

The matter appears to demand careful attention, and an accurate study of the symptoms, in order to arrive at some idea of the cause, whether atmospheric or the result of some particular chemical action of the soil, which is so rich in mineral deposits. The damage done is very great, and financially must represent a very large sum per annum.

Sir James sells the thinnings at 30s. per chord all round, and for small wood, such as tops, loppings, branches, and underwood, he realized an average price of 15s. per chord of 128 cubic feet. Most of this small wood is taken for the manufacture of pyroligneous acid and naptha, after which it is sold as charcoal.

Very little charcoal is now manufactured by the old method; that received from the naptha works is not so good as what is manufactured specially as charcoal, as all the best qualities of the wood are extracted; still it is found cheaper to use a greater quantity, as the manufacturers of the naptha can afford to lower the price for what would otherwise be useless and unprofitable to them.

I have omitted to mention that there are some remarkably fine beech trees in this forest, and that the soil and climate would appear well adapted for an experimental plantation, on the German system, of mixed oak and beech.

The revenue of the forest for 1870-71 was £10,838, and the expenditure £7,878.

Fencing.—Turf banks may be said to constitute the fence of the forest, and Sir James Campbell retains an improved description in the formation of enclosures. His turf banks are $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and faced with stone up to 3 feet from the ground, with a wire running along stakes fixed in the bank, making the whole nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, which is found necessary to exclude ponies and cattle, which manage to get through or over any other description of fence. Quick is planted along the inner side, and trained along the top, which, when fully grown, renders the enclosure quite impervious. This method of enclosing is rather expensive, costing nearly 2s. per running yard, and I must say I prefer Mr. Cumberbatch's hoop-iron fence, although it might not suit Gloucestershire.

Short History of Dean Forest.

The history of the formation and management of this forest so closely resembles that of the New Forest, of which I have already given a description at some length, that I shall only state briefly the leading features in connection with it.

The first legislation with regard to it appears to have been in the reign of Charles the Second, when an Act was passed, authorizing the throwing out of pieces not less than 500 acres in extent, in which the trees were so far grown up as to be free from injury by cattle, and the inclosing and planting an equal quantity of open forest. By another Act in the reign of George the Third (already quoted with reference to the New Forest), further powers as to enclosing and planting were granted as in the New Forest, and further legislation as to the rights of the Crown in the minerals and substrata, and those of the free miners and owners of what are called "gales," has taken place during the present reign. It must be borne in mind that the mining interest is predominant in the Dean Forest, and that the mineral rights form far the most valuable portion of the property. This renders it difficult, if not impossible, to exclude persons from any part of the forest, which is intersected with paths, roads, and even tramways and light railways, leading to the various mines, which are often situated in the middle of an enclosure or plantation. Applications for the sinking of new shafts are referred to the deputy surveyor as regards the value of the timber, its removal, &c.; but, considering the value of the Crown royalty on each mine sunk, it would be inexpedient, and probably fruitless, were he to raise objections to any piece of forest or plantation being given up, unless peculiar circumstances, which might have escaped the notice of the Government mining engineer, justified his doing so.

The number of free miners registered is 1,280, of whom some have since died or left the country, and the number of existing grants of "gales," or rights to minerals, is stated by the return of 1863 to be 500, but that number has probably been greatly exceeded since that date, as numerous mines for coal and iron have been and are being constantly sunk.

The prescriptive or communal rights in the forest, as to cutting of turf, grazing, &c., are nowhere clearly defined as in the register of those entitled to rights of common. It is curious that the Act of Parliament which authorized the enclosure and planting of certain areas, does not direct any inquiry as to the nature of the common rights, nor as to estates or persons entitled to the privilege, in a similar manner as was prescribed for the New Forest. This will probably have to be done sooner or later, although, at present, I am informed that everything is going on smoothly, no encroachments being made by the commoners, and the Crown officers not being over strict as to whether those who exercise rights of pasturage or turbarry are legally entitled to them or not.

Under existing regulations not more than 11,000 acres can be enclosed at any one time for the growth of timber, and Sir James Campbell estimates the area now actually under timber at about 14,500 acres.

HIGH MEADOW WOODS.

This estate is situated in the counties of Gloucester, Monmouth, and Hereford, and extends over 3,400 acres, all either old woods or plantations, and 60 or 80 acres let to tenants either as arable or meadow lands. The property was purchased under the authority of an Act of George the Third, which recites the advantages to be gained by the purchase in quantity of thriving oak growing on the estate, its contiguity to the Forest of Dean, facilities for the transport of timber by water, &c. Some of the woods are particularly fine—Nockalls, Marians, Mailest; and the view from Symond's Rock, of the wooded banks of the Wye, is most gratifying to the forester as well as to the lover of the picturesque.

The estate, as already stated, is under the charge of the deputy surveyor of the Dean Forest, and I do not consider it necessary to enter into further details.

The property is, of course, freehold of the Crown, and there are no common or prescriptive rights.

The revenue derived for 1870-71, was £5,176, and the expenditure only amounted to £1,827, leaving the handsome profit of upwards of £3,000 on as many acres.