

execution of their duty, can control to any practical extent the wasteful destruction of timber. The licensees are allowed to have access to any portion of the forest for which their licenses have been issued, and in many instances fell timber which they never wholly remove. The result is, that all the sound timber is cut down or destroyed in a few years. Young trees as well as matured ones, are cut two and in many instances three feet from the root; the tops, and frequently a large portion of the trunk, are left on the ground to rot, or be consumed by a subsequent fire. Timber that could be profitably used in the construction of a railway bridge, or the most refined piece of architecture, is cut down for fuel or some temporary construction. The whole forest is strewn over with decayed tops and branches of trees, the ignition of which, at a dry season of the year, would envelop the whole in flames, and end in its utter destruction.

It has frequently been suggested that the most advisable way to settle the forest question would be to sell all the timbered lands. The result of adopting such a ruinous course would be, that the whole of the forests in the country would become the property of a few capitalists and speculators, a sudden rise in the price of timber would immediately take place, and the public generally would suffer from such a direct monopoly of the timbered lands of the country. Others would purchase timbered land with a view to clear it for the purpose of raising annual crops.

It is to be regretted that the valuable pine forest in North Harbour and Blueskin district was ever opened for sale or for settlement. Those who settle on land of this description can neither benefit themselves nor the State, seeing that it costs £30 to £40 per acre to render it fit for agricultural purposes. But as a State forest, this valuable bush land could not possibly be more favourably situated, having a harbour and seaport at one end, an important city at the other, and a main trunk road passing through its centre. By railway facilities, the benefits of this forest might be felt at the northern extremity of the Province, where timber is so very scarce. Had it been retained by Government for this purpose, by judicious management it would be most beneficial to the population, and would have quite a different appearance from the ragged and miserable aspect it now presents. In a few years nothing will be seen but decayed timber, and the stumps of fine trees burned on the ground simply to raise a crop of vegetables.

Past experience therefore shows that when bush land is sold, the timber is either wastefully destroyed in clearing the ground for the purpose of raising annual crops, or it is preserved in its natural state, simply with a view to ornament, thus depriving the population in both cases of the use of the timber, which is so essential to settlement in any young country.

The object which ought to be kept in view should be to manage the State forests so that they would be useful and ornamental—profitable to Government and beneficial to the population. To accomplish this—and I speak from experience—it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to frame regulations which would work satisfactorily in all the forests. The situation, the value and quality of the timber of which they consist, are so variable, that rules which would work well in one forest would not be applicable to another. For instance, regulations which would be suitable to a superior pine forest near a harbour, large town, or railway station, could not be applied to another far inland and distant from a population, where carriage would be very expensive, and consequently reduce the value of the forest. Therefore, before they can be properly regulated, the public must be excluded from the timbered lands of the Crown, and a method adopted whereby the person who fells timber will have an interest in using it economically, and the public be supplied through a less extravagant system.

In recommending the adoption of a method of management for the conservation of the native forests of the Province on the principles which I have already mentioned, I would respectfully suggest—1st. That the public be excluded from the Crown forests. 2nd. That the demand for timber be supplied by selling at auction annually, or at any other time that might be deemed expedient or necessary, such quantities of growing timber as the state of the market might require for local or outside consumption.

I need not detail the conditions for regulating the sale of timber. Besides, these would depend in a great measure on local circumstances, such as the value of the timber, the situation of the forest, whether in its natural state or otherwise, &c. It would, however, be necessary in every instance to impose the two following conditions:—1st. That the trees be cut at the surface of the ground. 2nd. That the whole of the timber sold must be removed from the forest within a certain time from date of sale, otherwise such timber to revert to the Government. The former condition should be imposed for carrying on an economical system of management, and the latter for guarding against monopoly.

I have seen a system similar to this, although not the same in detail, carried out most successfully in some of the magnificent pine forests of the north of Scotland, and I feel assured the system I suggest would work admirably here.

To carry on the work successfully, it would be necessary to organize a "Forest Department," having a staff of officials as follows:—1st. A Board of Commissioners, who should have some knowledge of forestry. 2nd. A Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests, to be chairman. 3rd. Resident District Foresters. The Forester should be competent to value the forests within the district assigned to him; ascertain the qualities of the various kinds of timber, strength, and durability; and if a forest were situated near a large area of agricultural land, likely to be taken up for settlement, whether the timber should be reserved for the benefit of the district; direct what portion of a forest should be offered for sale; and mark the trees on the boundary of the sections. It would not be necessary to go to the expense of a systematic survey.