

## CANTERBURY.

Department of Lands and Survey,  
District Office, Christchurch, 17th November, 1903.

*Preservation of Native Forests.*

In reply to your circular No. 507, I have to report that the total area of native-forest country in the Land District of Canterbury is 532,000 acres, of which it is estimated that 11,000 acres are on freehold land, scattered about in numberless patches throughout the district.

Of the 521,000 acres of forest on Crown lands no less than 311,368 acres have already been protected by being within formally proclaimed reserves; and the Land Board some time ago recommended the reservation of a further 204,732 acres, chiefly north of the Hurunui, particulars of which—i.e., tracings and descriptions—were forwarded for gazetting under cover of memorandum of the 18th September, 1899; and, now that the Midland Railway area restrictions have been removed, there is nothing to hinder the proclamation.

When this is done only about 4,900 acres, or less than one hundredth part of the whole of the forest lands belonging to the Crown, will be outside the reservations. About half of it is in the vicinity of Oxford, and this will sooner or later be inevitably destroyed by fire, as the bulk of the forest in this particular locality has been in previous years; for, as the Ranger states, there is no possibility of saving it, and consequently there is no advantage in reserving it. The remainder of the area is in widespread isolated patches.

It may be found prudent later on to reserve some of the scattered clumps in some of the small grazing-run leaseholds; but I would like to see them, and judge for myself whether there is sufficient to justify their acquirement. It is possible that the lessees might consent to their exclusion from their leases; in the meantime, I am urging them to protect, instead of destroying, what bush there is in existence on their runs.

Of the 11,000 acres (rough estimate) of forest lands that are in the hands of private individuals, about 4,000 acres are in North and 7,000 acres in South Canterbury. Mr. T. N. Brodrick, District Surveyor, in his report in regard to South Canterbury, says,—“With regard to my opinion as to the desirability of the Government acquiring any part of the above for the purposes named in your letter, from a climatic point of view, or to prevent denudation of the hills, I do not think there would be any need for the Government to buy back the forest. The Crown already possesses reserves in Peel Forest and along the Hunter Range which should in my opinion be jealously protected from destruction, but I do not think it would be wise to acquire more, because I doubt if it could be better protected than it is now by its position in the gullies. I notice a fire has run through the 285-acre Government forest-reserve on the Hook River already, and I fear that much of it will gradually disappear, no matter what is done to preserve it.” In this I quite agree, and similar remarks will apply to the private lands in North Canterbury. From a scenic point of view, however, there are places that it might be well to acquire, provided they could be got at anything like a reasonable price, but here will be the difficulty, I fear. Appended will be found a list by Mr. Brodrick of areas which he thinks might or should be acquired. Not having had time as yet to see for myself, I am unable from personal knowledge to express an opinion just now; later on I may do so.

On the Akaroa Peninsula, more especially at Kaituna, there is still some native bush on private lands; but, from what the Ranger informs me, the price would be likely to be almost prohibitive, as there is value nowadays both in the timber and in the land when cleared.

On the question of the advisableness of the acquisition of private lands, I will report more definitely when I have had an opportunity of seeing the most likely places, and ascertaining what the cost to the Crown would likely be.

Attached will be found schedules of reserves, classed A (climatic) and B (scenic).

The Surveyor-General, Wellington.

THOMAS HUMPHRIES,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

LIST OF FOREST LANDS RECOMMENDED FOR ACQUISITION. (FROM REPORT BY T. N. BRODRICK,  
DISTRICT SURVEYOR.)

*Peel Forest.*—There are about twenty very fine totara-trees on Sections 1347 and 1362, belonging to Mr. Button, standing not far from the road in a grass paddock. He informed me they were to be cut for timber when the price had gone up. If they could be bought and left standing by any arrangement, the timber in the event of their dying to belong to the Crown, I would recommend their purchase. They are very beautiful, and it seems a great pity they should be destroyed.

I would also recommend the purchase of Mr. Miller's land—I think Sections 1414 and 1415—for a park. It is virgin bush. Failing that, Mr. Button's 30 acres of virgin bush would be suitable.

The bush belonging to Mr. Denniston, near the outskirts of Peel Forest, adds greatly to the attractive appearance of the place, but it is so near his homestead that I do not think it is at all likely it will ever be destroyed.

*Governor's Bush, Hermitage.*—So long as Mr. Melville Gray owns the 20 acres of freehold bush he assures me it will never be cut, and if he finds it necessary to sell he promises to let the Government have the first offer of it. I strongly recommend its purchase should it ever be offered for sale. It would be a great shame if the only piece of real bush in the Mackenzie Country was allowed to be destroyed. It is only a mile from the Hermitage, and is a delight to