

The first systematic planting was commenced in 1728, by Duke James, who caused extensive plantations of larch and spruce, particularly the former, to be formed; and, until a comparatively recent date, these descriptions were mainly planted, without much consideration as to the nature of soil and exposure. The Scotch fir has, however, been largely introduced during the past fifty years, and, as a rule, appears better suited to the soil and climate. Here and there the larch has done very well, and surpasses anything of that description in Strathspey.

*The Nurseries* at Ladywell adjoin Mr. McGregor's house, and cover about four acres. They are all well stocked with young trees, both hard-wood and coniferous. Amongst the former, the sycamores (*Acer pseudo-platanus*) are particularly fine, being grown for avenues, transplanted in the nurseries for several years, and put out 10 and 12 feet in height.

There is another small nursery at Blair, near the castle, in which seedlings for that district are reared.

*Plantations.*—I visited six plantations; they are mostly of small extent. The great difficulty which Mr. McGregor has to contend against is game, particularly rabbits, hares, and fallow deer. The only plans to adopt would be those carried on by Mr. McCorquodale, at Scone, viz., wire netting round the fences, and "cradles" or other protection to each tree; but anything of this sort adds considerably to the expense, and can never be generally adopted in extensive planting operations. The truth of the saying that "you cannot rear both young trees and game at the same time" is fully corroborated in the case of the Duke's estate.

At Blair some 300 acres are now being planted with Scotch fir and larch; and in an old larch plantation, which has been thinned out to about 150 or 200 trees to the acre, the plan of slitting in larch and Scotch fir as a second crop is being tried.

Near Dunkeld, 100 acres of Scotch firs, mixed with a few oaks as standards, planted some years ago, are doing fairly, but have a patchy appearance, owing to their being overrun with game, particularly fallow deer. In another place there are 36 acres of mixed hard-wood and Scotch fir, which is doubly enclosed, and now doing pretty well, but has been twice replanted owing to the devastation caused by game. An adjoining piece of 170 acres has not been planted up, as Mr. McGregor sees little use in doing so unless the rabbits and hares are shot down. In the same block, 22 acres of old wood has been left standing as a screen, and in the hope of natural re-production, which, it is worthy of note, the game do not attack so much as trees planted out from the nurseries; probably because, in the former case, the young trees come up very gradually, and do not attract the attention of their deadly foe, the rabbit, so much as those which are put out 8 or 10 inches high.

In a plantation about twenty years old, behind Mr. McGregor's house, the larches are much affected by disease, both blister and dry rot, and cannot be said to be thriving. The Scotch fir in the same plantation is healthy; the trees average 18 to 20 feet in height.

Close by is a mixed hard-wood and Scotch fir plantation, in which the former, particularly the sycamores, are doing well; but here again, and in a large tract of 350 acres which I saw the same day, the damage done by the game is great.

*Self-sown Fir.*—I only saw one piece of about 10 acres, and Mr. McGregor informs me that it is the only one on the property, excepting a small piece at Strathord.

There is a considerable quantity of self-sown or indigenous birch, which is sold by weight at from 6s. to 10s. per ton, dragging and carting expenses, and, in some cases, the cutting, being borne by the purchaser. The wood is much used for the manufacture of bobbins, and the refuse for charcoal.

*Woods.*—These are mainly larch, for which Duke James and his immediate successors had a great predilection. It has in many cases been planted in unsuitable soil, where the Scotch fir would have done much better, and yielded a much better return. The Duke's idea appears to have been to make use of it for ship-building, after floating down the Tay to Newburgh, and thence to Dundee. I believe only one man-of-war, a frigate called "The Athol," was ever constructed of it, but do not know how it answered.

The disease which has attacked the larch within the last thirty or forty years, the great fall in price (owing to its disuse for ship-building) the introduction of foreign timber in large quantities, and more recently the substitution for many purposes of iron for wood, has falsified all the calculations as to the value of these woods, so much so that what was estimated to be worth £1,000 per acre when mature would not now realize more than £150 to £200.

The disease to which I have alluded does not appear to have existed until within the last thirty or forty years, but it is now very common, in fact universal, and there would appear to be no remedy for it short of cutting out all diseased trees and replanting; even then it is doubtful whether it will not reappear in the new crop. It is said to be atmospheric, and first makes its appearance in a fungus-like growth on the stem of the tree, generally near the axils of the branches, then develops itself into or produces a blister, and eventually a hole or wound, as if a branch had been roughly broken off.

There is a fine larch wood, extending to 3,000 acres, behind and above Dunkeld, and covering the whole of Duchray Hill, to the top of which we ascended (1,600 feet above the sea). This extensive forest has now been cleared out to an average of 100 trees per acre, and those near the base of the hill are very fine and healthy. On the higher slopes the growth is superior, and there appears little doubt that the Scotch fir is much better adapted for such exposed situations. There is a good deal of spruce in the hollows, which does not, as a rule, present a healthy appearance, little regard having in former years been paid to drainage. On the opposite hills a tract of almost equal extent was planted, but it has not done nearly so well.

Above Inver there is a wood, known as Craigvinean, extending over 800 to 1,000 acres, of larch and spruce, with a little Scotch fir, which is the finest I saw on the estate. It has been thinned out to 150 to 200 trees per acre, and a little thinning of "back-going trees" (that is, those which have passed their prime) is now going on.

In the Policy Grounds at Castle Blair there are some very fine specimens of larch trees, over 100 years old, and some of the original Scotch firs planted in 1738. Both descriptions are of great size but of straggling habit, not having been trained as in regular crop. The grounds also contain some fine specimens of the *P. douglasii*, *P. nobilis*, *P. pectinata*, *Cupressus lawsoniana*, *C. torulosa*, &c., and