descriptions at the Seaward Bush in Southland, are excellent, and the same may be said of the breaking-down and converting machinery, which is as a rule the best of its kind produced, and specially adapted to the description of work it has to perform. . . .

"There is, be it understood, great waste—or, more properly speaking, neglect—in utilising the timber, but this clearly results from an abundant and seemingly inexhaustible supply, high rates of labour, and very low rates of sale, which has led to only the best portions of the best trees in the most accessible localities being made use of, and the rest either left standing, or their upper portions and branches left lying on the ground to decay or feed the forest fires.

"Another very important point demands consideration here—viz, the manner in which the timber-trees have been felled and worked at all seasons of the year, the timber being made use of for construction-works without any attempt at seasoning. The results of such a system are everywhere apparent in the warping, contraction, and deterioration of the timber in houses, bridges, wharves, and other buildings, and in furniture. It has done much to give New Zealand timber a bad name, and it should be one of our first aims to put a stop as much as possible to felling and conversion in the spring and summer months, and to induce sawmillers and timber merchants to allow for seasoning before placing the timber on the markets. The advisability of some such measure is admitted on all hands, and the sawmillers on the West Coast have to a certain extent set an example in the right direction, and limit the felling—especially of silver-pine and yellow-pine—to a minimum in the summer months. Whether this is due to their having a considerable export trade, and finding that timber felled in the autumn and winter months fetches better prices, I cannot say; but I firmly believe that any timber merchant possessing the means and determination to sell only timber so felled, and after a certain amount of seasoning, and thus being able to guarantee his timber as of a certain season, &c., would find himself well repaid by a steady demand at enhanced rates.

"The timber trade is at present, as stated in the section devoted to sawmills, in a rather depressed state, especially in Southland, the rates ruling very low indeed, especially in Southland, where pine from the Seaward Bush, delivered at the mill, generally alongside the railway, realises only from 6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. per 100 ft. superficial, leaving scarcely any margin of profit even under the most favourable circumstances to the sawmiller. The reasons generally given for this state of things are general dullness of trade and stagnation in building operations. I am inclined rather to ascribe it to over-competition; the low rates at which forests can be acquired, and the little value set upon them, causing numbers to embark in the timber-trade who once in are bound to go on and keep their mills going, even if they barely make the men's wages by so doing.

"I anticipate a considerable rise in the price of timber throughout New Zealand in the course of the next few years, especially if the measures of conservancy and securing a forest revenue to the State which I am about to propose be introduced. I do not think that this result, if it be gradually brought about, will in any way paralyze or cripple the timber industry, nor will the rise be such as to be severely felt by the consumer, and thus prevent the extension of building.

"The main thing to be guarded against is raising the price to such an extent that it would be found cheaper to import from other colonies, America, or Europe, which would have of necessity a disastrous effect on our trade.

"I see no reason to anticipate any such movement. The timbers of Australia are of an entirely different character to those of New Zealand, and although imported to a certain extent, and I may say a greater extent than I can see any adequate reason for, it is for special purposes."

That these reflections of Captain Walker upon the state of affairs in 1877 applies with equal force in 1896, few people acquainted with the forest will dispute. Matters are much worse now than they were in the former year, and what he has written so forcibly twenty years ago I now reiterate—let him again speak for himself:—

"The forest trees of New Zealand are certainly very impatient of the effects of fire, and at some seasons of the year the bush is exceedingly inflammable, but not more so than in India, where we have grappled with and overcome the difficulty in some of our reserves with satisfactory results. Once place the conservancy of the forests and their management under officers specially responsible for them, and duly authorised by law to prevent waste and damage to the State property in their charge, and I am confident that fires and other evils will gradually decrease, and eventually disappear. . . . The interests of sawmillers are I consider, really identical with our own, that is, with those of a State Forest Department. . . . A continuance of the present system of waste, burning, and devastation of forests must result in their deterioration and eventual disappearance. Viewed from a purely conservancy point of view, it is, of course, suicidal: and even where it is not proposed to retain or reproduce the timber, but make the land available for settlement or pasturage, it is, to say the least of it, open to objection from a financial point of view. . . .

"The history of *reboisement* in France is most instructive, and peculiarly applicable to the circumstances of New Zealand, where the tendency is to clear the hillsides in order to provide grazing for sheep and cattle. This is exactly what was done in France, with the result that the vegetable soils disappeared, and evils calling for remedial measures, though varying in the degree of importance attached to them, have been the destruction of the mountains, the covering up of fertile lands in the valleys with sterile detritus, and the inundation of the plains beyond by the super-abundant waters."

"This is exactly what I fear may be the case in New Zealand if steep hillsides, such as those of the Buller and its tributaries, are cleared of forests. The timber is not of much value on the upper portions, so that we should not conserve it for that, but I would on no account have it cleared."

These extracts serve to show that the same waste, carelessness, and neglect of the forests is as rife to-day as when Captain Walker penned the above. Could that gentleman now see the forests and Buller Gorge as I saw them in 1896, he would gaze with astonishment at the devastation