

Now, the full and detailed reports of the Superintending Nurserymen will show how carefully and systematically the preliminary work is carried out, and how advantage is taken of the knowledge gained abroad to carry on work in this far-off country under as favourable conditions as possible: but after all that is possible has been accomplished in this respect, another danger crops up and needs the most skilful attention to enable its evil effects to be checked and counteracted.

In almost every country in the world where forestry operations have been carried on it has been found that sooner or later forms of plant-disease inevitably make their appearance. In some instances great havoc has been worked, whilst of late years modern methods and discoveries have largely diminished the attendant dangers. It is of the utmost importance that in this fruitful land, where the conditions are so eminently favourable to plant-growth, that the equally favourable conditions to the formation and dissemination of plant-disease should be continuously and carefully watched, so that the smallest outbreak of any kind of disease may at once be notified, and every possible precaution taken to deal with it at the very commencement of its attack. Up to the present the indications of disease have been very small, but in order that the scrutiny of the officers of the Forestry Branch may be directed into the proper channels, and that the best advice may be available on this point, a special examination has recently been made by the Biologist of the Department of Agriculture, who has supplemented the constant supervision of the officers with a personal inspection in their company, and his report upon the health of the plants and their comparative freedom from disease will be found in Appendix D attached to this report.

As time goes on, and the trees attain a greater age, whilst the area under plantation annually increases, such inspections will be made at frequent intervals; and by a rigid scrutiny of all plants apparently suffering from any disease or trouble, it is hoped that disease may be kept well in check, and never permitted to spread beyond a confined radius where it originates.

Seeing that the plantations are still young, and that their area only extends to about 15,000 acres, it has been possible to carry on operations with a somewhat inexpensive staff of officers, and no great expenditure in the way of administration has yet been necessary. It has been absolutely necessary to employ the funds at the disposal of the Forestry Branch to their fullest extent in the direction of tree-planting, and consequently a rigid check has been kept upon all outlay that was not immediately and directly needed for present operations. In the future it will undoubtedly be necessary to increase the staff and provide for duties and needs that have as yet hardly entered into practical consideration. Even under these conditions, however, it is essential that no lavish expenditure shall be entered upon, but that the best possible results shall be attained from every new departure. As the scope of operations widens, it will undoubtedly be necessary to select and specially educate a few able and intelligent young New-Zealanders to fill the positions that will later on be required for the development and skilful management of the State plantations, and it is thought that a practical training in the nurseries and plantations of the branch, combined with a university education comprising those subjects specially appertaining to forestry (such as botany, entomology, geology, agricultural chemistry, and other subjects included in the degree of Bachelor of Science), and possibly a visit to the best schools and works in England and the Continent, will enable the operations of the Government to be conducted with the highest degree of economy and efficiency, and insure the best results being attained from past and future expenditure.

Every day increases the store of knowledge and literature appertaining to scientific forestry, and it is of the utmost importance that the training and methods of the officers of the branch should be as complete and efficient as it is possible to insure. At the present time both of the Superintending Nurserymen conduct a winter class, in which all the nurserymen and officers under their control have an opportunity of learning all that can be taught them of the work of their profession, and useful reference libraries have been established in each Island at the headquarters. The keenness and intelligence of the members of these classes is in the highest degree praiseworthy, and reflect the greatest credit on their instructors, and their individual efforts to advance in knowledge and usefulness.

Seeing how far the operations of any particular industry or business extend in modern days, and from what numerous sources it is necessary to gain information and assistance in order to achieve the best results, it will naturally be easily understood that the occasional services and advice of various officers of the Government service may from time to time be requisitioned for, and availed of, in connection with the work of tree-planting. A periodical inspection by a skilled biologist, an occasional examination by an agricultural chemist, visits by modern botanists and entomologists, for instance, will be of immense use in aiding the efforts of the permanent officers of the Forestry Branch; and it may be advisable later on to form a special advisory board of such experts, who would from time to time study and report upon any extraordinary or unexpected development in connection with the operations, and advise (if necessary) upon the general questions affecting the work of afforestation and timber-conservation. It is, however, to be distinctly understood that though it is essential to keep a watchful eye upon modern developments, and to display a foresight compatible with the importance of the subject, it is quite out of the question to lay down any hard-and-fast rules as to future management and administration, and the Government will in all cases be guided by the exigencies of each case as it arises, and meet the problems that constantly arise with the best means at its disposal, and in accord with the special circumstances of the matter. Possible future changes are merely indicated to show that the Government is fully alive to the needs of State afforestation in all its varying phases, and is facing future needs with foresight and discrimination.