

forests have been and are still being destroyed by the axe and by fire, and at a conservative estimate Australia must be losing millions of pounds annually. In Victoria, however, there have been signs of a new spirit since the constitution of the Forestry Commission. An educational campaign designed to make the public realise the value of our timber assets and the necessity for protecting them is being carried out by the Commissioners. Machinery has also been devised for the prevention and suppression of fires, but valuable as this may be, the public will feel more satisfied if assured that a sufficient number of rangers have been appointed to keep it working effectively. Other States have not all appreciated the importance of taking similar measures. Much timber is still being destroyed, and the value of existing supplies is realised by very few persons. There is reason to believe that Professor Wilson is right when he says that many Australians continue to import from America and other countries in ignorance of the fact that their own woods could often be used for precisely the same purposes. It is true that the Australian public is gradually losing its conservatism in this respect. Local hardwoods are now recognised as being among the best in the world, and a number of our more ornamental timbers are used, with excellent effect, in the construction of furniture. Unfortunately the recognition of this has been accompanied by enormously increased prices for our native woods. The fact that Australian timbers can be used in the manufacture of furniture has been of great assistance, however, to those who are endeavouring to protect forest areas from fire and destruction by settlers. As the Victorian Forest Commission pointed out in reply to Professor Wilson, a new era is being ushered in, at all events in Victoria. But the advice which the Professor summed up in the sentence—"For heaven's sake stop making havoc of your heritage of natural forest"—is sound, and needs reiteration.

Need for Afforestation.

The enormous wastage of timber in the Great War has accomplished what had almost come to seem the impossible feat of awakening England and the British Empire as a whole to the urgent need of an intelligent and active forest policy. In the case of the British Isles there are large areas, more especially in the Highlands, crying out for afforestation. Yet far from these areas being planted, the area already under timber has of recent years been steadily shrinking. And this in spite of the fact that England has been paying to foreign countries some £70,000,000 a year for her timber imports. But, thanks to the war, she has already begun to change all this. By the Forestry Act of August, 1919, there came into being a Forestry Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Lovat. The Commission consists of eight members ap-

pointed for a five-year term, and has very wide powers, and a fund of three and a-half millions at its disposal. It lost very little time in getting to work, and, owing largely to the labours of the interim authority, which preceded it, was in a position to work effectively from the very start. By February last arrangements had been made to secure in Scotland alone 16,000 acres of land suitable for planting, and there were in the various nurseries some 40,000,000 seedlings coming on. A School of Forestry for the training of partially-disabled soldiers had been set on foot at Birnam, and was already well established. A beginning had been made with the work of planting, and by a happy coincidence the first English planting in Devon had been begun on the same day as the first Scottish planting in Aberdeen. But this was by no means all that had been done; some of the earliest official bulletins of the Commission were able to announce that "Rules of the procedure have been made, the preliminary work of the Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners has been allocated; a ten years' planting programme has been considered; the planting programme for 1919-20 has been arranged and is being carried out, and steps have been taken to meet the shortage of forest tree seeds. In addition, the appointment of consultative committees is proceeding, and conferences with certain public departments have been held in London. In London, Dublin and Edinburgh schools are being arranged for the training of forestry apprentices. Statistical work is being carried out, surveys are being undertaken, and afforestation land in various parts of the United Kingdom is being inspected with a view to acquisition.

Nor did the Commission limit its operation to the British Isles. Under its auspices, and by its suggestion, a British Empire Forestry Conference met in last July, and after mature deliberations adopted a series of resolutions which the delegates were instructed to bring to the notice of their respective Governments. These resolutions, which have recently been published by H.M. Stationery Office, cover the whole ground of the theory and practice of forestry, urging the importance of a survey of timber resources throughout the Empire, of carefully devised and correlated schemes of research, of increased facilities for training experts, and of such immediately practical reforms as the standardisation of forest terminology, and the trade names of timbers. Special stress is laid on the vital importance of each of the Governments of the Empire laying down a clear and definite forestry policy, to be administered by a properly constituted and adequate forest service, and of each of these authorities developing systematic schemes of forestry education, framed "with a view to combining for meeting the needs of those parts which can only themselves make a partial provision for their requirements." It was further proposed as essential to the systematic development of the timber resources of the Empire, and to the diffusion of the results obtained of research, that an Imperial