

1880.

NEW ZEALAND.

SUGGESTIONS ON FORESTS IN NEW ZEALAND

(PAPERS RELATING TO).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. A. LECOY to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th April, 1880.

In accordance with the arrangement which I made with you, I have now the honor to transmit "Suggestions on Forests in the Colony of New Zealand," which I shall be obliged by your submitting to Parliament during its next session.

I have, &c.,

A. LECOY.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands, Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 1.

SUGGESTIONS ON FORESTS IN THE COLONY OF NEW ZEALAND.

PREFATORY OBSERVATIONS.

THE establishment of State forests has for its object not only to provide for a regular and permanent supply of timber and wood, but also to maintain the protection given by Nature against the disturbance of the climatic equilibrium, the occurrence of droughts, the disastrous effects of flood-waters, &c., experience having shown the preventive or modifying influence, as the case may be, of extensive forest areas. Furthermore, that the conservation of these woodlands, intended for the general interest, should not be intrusted to the management of private persons as purchasers of them; because forests, considered from a financial point of view, being almost the least remunerative of all land cultivations (as private property), the apparent interest of the purchaser would be to realize the value of the timber, and to convert the forest land into agricultural or pastoral, thereby selfishly disregarding the beneficial effects which the existence of the forest afforded to the whole district.

In the hands of Governments, forests represent a national interest of the highest importance, not only because of the financial resources which the annual fellings afford, as the direct revenue derivable from the property, but, above all, on account of the salubrious and fertilizing effects which forests bestow on the surrounding country, thus favouring the progress of agriculture and the general development of national wealth.

It is only under such prosperous conditions, it may be remarked, that freehold lands can well afford to contribute towards the public expenditure, and thus will spring up (*i.e.*, by the conservation of forests) other sources of State revenue. Again, the great mass of the ever-growing forest, notwithstanding the annual thinning out of it, may be assimilated, in its effects, to a public insurance-fund sunk for the purpose of securing the safety of arable lands from contingent damages by floods, &c., thereby assuring the stability of public revenues.

The material importance of these indirect advantages as resulting from the proper management of forests, especially when situated in mountainous regions, may be demonstrated by the observation of events of recent occurrence in France. In that country, as the result of injudicious alienations of State forests and the further conversion of the forest land into pasturages, originated periodical inundations, and the ultimate ruin of agriculture in no less than four "départements," the rural population of which are now emigrating to America.*

* "Etudes sur l'Aménagement des Forêts," p. 489, par L. Tassy, Conservateur des Forêts. Rothschild, publisher, Paris.