

Wherever we can obtain a supply of water sufficient to irrigate, there would be no difficulty in forming plantations, the supply being gradually decreased as the trees grow up, until they can do without it, which is exactly the plan pursued in some of our Indian planting operations. The tailings from old workings, or "paddockings," would also be made use of for planting purposes wherever practicable, but for the most part they are too rocky and devoid of soil to give good results.

Our first step here would be the selection of suitable situations, securing a supply of water, and deciding on the description of trees to plant both as regards growth and the special purposes for which the timber is required. The eucalypti will not do in Otago, away from the sea, but conifers exhibit good results, and of these we should probably find the Scotch fir, larch, spruce, and *P. austriaca*, the best on the whole. It is on account of these preliminaries, and not by any means from under-estimating the urgent want of plantations in the Otago gold field district, that I propose commencing operations elsewhere, whilst the preliminary steps in Otago are being taken. The only other planting which has been suggested to me is in Nelson, where Mr. Curtis mentioned some 7,000 acres at Moutere as suitable and available for the purpose; but there appears no immediate necessity for planting in that district, and we cannot be too careful not to attempt too much at the outset, and have no intention of undertaking to plant all the bare land in the colony not otherwise useful. We need not, therefore, consider this matter for the present, and I restrict my proposals for planting by direct Government agency to the localities in the Canterbury, Auckland, and Otago Provincial Districts already referred to.

As regards the encouraging and subsidizing planting by private individuals, the Forest Trees Planting Encouragement Act of 1872 has recently been brought into force throughout the colony. I had no intimation that this was intended, or should certainly have recommended Government to await the submission of this report and take time to consider the subject generally.

I am strongly in favour of encouraging private planting in districts where plantations are necessary for the benefit of the community at large, and where the circumstances are such as to justify a reasonable hope that the planting will confer a real public benefit. In such cases the inducements held out cannot well be too liberal; but I would certainly not advocate the subsidizing from public funds plantations formed, where not absolutely necessary or advisable, for the improvement and ornament of a private property or residence, or the mere gratification of a hobby on the part of an individual. Whilst I admit the generally good and beneficial results that have attended planting under the Act in Canterbury, I know of cases in which it has been abused, or at least in which the circumstances of the case and locality, the description of trees planted, the manner in which the work has been done, and its real object, do not, to my mind, justify a reward from the public purse. Moreover, whilst I do not think the amount of the land order (£4), representing two acres for one, is excessive in that district, I do think that in others—for instance, where land is only £1 per acre—the grant is needlessly large and extravagant. It is, I submit with deference, too much the practice to regard a land order representing so many acres of public land as quite another thing to a payment of an equal sum in public money. This I think is a great mistake, and I submit that the Government have no more right to be wasteful of the former than of the latter public property under their charge. The day will, I think, come ere long, when this is more generally felt and admitted than it appears to have been hitherto or is now.

In harmony with these views I would recommend that the Act may not be made in force throughout the colony, but only in such districts and localities as the Governor may from time to time direct, and that the regulations made under it be modified in the following respects:—

1. The land which it is proposed to plant to be inspected and reported on by a competent officer duly delegated by the Governor, *before* the planting is commenced; and no planting to come under the provisions of the Act, or regulations framed thereon, unless so inspected and passed for planting.

2. The description of trees which it is proposed to plant to be approved of by the officer authorized to certify, and the number to be planted per acre to be prescribed by him.

3. The amount of the land order in no case to exceed the value of two acres of land in the district for each acre planted, and maintained for at least three years to the satisfaction of the officer authorized to certify.

The above would, I think, put a stop to any abuse or undue advantage being taken of the Act, and secure the best results. If the State Forest Department be organized, the officer appointed to inspect and certify should invariably be the Assistant Conservator of Forests or Forest Ranger of the district.

I would further introduce or extend the Otago Regulations of 1874, I think, under which parties could take up waste lands of the Crown for planting, and acquire the freehold of them by doing so satisfactorily under analogous regulations, as to previous inspection and conditions of planting, to those already referred to. I submit a list of trees which I consider the most suitable for planting in the colony, reiterating what I said at Dunedin on the subject—viz., "The special necessities and requirements of each case must always be carefully considered before planting operations are commenced, and, with a climate and conditions so varied as they are in this colony, it would be absurd and misleading to attempt to generalize on this point. The situation, soil, rainfall, purpose, and species should all have careful consideration before any money is spent, even in the formation of a nursery." And again, "Regarding the species most suitable for planting, as with the particular method to be adopted, much must of necessity depend upon the circumstances and locality, and in a general paper like this I might only mislead if I attempted to prescribe. Those who have experience know better than I do what will and will not grow in their own locality, and to those who have not, I would recommend their making special reference, stating the soil, situation, object, &c. Should the State Forest Department be maintained, it will be one of the duties of the local Forest Officers to give such information and assistance when asked. But at present, as I have said, it would be premature on my part to attempt to lay down any general rules. I would, however, certainly not try planting any of the indigenous descriptions, though we may do so in the department as matter of experiment and for guidance."