

Forestry in South Australia.

The following information will be read with interest, in prospect of the introduction of some measure of forest conservation in our Assembly. We quote from the *Argus* (Melbourne) of Monday:

In South Australia the importance of husbanding and developing the timber resources of the colony has been acknowledged by the Legislature, and in 1875 an act was passed constituting a forest board, under whose charge the timber reserves were placed. The report of the board for the year ending June 30, 1880, is now before us, together with the report of the conservator, Mr. John Ednie Brown, from which we obtain much interesting and valuable information. The board has only been in existence five years and yet within that brief period much useful work has been done. Two leading objects appear to have been kept in view—first, the renewal of the native timber by the process of "natural regeneration," which means the fencing in of blocks of land until the young seedlings which spring up after the disappearance of the old trees are large enough to be incapable of injury by live stock; and, second, the planting of young trees and the sowing of seed. The chief trees planted are the leading varieties of Eucalyptus, and the more robust and most quickly growing pines. The propagation of the wattle from seed is not neglected. South Australia, being deficient in soft-wooded trees furnishing timber suitable for furniture manufacture and building purposes, the cultivation of exotics is being tried, a variety of trees having been introduced from India and elsewhere. The reserves now under the control of the board embrace an area of 239,388 acres, and the active nature of the work which is going on is shown by the fact that the extent of land "under crop" has increased from 934 acres in 1879 to 1,840 acres in 1880. Of the young trees sown or planted, 264,950 are now well established, while provision has been made for planting this season 527,400 pines and different kinds of eucalyptus. The area to be covered is 786 acres, and in addition it is intended to sow 310 acres of wattles. The young plants in the nurseries ready for planting when the report closed numbered nearly 700,000. But planting and sowing are not everything. The conservator attaches great importance to what he not inaptly calls the "natural regeneration" of forests. It is well known that when a forest has been cut down or destroyed by fire, in a very short time a new growth springs up, which, under favourable conditions, would in course of time become another forest. But

which, under favourable conditions, would in course of time become another forest. But in settled country the live stock eat down the young plants, and unless they are artificially protected, they come to nothing. Here the forest conservator steps in. The land is fenced off so as to exclude live stock, and scarified; and further, the young plants are systematically pruned so as to train them to grow in one straight stem. Attention of this sort produces surprising results. No wood-producing plants, Mr. Brown points out, are so easy of reproduction and so rapid in growth in their indigenous forests as the eucalyptus family, and this is especially the case with those species whose timber is of the greatest commercial value, such as the red, blue, and white gums and the stringy-bark. The conservator has therefore devoted a good deal of attention to the "regeneration" of the forests under his control, and he can already number something like 80,000 promising young trees as the result of his treatment of the spontaneous growth.

One important feature of forest conservation in South Australia is its inexpensiveness. Not only is the board self-supporting, but it obtains a revenue from the territory placed under its management which actually exceeds the expenditure. The revenue for 1880 was £6,049—an increase of £1,155 on the returns for the previous year—while the total expenditure for salaries, wages, implements, seeds, &c., was only £5,295, showing a credit balance of £754. The estimated revenue for the ensuing year is £7,500. The revenue is derived from two sources, viz., the letting of portions of the reserves for pasturage, and the sale of timber. From the latter source, the returns are increasing year by year. The timber is of course disposed of with judgment. Only that which is fully matured is sold, and as soon as it is cleared off, planting or sowing is commenced, so that a new forest is growing up almost as soon as the old is removed.

If state forestry can be made self-supporting in South Australia, there is no reason to doubt that it could be made so here. It would pay in the long run to expend a substantial sum every year in the preservation of our forests, but when it has been shown how much can be done without any cost whatever, it would be like throwing away wealth to neglect this important matter any longer. Before concluding, we may point out that while the state has a duty to perform, the occupiers of the land would do well to give some attention to the growth of trees on their estates. Farmers and stockowners take care to preserve a certain quantity of timber for purposes of shelter, but as a rule they do not consider the subject from a climatic and

consider the subject from a climatic and revenue point of view, or they might at one and the same time improve the country and put money in their pockets by planting in a systematic way, quick growing pines and eucalypts. The establishment of an active forest board in South Australia, we learn from Mr. Ednie Brown's report, has awakened the farmers of that colony to the importance of the subject, and they are beginning to form plantings on their holdings. The practice is not as yet so general as could be wished, but Mr. Brown is nevertheless able

to say that "many of our landed proprietors are now looking upon the operations of the Forest Board as an essential branch of our Legislature, and one which is destined to work important results to the country." If the state here exhibited the same interest in forestry as is the case in South Australia, we should have in this colony also the land-owners and the Government working together for the improvement of the territory.