

No. 7.

The DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, Taranaki, to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, New Plymouth, 23rd February, 1869.

I have the honor to enclose herewith a reply to the questions contained in your circular No. 32, of the 27th November last, with regard to the condition of the Forests in this Province. Those questions appear to be more applicable to parts of the Colony where the forest land being of comparatively small extent there is immediate need of interference to prevent its destruction, which cannot be said to be the case in this Province. I presume, however, for the sake of completeness, it is desirable that some information on the matter should be furnished.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS KELLY,

Deputy Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

 Enclosure in No. 7.

First Series of Questions.

1 and 2. As far as has been ascertained, the whole of the Province of Taranaki, with the exception of a belt averaging say four miles wide along the coast, the upper part of Mount Egmont and the Pouakai Ranges, and some few swamps and Native clearings in the interior, is forest land. About 59,000 acres of such land is included in the blocks acquired by purchase.

3. About 11,000 acres of forest land out of the purchased blocks remain as Crown land.

4. There has not been any destruction of forest on Crown lands. On freehold land, the object of the holder is to destroy the forest as speedily as possible, to lay the land down in grass, with the exception of a small piece for shelter of his homestead.

5. The cause of the destruction of the forest in this district is by felling and burning it in the first instance. The undergrowth of the surrounding forest is soon destroyed by the cattle of the settlers; this has the effect of letting in the sun to the trunks of the large trees, which soon shrivels up the bark and thus the tree soon dies. On the occasion of accidental fires in the back clearings, the fire is driven by the wind from stump to stump and from log to log, and sweeps through the belts of standing bush, particularly when the undergrowth is destroyed; sparks of fire are also carried to the tops of pines and ratas, where there is always plenty of dry decayed vegetable matter ready to ignite, and thus the fire spreads. This will be a source of great danger when the back clearings are more extensive, for on the occasion of a fire occurring with a strong S.E. wind blowing, it soon spreads over the bush districts, and as the country is covered with smoke it is almost impossible to arrest its progress.

6. No such damage which may be imputed to the destruction of forest has yet occurred in this Province.

Second Series of Questions.

1. I consider that it is absolutely necessary that large reserves of forests should be made. I would suggest that the whole of the forest within a radius of at least ten miles from the top of Mount Egmont, should be so reserved. Also, that large reserves be made on the sides of the lower ranges, and, where practicable, on other places which would not interfere with the opening of the country, where such is desirable.

2. It has not been the custom to grant bush licenses in this Province, as there has always been a superabundance of timber land in the hands of private individuals; but if reserves were made as I have suggested, it would be necessary to make regulations as regards the stripping of towai trees of their bark. The sides of the mountain ranges are covered with large numbers of these trees, and as the demand for the bark increases, the forest would be liable to be destroyed for the purpose of securing it. But the time is probably distant when such regulations would be required.

 No. 8.

His Honor W. ROLLESTON to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office,

Christchurch, Canterbury, 19th April, 1869.

I have the honor to forward herewith copies of reports which have been furnished to me from the Chief Surveyor, and from Mr. Townsend, district surveyor, upon the forests of this Province.

I have, &c.,

W. ROLLESTON,

Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

 Enclosure in No. 8.

The Forests of Canterbury.

1. THE total area covered with forest within the Province of Canterbury I estimate to be about 270,000 acres, of which 46,757 are freehold.

The forests on Banks' Peninsula contains about 64,000 acres, of which 33,000 acres are freehold. The sheltered valleys and rich lands are covered with a great variety of useful timber trees, consisting chiefly of *Podocarpus Totara*, *P. Dacrydioides*, *P. Spicata*, *Eleocarpus dentatus*, and *Manuka*. The sides and summits of the mountain ranges are covered in some cases with scrub, and in others with forest trees of considerable size.