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DEPARTMENT OF LANDS:
REPORT ON STATE FORESTS.

PART I.—STATE FORESTS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE CONSERVATORS OF STATE FORESTS.

PART II.—STATE FORESTS SET APART FOR AFFORESTATION, UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE CHIEF FORESTER.

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

REPORT ON THE STATE FORESTS BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY FOR LANDS.

Department of Lands, Wellington, 20th June, 1906.

As already foreshadowed in the annual report of the Department upon the lands administration, I have the honour to submit herewith a definite report upon the State forests of New Zealand, as distinct from last year's report on "The Timber Industry of New Zealand," which dealt with the operations of the numerous sawmillers throughout the colony and the utilisation of the milling-timber, both as regards the consumption within the colony and its export outside.

This report refers only to State forests proclaimed as such by the provisions of "The New Zealand State Forest Act, 1885," which must not be confused with the ordinary Crown forests set apart under the authority of "The Land Act, 1892," and under the control of the Land Boards and the Commissioners of Crown Lands.

Judging from articles which have appeared from time to time in the public Press, there appears to be some misapprehension as to the powers of the Government, represented by the Commissioner of State Forests appointed by "The New Zealand State Forests Act, 1885." Section 6 of that Act provides that sums accruing from the management of State forests are to be paid into a separate account of the Consolidated Fund, to be called the "State Forests Account"; and section 7 authorises the Commissioner of State Forests to borrow money for State-forest purposes up to £10,000, but gave no power to enable the cost of the State Forests Department to be defrayed out of the Consolidated Fund in the same way as other Departments of the Government. It therefore became necessary to raise revenue from the disposal of marketable timber out of the State forests by sale on royalty to sawmillers, the sums so acquired being used for the gradual development of a Department whose duties would embrace the work of afforestation and replanting, and whose operations would be confined to districts where the original native growth had disappeared, and, in consequence, the climatic conditions demanded reforestation.

The efforts of this Branch of the Lands Department, under the control of the Chief Forester, were therefore naturally turned, first, to the treeless areas of Central Otago, in the South Island; and, secondly, to the large pumice plains in the interior of the North Island, between Rotorua and Taupo, known as the Kaingaroa and Waitapu plains; followed by the initiation of nurseries and plantations at Hanmer, in the Canterbury District, and similar works at Starborough and Dumgree, in Marlborough. The latest nursery and plantation area is that of Kurow, in North Otago, where the mellowing influence of forest-growths are much needed in that treeless locality.

The yearly expenditure on the above work has risen from £10,334 in the year 1901-2 to nearly £20,000 in 1904-5; and will probably increase to £28,000 in the current twelve months. Since 1896 practically £100,000 has been spent upon reforestation. The revenue from State forests for those periods amounted to £17,000 for 1901-2; £16,000 for 1902-3; £17,000 for 1903-4; £16,000 for 1904-5; £20,000 for 1905-6.

Thus far it has been shown that the Government has not stayed its hand in the matter of providing timber-supplies for future generations, whilst the work of afforestation is going steadily forward, and its progress is both real and systematic. It must also be borne in mind that the men employed as nurserymen and overseers have required special training for their work, and that continuous experiments have had to be made to ascertain the various descriptions of trees most suitable for rearing and planting out, bearing always in mind the varied climatic conditions prevailing in the different parts of the colony. No less than thirty-two million tree-plants have been so raised in the State nurseries from their commencement, and the annual output is now over eight million trees.

Following upon these prefatory remarks are given summaries setting out the details of the gazetted State forests and the State nurseries and plantations.