

PART I.
—
Parliamentary
Debate, 1868.

unfortunate gentlemen referred to by the honorable member for the Gold Fields as having been defeated in the Provinces. He had made an attempt to arrest the destruction of these forests by procuring the appointment of a bailiff or ranger to look after them, but he was not successful. He was convinced that the gospel of trade was the only thing that would save the forests, and they must trust to that. He did not think, if the freehold was parted with, when the timber became of high value as compared with that to be procured from other sources, that anything that human skill could do would be wanting for their protection; at the same time, there was an enormous danger in this country to the drier kinds of timber. The Natives were the means of spreading fire over the country, and a man stopping to boil his billy often set fire to the whole country without any mischievous intention. It was clear that they could not make any law to apply generally. The sorrow on the West Coast was, not that there was too much wood, but that it would not burn. We might wish to burn Titokowaru at the West Coast, but it would be absolutely impossible to do so. He supposed that any wanton act by which private property was destroyed was punishable by law, provided the mischievous person was solvent, but he did not know whether the honorable gentleman had informed himself on the matter. The Provinces would be wise to sell all the available forests, however much it might go against the grain, whenever a purchaser offered.

Mr. PORTS, in reply, said that he was glad that the matter would be taken up, although the prospect was not very encouraging. Still, the Hon. the Colonial Secretary had said that he would ascertain, as far as possible, from the Provincial authorities, what was the present state of the forests. He would be very glad if those Governments could see their way to making new plantations to replace those which were being so rapidly cleared away; and he thought, as the honorable member for Parnell suggested, that a portion of the fund arising from the sale of bush land might be properly spent in appointing persons to take care of the forests. In many counties in England there were foresters, and he thought they might have something of the same kind here. Another honorable member suggested the advisability of devoting some of the funds arising from bush lands towards the formation of plantations, and he thought that might be attended with very good effect. With regard to the observation of the honorable member for Westland South, he did not think the motion would interfere with the views of the diggers, as it was simply one of inquiry. In addition to the remarks of the honorable member for Christchurch as to the extent of the importation of timber, he might remark that cargoes had been brought into Canterbury direct from Norway.

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary
Debate, 1871.

CANTERBURY FOREST TREES BILL.

(*"Hansard,"* 15th September, 1871.)

Mr. HALL moved the second reading of this Bill, and said that the House would recollect that, during last session, the Joint Committee on Local Industries had recommended that the planting of forest trees in parts of the country void of timber should be encouraged by the Government. The question was a very important one, and it had been considered by the House that it should be taken up in the first instance by the different Provincial Councils. This recommendation had been followed in the Province in which he resided, and the proposals of the Canterbury Council were embodied in the present Bill. It provided that every person planting one acre or more of land with timber trees, in accordance with such regulations as might be made by the Governor in Council, and producing a certificate from the proper officer to that effect, should be entitled thereupon to a free grant of two acres of waste land for every acre planted. He did not anticipate any objection to the principle of the Bill, but it was probable that honorable members would differ as to the best mode of giving effect to it. In that case he would be very happy to discuss any alterations which they might suggest, but he trusted they would not press them so far as to endanger altogether the passing of the Bill. It not unfrequently happened that one honorable member wished so much to improve a measure in one way, and another in another, that it at last got stifled by the extreme interest which members took in it. If the Bill was read a second time it would then be referred to the Waste Lands Committee.

Mr. O'NEILL would support the measure, which he doubted not would receive the approval of the House. In Otago he believed that some such measure had already been put in force, and last session the Committee on Colonial Industries had recommended a similar one. The House was aware that the conservation of forest trees had not been looked to as it should have been. In many parts of the country whole tracts of timber had been burnt down, and the most serious inundations had occurred, caused, as he believed, by the clearing away of the timber. In other countries, where timber had been cleared away recklessly, great droughts had set in, ruining the country and scattering the population, as had often happened in France, where they were now planting trees to avoid a repetition of such occurrences. In some countries it was absolutely law, that whoever cut down a tree should plant one, and sometimes even two, in its place. Certainly the American farmer was compelled to plant trees by an Act of Congress. Many instances might be cited in referring to lands in various parts of the world that were once fertile and flourishing, and which have now become arid wastes by the destruction of their forests; and, on the other hand, the aridity of large tracts had been subdued by the planting of forest trees. They had seen the evil effects of denuding the country of trees in the Province of Wellington, where, on one