only, four have closed down temporarily, and thirty-six are cutting on Crown land and freehold. Two mills of large cutting-capacity are in course of erection. During the year 46,760,100 ft. of sawn timber were cut and marketed, 35,210,700 ft. being obtained from Crown land and 11,549,400 ft. from freehold. This output comprised 8,000,000 ft. of white-pine, 38,360,100 ft. of rimu, and 400,000 ft. of brown-birch (*Fagus fusca*). There is an increasing demand for the latter, principally for mining purposes and bridge-work, and a limited quantity is used in the manufacture of furniture. Silver-pine sleepers are always in good demand, but they are becoming more and more difficult to procure. No other kinds of timber have been used to any appreciable extent.

There are no State forests in Westland, and, as all timber on Crown lands is cut under the regulations made under authority of the Mining Act, the increased royalties under the Land Act and State Forests Act which came into force last year do not apply here.

The total amount received by this Department in rents and royalties is £8,286 19s. 5d., being £7,524 7s. 11d. from national-endowment lands, £600 8s. 7d. from Crown lands, £152 7s. 9d. from education endowments, and £9 15s. 2d. from other endowments. These sums do not include rents and royalties which are deemed to be goldfields revenue in accordance with the provisions of section 148 (a) of the Mining Act, 1908.

At present there is a much improved market for rough timber of short length, and some millers are making the most of the opportunity for reducing waste.

Sales of timber are made under a very wide classification, which varies for each individual market, and the prices vary accordingly, but the following is a fair average for recent sales, f.o.b., Greymouth: Rimu—Clean heart, 18s.; clean, 13s. 6d.; O.B., 9s. 6d. White-pine—Wides (12 in. and over), 15s.; smaller sizes, 8s. 6d. to 10s. 9d.; seconds, 1s. less. The prices for export to Australia are better, and that market has the additional advantage of being able to absorb a large quantity of low-grade timber for which there is little demand in the Dominion.

No timber of commercial value has been destroyed in this district.

Information as to the extent of accessible timber country is very meagre, and guesswork must enter largely into any attempt to estimate the probable duration of supplies. Having now a better knowledge of the district, I believe my last estimate of twenty years is too low, and that thirty years is nearer the mark.

OTAGO.

(Robert T. Sadd, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The timber industry in Otago is in a flourishing condition at present as far as the demand for the output is concerned. The output, though, is somewhat below the possible limit on account of the shortage of labour. With one exception the Otago mills are all working short-handed—in fact, one mill had to close down recently for want of men.

There are ten sawmills working in the district, and the output for the past year was approximately 5,500,000 ft. The total power could put through about double that amount if plenty of labour was available. It is impossible to state with any degree of certainty what is the output of each kind of timber. Red-pine (rimu) is the most prevalent, and therefore occupies the most prominent place in the yearly production. Beech and miro come next in order of quantity, but totara and kahikatea are now very scarce indeed. The following percentages would be the approximate output: Rimu, 40; matai, 10; miro, 20; totara and kahikatea, 1½ each; beech, 27.