

(No. 78.)



1891.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS:

ANNUAL REPORT.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



Conservator of Forests' Office,
Hobart, 27th July, 1891.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit my Annual Report of the work of my Department for your information.

Little has been done in the direction of Forest conservation, but every effort has been expended to protect our forests, and exhibit the advantages of our timber in London, the Australian Colonies, and New Zealand.

The pine industry, for want of proper supervision, is being carried on at the present time in a reckless manner. Grave complaints are constantly being made as to the dishonest practices going on in this industry. I have no power to counteract the same, and respectfully suggest for your consideration the urgent necessity for a new appointment to the post of Bailiff of Crown Lands, whose sole duty it shall be to attend to the Lands; I shall then be in a position to cope with the many difficulties to be met with. At the present time the West Coast is not under that strict supervision it is so much in need of, and is, in fact, practically not under proper surveillance.

Very little Huon pine has been sent away from the West Coast during the current year. All the season's cutting is still up the river, and cannot be got out for want of sufficient flood-water to bring the logs down. Messrs Wilson & Pontifex have erected a very extensive saw-mill at Strahan; and, in order to keep up the work at the mill, they have made liberal purchases of Huon pine and other Tasmanian woods, which they intend working up into ornamental articles and furniture for exportation to England and the neighbouring Colonies.

Two saw-mills are now at work in the District, one at Strahan and one at Zeehan, both of which are fully employed. Another mill is to be erected at Strahan shortly. When these mills are at work there is every probability of the forests being cleared of the valuable timber which has been left from the cutting of years past to cumber them, and for working up the large quantities of timber now at the mouth of the Gordon River and on the shores of the Bay.

An expedition was made by me during the year to Port Davey, and the pine forests on the Davey River inspected, a full report of which was furnished for your information.

Collections of indigenous trees, both Tasmanian and Continental, were made in the latter part of the year with the view of distributing amongst our Colonists, and for exchanges if required. Many persons throughout the Colony were supplied with seeds for propagation; some succeeded, but with others disappointment ensued. This can only be attributed to want of knowledge in propagating them.

The Huon pines, some thousands of which were distributed last year, resulted in most cases in disappointment, as a very few of the recipients had any idea of the *habitat* of the tree. A further distribution of both plants and seeds will be made this season, the result of which, I hope, will be more satisfactory.

I was disappointed in the number of applicants for the seed of the South Australian broad-leaved wattle (*Acacia pyrenantha*), for the purpose of testing the value of wattle-bark produced in comparison with our native black wattle. The greater number of applicants required them merely for ornamental purposes.

A further collection of ornamental woods, comprising myrtle, sassafras, musk, dogwood, gum, &c., is being made to send to London, a firm there desiring a small supply for experimental purposes, which, if successful, will no doubt eventuate in a regular demand. With reference to gum, to meet the demand in this line it will be necessary to forward green timber, as no stocks of well-seasoned timber are now to be found in the Colony. This latter circumstance is much to be regretted, but it shows that a healthy trade is being done in that timber, inasmuch as the demand is so ready that merchants have great difficulty in meeting urgent orders, and, as a consequence, are unable to keep stocks on hand to season, thus being obliged to supply the green article in order to keep up with the briskness of the demand.

The great amount of green timber now in the market proves the wisdom of carrying out my suggestion made last year, to establish yards in various centres for stacking timber to season for use on Government works. It stands to reason much of the timber now supplied must be green—no other being obtainable—and, as a consequence, Government works must suffer. I therefore again urge the establishment of store-yards in the manner as indicated in my last annual Report.

The Crown Lands Bailiff at Strahan—at the present time one of the most important districts in the Colony—cannot attend to the duties of Crown Bailiff as carefully as should be owing to the very great increase of police work, so it is not to be expected he can attend to the duties of Crown Bailiff in the same careful manner as hitherto. Notwithstanding the careful supervision exercised by the Crown Bailiff and myself, evasions of the law are constantly occurring—indeed, both the Bailiffs and myself find it almost impracticable to check them.

Reports of the various expeditions undertaken by me throughout the year have been forwarded to you, and I have also performed under your instructions many works not connected with my Department, reports upon which have, as required, been forwarded for your information.

Yearly I become more impressed with the necessity which exists for a portion of Crown land in a suitable and accessible locality being reserved for the purpose of establishing a Forest Nursery. In many instances I have had offers of seeds and trees from the neighbouring Colonies, and until I have placed at my disposal a piece of land upon which I can rear young plants for transplanting, and to test the seeds and plants forwarded to me, it will be of no use my endeavouring to acclimatise the valuable marketable timbers of the other Colonies, many of which, I believe, would thrive well under the Tasmanian climate, and become a great source of assistance to our market.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. T. H. BROWN, *Conservator of Forests.*

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.