

SCIENTIFIC NATIONAL FORESTRY FOR NEW ZEALAND.

D. E. HUTCHINS, F.R.G.S.*

It has been thought that the forest-trees of New Zealand grew too slowly to be economically preserved, and that their place should be taken by forest plantations of exotic timbers, and by timber imported from Australia or, at even greater expense, from the other side of the world. It was considered that the wealth of the Dominion lay in sheep and cattle, and that the country should be developed with them. But while the essential importance of the country's pastoral industries is not gainsaid, there are other rural economic factors claiming active attention. The Dominion is now losing wealth and population, together with much of its beauty, by the indiscriminate destruction of the forests and non-development of the mountain lands as they have been developed in some of the best parts of Europe, North America, and Japan.

The forest question is the most important social question now before the country. It is common historical knowledge that every country which, during periods of national neglect, has lost its forests has had to set about restoring them at great expense afterwards. Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, in the latitude of New Zealand, are now doing this. I have recently been on a forest tour through three of these countries, and have seen something of what they are doing.

It gives food for reflection that within a few miles of the capital of New Zealand, after seventy-six years of colonization, there is mountain forest land, pathless, waste, and returning nothing; while similar land in the Vosges and Black Forest is covered with a network of roads, the forest in one or other of its sections always yielding timber, and giving to the State a net return of £2 or £3 per acre per year (average yield over the whole area); the valleys dotted with pulp-mills and timber-mills; and hamlets sheltering the best manhood of the country.

* Mr. D. E. Hutchins, formerly of the Indian, Cape Colony, and other African Forest Services, has been in New Zealand during the past year at the invitation of the Government, for whom he is preparing a comprehensive report on the forests and forestry of the Dominion. The substance of the present article was given by Mr. Hutchins as an address at the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Forestry League, held at Wellington, 11th July, 1916.—EDITOR.