

The plantations were not laid out on a definite plan, so that they were exposed to fire from the first. There have been serious losses from fire, and two of the smaller plantations have been practically burnt out. Foresters are very careful about mixing forest-planting till they can see their way quite clearly. In the New Zealand Government plantations the same caution has not always been shown, so that some of the best trees—Californian redwood, Douglas fir, &c.—have not been able to develop.

Most, if not all, of these mistakes were pointed out by the Forestry Commission of 1913, and its report can be easily referred to for details. It did not require a knowledge of forestry to see them. Others have been since remedied by the Lands Department, to whom every credit is due for the good work that is now being done. The Lands Department was in no way responsible for the appointment or the mistakes of the late Chief Forester (deceased), of whom one hears nothing but praise, but who had the misfortune to be placed in charge of technical work with no means of acquiring a practical knowledge of it (see the interesting brochure issued by the Lands Department in 1914, at page 11).

The war broke out soon after the report of the Forest Commission was made, so that the fundamental error of having so considerable a forest expenditure without a skilled technically trained forester in charge still remains. There is still in New Zealand no responsible Forest Department as in other civilized countries. There is not at present a fully trained forester in the Civil Service of the Dominion; not a man who could go into the wild forest and draw up a technical working plan, mark a *coupe*, or make a valuation survey, nor in a regular forest rightly estimate the value of thinnings or final cuttings at different ages of maturity.

In the plantations will soon come the all-important question of thinning. The silviculture of thinning is a technical subject. It cannot be learnt from books alone. The tendency in New Zealand will be to follow English text-books and overthin. That has already begun in the Government forest plantations. Not enough allowance has been made for the difference in the light-intensity of British and New Zealand latitudes, the sun of England and the sun of Spain. Australia has cut the knot by having only wide planting and coarse timber. The New Zealand plantations are close-planted, and should produce fine-grained timber with skilful thinning.

Much is to be learnt from travel, but a good knowledge of silviculture requires long study under a master. Mr. R. G. Robinson, who has charge of the forestry of the South Island, was sent on a useful forest tour, but the war unfortunately cut it short as he approached Spanish latitudes.