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CONSERVATION OF NEW ZEALAND FORESTS

(REPORT UPON THE), BY GEORGE S. PERRIN, F.L.S., F.R.G.S., F.R.H.S., LONDON, CONSERVATOR OF STATE FORESTS, VICTORIA, EX-CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TASMANIA, LATE CHIEF FORESTER SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FOREST DEPARTMENT, CORRESPONDING MEMBER ROYAL SOCIETY, TASMANIA, AND MEMBER OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY, VICTORIA.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS report is practically the outcome of the Timber Conference held in Wellington on the 17th July, 1896, and following days. At the close of the Conference the Hon. the Premier of New Zealand, after having obtained the necessary assent of the Premier of Victoria, requested me to visit the forest districts of New Zealand, and advise generally upon the important question of State conservation of forests. Accordingly I left Wellington on the 29th July, and visited the Middle Island, *via* Picton, Blenheim, Havelock, Nelson, Buller Gorge, Westport, Mokihinui, Reefton, Arahura, Greymouth, Jackson's, Kumara, Ross, Hokitika, the Otira Gorge, Christchurch, Dunedin, Lake Wakatipu, Invercargill, and Orepuke in Southland; thence returning to Christchurch, and on to Wellington by steamer, when, after interviews with the Premier, I started for a tour of the North Island on the 14th September *via* Wanganui; thence up the river to Pipiriki, Raetihi, Waimarino, into the forest country at the head of the Wanganui River, near Taumaranui; thence round the volcanic districts Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Tokaanu; thence by central coach-route to Wai-o-uru, to Ohingaiti, and Marton; back to Wanganui, to Napier, and overland to Rotorua, *via* Lake Taupo, Wairakei, Waiotapu, and Tarawera; from Rotorua to Auckland; thence to the kauri-forests at Waitakerei, the Thames, and Coromandel Peninsula, and back to Auckland, sailing thence for Sydney on the 15th October, after exactly three months' inspection of the New Zealand forests.

I regret very much that, owing to the short notice given me to attend the Conference, I was unable (arriving only on the last day of meeting) to take part in the discussion on forest conservation, or share the labours of the committee appointed to deal with this subject, more particularly as I visited New Zealand as delegate for both Victoria and Tasmania.

In this connection, I have to acknowledge the compliment paid me by Sir Edward Braddon in appointing me to represent Tasmania, and thus practically showing his appreciation of my past services to that colony; also to thank Sir George Turner and the Hon. R. W. Best for the necessary leave of absence from my official duties in Victoria, which enabled me to become personally acquainted with the forests of New Zealand, and has led to the compilation of this report. To the Hon. the Premier of New Zealand (Hon. R. J. Seddon) I desire to express my sincere thanks for the facilities given me to inspect the colony thoroughly within the short space of time at my command. I am further indebted to the various officers of the public service for courtesies extended in furtherance of my mission, especially to Amelius Smith, Esq., of the Industries and Commerce Department; S. Percy Smith, Esq., Surveyor-General; and T. Ronayne, Esq., New Zealand Railways; to the Crown Lands Commissioners in both Islands; to the Crown Lands Rangers; to Messrs. Trapp, Brett, and Ross, directors of the Kauri Timber Company, and their energetic manager, Mr. Blair; to the Press of New Zealand also, for kindly notice of my work and antecedents, my special and hearty thanks are due; and to the sawmillers and other gentlemen, whose assistance was given me in a spirit of co-operation which made my task of inquiring into the condition of the New Zealand forests one of love rather than of duty.

I have to apologize for the unavoidable delay which has occurred in the preparation of this report. In consequence of my long absence from my official duties in Victoria my work there had fallen much in arrear, and had to be overtaken without delay. In addition, an unfortunate illness rendered me for some time unable to work at night, and proved a further hindrance in compiling this report.

I have dealt herein superficially with forestry in its many aspects, and trust my report may be the means of resuscitating the work of forest reform so ably inaugurated by Professor Kirk, F.L.S., and others.