

LAND UTILISATION

By E. V. Sanderson.

It is all very well to be wise after the event, but are we even yet in New Zealand able to say that we have become wise so far as the effective use of our various types of land is concerned?

Had super-minded people been the first white men and women to land on these shores, they would, in the first place, have taken steps to put the land to those uses to which the many different areas were suited according to the nature of the soil, topography, local climate, etc., etc. Considering, however, the almost unbelievable difficulties and obstacles which the earliest pioneers had to contend with, they can well be forgiven their failure to take steps to see that New Zealand was occupied in a systematic and practical manner. The early settlers had little or no knowledge of the strange problems, different, and in cases in opposition to those found in any other country. Therefore, the first attempts at colonisation were bound to be of a very haphazard nature. Later, however, it became apparent to some that we had real problems which might, if not fully guarded against, undo all our efforts and make this land of little use for the purposes of the white man.

Sir James Hector warned us of the menace of erosion, Dr. Leonard Cockayne, of the plant-eating animal danger to our forests. Others gave similar warnings but little or no heed was taken. Now the Forest and Bird Protection Society has arisen to put the findings of such savants into easily understood terms, and the public, after much educating, are beginning to see that we are up against real live problems that must be combated.

Much hardy pioneer effort, incurring much public expenditure, has gone for naught, because many of such settlers have been allowed to occupy and clear land which would not, and could not, as farm lands support them and their families. In some cases these settlers were compelled under the conditions of settlement to fell the best crop the land could ever produce. Other land which is merely of temporary usable value for pastoral or agricultural purposes has been occupied, while its real value

was as we found it in forests. The vicinity of every district can furnish examples of land utilisation for wrong purposes.

Surely then, we should be wise after the event and straight away set about putting our house in order by demarcating our lands and endeavouring to put the various types to those uses for which they are best adapted. The undertaking is vast and complex, but urgent. Great areas will have to be abandoned because it is quite beyond our means to reforest them, but if left more or less alone they will, in the absence of fire and grazing animals, themselves start to regenerate the natural forest. In the meantime many such areas could return some revenue as game resorts had we an efficient conservation system. We could then perhaps be more worthy of the reputation given us by those interested in the tourist traffic of being "the sportsman's paradise," which at the present we are far removed from with the exception of deer-hunting.

Other lands situated near markets could be reforested for commercial purposes, but to do this we require the establishment of modern forestry practice and far-sighted statesmanship, not the mere plundering of the national capital for the benefit of individuals at the expense of the community present and future.

Great will be the honour for that statesman who can arise and put the utilisation of our lands under a proper economic system. No monument which Man can erect will be worthy of such a statesman. The Forest and Bird Protection Society is here with us to put its weight towards helping the work, and many other organisations and people, with the well-being of the nation at heart are willing to pull an oar in the effort to remedy such evils of past maladministration. If the man with the necessary courage and foresight is here backing will not be wanting.

Queen Charlotte Sounds—Land wrongly used for pastoral purposes instead of scenic.

