

PREFACE.

IMPORTANCE OF SUBJECT.

THE necessity of dealing with forestry upon businesslike and comprehensive lines is becoming increasingly more important, and State recognition of the matter is now practically universal. Owing to the growing demand for sawn timber, and the use of wood in new branches of industry, the gradual diminution of the world's forest-supply is attracting serious attention. In some countries of the Old World—as, for instance, France and Germany—this danger has been grappled with for many generations, and in both those countries the State plantations are now showing gratifying results and testifying eloquently to the foresight and enterprise of bygone statesmen. In the New World, including the Americas and Australasia, it has only recently been recognised that what was thought to be a supply of timber sufficient for all possible requirements for future generations is barely adequate to meet current demands and the probable requirements of the ensuing half-century. Vast as the indigenous forests have been in these new territories, and scarce as their populations were, until recent times, in comparison with the huge areas of virgin land waiting to be settled, yet the steady influx of new inhabitants from European countries, and the unexampled increase in the use of wood for building and other commercial purposes, coupled with the enormous destruction of forests by fires, has caused the Governments of every State in the New World to take into earnest consideration the problem of meeting the future timber-supply, and guarding against a possible timber-famine. The formation of a Forestry Bureau in the United States, under the guidance of Mr. Gifford Pinchot, one of the foremost authorities on timber matters, has demonstrated how pressing is the need for forest-conservation and reafforestation in that immense republic; and, turning to our southern lands, the creation of Forest Departments in most of the States of Australia affords convincing proof that the same pinch is beginning to be felt nearer home.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION.

It is a matter for distinct congratulation that the Government of this Dominion has recognised the growing need for afforestation and regulation of timber-cutting for some time past. The New Zealand State Forests Act of 1885 was a commendable attempt to meet the difficulty by insuring that the sale of timber from Crown lands and State forests should proceed under careful supervision and without undue waste; and when (in spite of judicious attempts to conserve the timber-supply by extensive reservations of forest lands) it was found that the demand was increasing too rapidly to be coped with by these methods alone, a modest system of State nurseries and plantations was inaugurated in 1896, and, as its operations proved increasingly successful, they have been gradually expanded as funds warranted, and give every reason to believe that the artificial forests of the State will eventually yield a highly satisfactory supply of timber suitable for many of the requirements of the building and allied trades.

PRESENT POSITION.

The present position of the timber supply and demand in New Zealand is as follows:—

According to the details given in Table A, on page 7, it will be seen that, out of a total area of 66,568,876 acres in New Zealand, about 17,074,003 acres are still covered with forest. In 1886, the forest-area was estimated at 21,196,966 acres (*vide* "Native Forests and the State of the Timber Industry," by T. Kirk, F.L.S.). Of the present area, it is estimated that there is growing within the Crown and State forests, and on private and native freehold lands, a gross total of about 33,000,000,000 sup. ft. of timber that is, or may eventually prove, suitable for commercial requirements. The output of sawn timber for the past year amounted to 413,868,919 sup. ft., and, as indicated in the General Remarks in Part I of this report, will probably advance to an average of from 450,000,000 sup. ft. to 500,000,000 sup. ft. for the next fifty years, thereby giving an anticipated period of about forty years within which our indigenous forests can meet the full demand. As against this, the stock of trees in the State nurseries and plantations amounted to 47,835,217 at the 31st March, 1909, of which no less than 6,231,479 had been planted during the preceding twelve months. The total area of land planted with forest-trees at same date was 12,175 acres, of which 2,709 acres had been planted during the previous year.