

and otherwise, owners of plantations to send information as to the names of their trees, their height and girth at 5 ft. from the ground, the nature of the soil in which they grew, and the altitude and climate of the locality.

We also visited certain of the plantations that lay along our route, and made special excursions to such in a few localities, but it is plain that much still remains to be done in this important field of research, and that an exhaustive knowledge of the plantations of New Zealand throughout is a matter of the highest importance to the State. What information we have collected on the above matters is shown in Appendix D.

We have held altogether twelve public sittings, at which we examined eighty-eight witnesses. In addition, we have had many informal conversations with settlers and others interested in one phase or another of the subjects under our consideration, and we have thereby elicited a considerable amount of valuable and suggestive information. One and all have been anxious to give us all the information and assistance that lay in their power; indeed, no trouble has seemed too great, and we have had reluctantly, owing to lack of time, to decline many invitations to visit plantations or pieces of natural forest. We have received many letters and contributions from different sources. For the whole of these we are most grateful, and we beg to accord our hearty thanks. We have also to thank sincerely several gentlemen who have placed their time, services, and knowledge at our disposal. We are expressly indebted to the Rev. Mr. Simmonds, of the Three Kings' College, Auckland, who has written the masterly letter on *Eucalypti* which appears in Appendix C; and Mr. R. Reynolds, of Trecarne, Waikato, who has given us such important evidence as to the remarkable durability of some of his *Eucalypti*, and sent us samples of the wood. It is hardly going too far to state that Mr. Reynolds's Australian gum may prove eventually almost the most important tree introduced into New Zealand. The evidence we have taken is appended. While carefully considering the facts therein recorded, and as far as we know neglecting nothing of importance brought before us, our conclusions are by no means based on such evidence alone. On the contrary, we have been guided in no small measure by our personal experience and observations.

In the compilation of our report we have sought to be as brief as possible, without neglecting any points of importance in an order of reference so extensive.

We have made every effort to carry out the important duties intrusted to us. The limited period allotted to us to undertake a task so great had led to our having had to travel early and late, and at the greatest speed. Nor would this have sufficed had it not been that we were favoured by almost invariably fine weather. Even as it was certain localities would have remained unvisited had we not divided at times into subcommittees, so that several forest-areas far apart could be inspected on the same day.

It is our pleasing duty to record that in all our recommendations there has been complete unanimity.

Passing now to the various questions on which we were instructed to inquire, and which fall naturally under the two leading heads of matters concerning the indigenous forests and those concerning afforestation, we beg to report as follows:—

PART I.—THE INDIGENOUS FORESTS.

1. AS TO THE EXISTING FOREST LANDS, AND WHICH IT IS DESIRABLE TO PERMANENTLY RETAIN UNDER FOREST COVERING FOR THE PURPOSES OF SOIL-PROTECTION AND PREVENTION OF DENUDATION, WATER-CONSERVATION, PREVENTION OF FLOODS, CLIMATIC, SCENIC, OR OTHER NATIONAL BENEFIT.

The above question falls naturally into two sections—the one dealing with climatic and the other with scenic reserves. Since we have found it impossible to visit all the forest lands of the Dominion, or even to afford in certain cases adequate time for a thorough inspection of the areas visited, a good deal of reliance has had to be placed upon departmental reports, the evidence of depart-