

local trade in Australia is in many instances a positive disgrace, and is a pregnant cause of trouble in house-building and construction works.

A good deal of indignation was caused among the sawmillers by the statement that the timber-supply was not so plentiful as it had been made out to be by the committee appointed for that particular section, of which Mr. Bell was the chairman. Well, I was prepared to accept the disclaimer in all good faith; but after visiting the West Coast and other forests I have formed the conclusion detailed elsewhere, though I qualify such conclusion by giving a longer date than the committee, and by supposing that fire and settlement will still be a huge factor in the destruction of the forests. I do not deny that large areas of forest-land still exist, nor do I seek to decry the quality of the timber. No doubt I passed by large areas of forest, and unseen by me, but nevertheless the waste and ruin I witnessed in the forests now worked gave me much food for reflection, and material for founding the opinion I have so freely expressed in the report. In short, I disagree with the conclusion of those gentlemen who seemed to think that the forests of New Zealand are practically inexhaustible, and at the same time I do most heartily agree with their views on the protection from fire and settlement, as expressed at the Conference.

The admirable paper read by Mr. Mathews at the Conference is worthy of praise, and I agree with the statements and deductions made therein. The writers of other papers deserve credit for the various views given therein.

NOTES UPON THE FORESTS OF AMERICA.

In connection with the figures and extracts dealing with European forest statistics, it will be instructive to learn how the forests of America are treated, and to what extent they are protected. From a report for 1892, issued at Washington, by the Chief of the Division of Forestry, B. E. Fernow, Esq., we learn:—

“In consequence of the various destructive agencies, not only has the forest area dwindled down to less than 480,000,000 acres, but a large part of this area believed to be under forest is in a more or less devastated condition. If, therefore, the map of the State of Massachusetts by the United States Geological Survey, for instance, exhibits over 50 per cent. of the area of the State in forest, this has but little meaning for the question of future supplies, for fully one-third or more of the so-called forest is useless brush and waste land, which will not be productive in this or the next generation.

“An exact census of the forest area in existence has never been made. The figures given have been approximations from various sources of information, more or less reliable, and hence much larger areas have been claimed to be in existence by those who deny the necessity of a conservative forest policy. It will, however, be found that, deducting the so-called treeless area—which does not contain forests of extent or value—the farm area not in forest, and as large a percentage of waste land as is reported in farms from the total area of the United States, the area that could possibly be in forest will not exceed 850,000,000 acres. Any one familiar with the condition of the culled-over and burnt-over forest areas, and, at the same time cognisant of what the lumber-producing capacity of a growing woodland may be, will readily admit that 50 per cent. of this area may, to all intents and purposes of lumber production for the next generation at least, be considered unavailable. It may, then, be safely assumed that we have hardly 25 per cent. of our area in producing forest—a proportion that is reported for Germany; but our drafts for material exceed the consumption of Germany at least eight-fold.

“The ownership of the forest area is for the most part in the hands of private individuals. The policy for the single States or the United States to own lands, except for building, &c., and for eventual disposal, has not been germane to the spirit of the institutions of this country. Schools lands, indemnity lands, swamp-lands, and other lands which the General Government has given to the States, or which they have owned otherwise, have never been held for an income, except by their sale. The State of New York seems to be the first to make an exception, having set aside an area of nearly 1,000,000 acres in the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains as a forest reserve; and a movement to extend this reserve over a larger area—3,000,000 acres, more or less—is strongly advocated. The administration of this reserve is, however, confined to protection without utilization, and forest management in any sense does not as yet exist, although the staff of the three Forest Commissioners includes, besides a Secretary with assistants, a Superintendent with assistant, inspectors, and surveyor, and eleven foresters, who constitute, in fact, however, only a police force.

“The General Government has also within the last two years been committed to a change of policy by the enactment of a law permitting the reservation of forest areas for permanent ownership by the Government. This policy will be discussed further on. Before this enactment several areas of public lands, besides the Indian reservations, had been reserved as military, timber, and water reservations, and as natural parks—the former for temporary occupancy by troops, to supply them with fuel; the latter for permanent ownership on account of natural wonders and scenery, for the benefit of pleasure-seekers, or for health resorts, but not with the express purpose of preserving and improving forest conditions. These parks are at present: Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 2,288,000 acres; Yosemite National Park, California, 960,000 acres; Sequoia National Park, California, 100,000 acres; General U. S. Grant National Park, 3,000 acres; Hot Springs Reservation, Arkansas, 2,529 acres. The area of the permanent forest reservations proclaimed by the President of the United States will, before the close of the present administration, amount to nearly 13,000,000 acres; while the total area of public lands, classed as timber lands, may be in the neighbourhood of 50,000,000 acres, the last estimate made in 1883 making the area 73,000,000 acres.

“There are three classes of private forest-owners: The farmers, who have wood-lots connected with their farms; the speculators, among whom may be included all those who hold forest property temporarily for the purpose of selling it to obtain the ‘unearned increment’ from; the third-class—