

PART I.
Reports, 1874:
Otago.

I enclose a sketch of the method of clearing I would recommend. The belt coloured red, round the margin of the forest, should be reserved, both for ornament and for sheltering the young growth.

Supposing that the timber on each subdivision was to be sold annually, beginning at No. 1, by the time that clearing operations would have extended to No. 59, the timber on No. 1, if replaced by Scotch pine, blue gum, or natural growth, would be sufficiently matured. The same process of disforestation could then be proceeded with as before, and thus a perpetual supply of timber could be kept up.

If this system of selling the timber in its natural state were adopted, not one single tree or branch would be wasted or destroyed, the public would be supplied at as reasonable a rate as they are at present, and supervision would be simplified.

I would not recommend for this Province the system of Government taking charge of the felling and manufacture of timber. This method might work in small plantations near large cities, but it would be carried out with unprofitable results here. The cost of supervision would exceed the amount derived from the timber. The manufacture of timber can be carried on with more expedition and more economy by private enterprise. It might be advisable, if a superior pine forest were situated near a large population, that the Forester should dispose of the timber by marking and selling the matured trees only; but in every instance the timber should be sold in its natural state in the forest.

I consider it is a hardship to residents in the country, that when a large settlement has taken place in the vicinity of a forest or bush, mainly on account of the convenience of the timber, that the Government should authorize any person or a company of persons, for a trifling fee, to go in and utterly destroy what would be so beneficial to a rising district for years to come, and yet make no efforts to replenish it. Frequently the land, after being cleared of the most valuable timber, is then sold, and the residents are thus even deprived of timber for fuel. All the bush reserves along the seaboard of this Province have been cleared of the useful timber, and, unfortunately, no effort has been made to replace it even by natural growth. All that is necessary for facilitating the growth of the young trees and bringing them to maturity, is simply to give proper attention to thinning at different stages of growth. For instance, if the young manuka bush at Kilmog, were thinned at the present time, the trees would grow rapidly, and soon become valuable to the district. Instead, therefore, of selling bush reserves which have been partially cleared of the native timber, they could be profitably utilized either in rearing young growth or artificial plantations. The native timber now growing on the land would afford excellent shelter for the young trees.

Taking into consideration the timber resources of the country, and making allowances for a large increase of population, I can see no difficulty, by judicious management, to so arrange that the people can be supplied and yet the forests not impoverished. Many evils which are at present practised would require to be remedied, such as felling timber at the improper season; and unless some attention be given to this, the reputation of the native timber will suffer. It has not come within the range of my duties to examine the forests at Tapanui and those in the late Province of Southland; but if the accounts which I have heard, of the superior quality of the timber of which they consist, have not been exaggerated, they may be made of considerable service to the settlement of the people on the land, the supply of the cities and public works with their requirements, and of great pecuniary benefit to the State.

14. Give your opinion on the best way to encourage artificial planting in private and public lands, and the kinds of trees you would recommend, as you have seen in your district.—I cannot see that anything more liberal could be devised than the inducements held out by the General and Provincial Governments, for planting on private lands. A condition might be imposed on persons obtaining leases of education reserves, or agricultural leases, to plant a certain area annually. State plantations could be raised on public lands, either under the Forest Department I have already mentioned, or by taking advantage of the pastoral resources of the country. This could be done by giving a lease for twenty-one years of small runs, say, from 5,000 to 10,000 acres of pastoral land, more or less, as the nature and features of the country would recommend. Absolve the assessment on the land set apart for that purpose, and make it a condition to plant a certain area annually. The area to be planted yearly would have to be determined by the annual value of the land leased, the kinds of trees, the distance apart, and the nature of the soil intended to be planted. The whole estate to be handed back to Government at the expiration of the lease. It would be necessary, for the purpose of carrying on planting operations successfully, and for raising plants at the cheapest possible rate, to set apart planting districts, and establish a nursery as near the centre of each as possible; say one at Oamaru, one at Dunedin, one at Clutha, one at Naseby, or any other place where it might be deemed advisable to carry on planting operations. If the inducements which I have already mentioned for planting on public land were held out, and nurseries established, I have no doubt but the land would be rapidly taken up for the purpose. Establishing nurseries in different parts of the Province would facilitate planting operations both on private and public lands. The public would be able to obtain plants within the district at a more reasonable rate than from private nurserymen at a distance. There is little doubt, therefore, that artificial planting, even on private lands, would be carried out on a much larger scale than at present. I have seen Scotch pines, oaks, poplars, &c., all growing, and in a healthy state, in different parts of the