

NEW ZEALAND'S DWINDLING FORESTS.

A COMPARISON WITH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

It will surprise many New Zealanders to learn that the area of the remnants of their forests, as stated in a percentage of the total land surface, compares very unfavourably with the figures of several countries of Europe.

The area of controlled forests in Finland amounts to 60 per cent. of the total area of the country, that of Sweden 50 per cent., Germany 25 per cent., France 19 per cent.

New Zealand's per centage is 11.7, much of which is not permanently reserved, or 19 per cent. including scenic reserves and other such reservations. The Auckland district, containing about a third of the Dominion's population, has only 6 per cent. of its total area under forests. Let us remember that it is an accepted fact that no nation can live in prosperity without a sufficiency of forests.

In his report for the past year the Director of the State Forest Service makes some terse comments on the importance of protection forests. There is a passage which should be well heeded by New Zealand's people:—

"Pending the completion of the forest inventory, work on which has unfortunately been delayed for reasons of economy, it is difficult to quote the total area of protection forests under State control in the Dominion, but it is probably in the vicinity of 5,000,000 acres. It has been emphasized in many previous reports, but cannot be stressed too often, that, although they have little or no commercial value, the question of control, protection, and management of these protection forests is of the greatest importance. It is realized that expenditure on this work will not return any direct revenue to the State, but by applying proper forest treatment these lands can be made to exercise a wonderful influence on the productivity of the lower-lying farming country; to do this, however, it is a *sine qua non* that the forest-cover should be unmolested and held inviolate to perform the functions ordained by nature. Failure to observe this natural law has resulted in great national loss in many parts of the Old World and the American Continent. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the serious floods, land-erosions, and river-siltings which periodically occur in our own Dominion are primarily attributable to the same cause.

"It is equally important that the forest-floor should not be disturbed in order to properly regulate stream-flow and prevent rapid run-off. On the question of protection forests the following extract from the annual report of the United States Forest