

hinder the cultivation of the land, because we possess thousands upon thousands of acres of woodlands, must we for such reasons as these burn and destroy the whole? If a rich man were to fling his money out of the window, as has sometimes been heard of, what should we predict? Would not every one say that, before long, he would be begging his bread? The same sad fate might well be prophesied of the nation, which, because it possesses the finest forests in the world, destroys them from a deliberate purpose.

As every body is interested in this question, let us see what duty each has to perform who would aid in the preservation of our woodland. The government should be the first to put its hand to the plough; then the limit-owners, the wood-dealers, &c.; next the settlers; and, lastly, tourists, fishermen, hunters, and all who frequent the forests during the course of the year. (1)

#### CHAP. II.

##### THE DUTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT AS REGARDS THE PRESERVATION OF THE FORESTS.

Two characters are assumed by the duties of the government in the preservation of the forests. prevention and guardianship.

The best means possessed by the government for maintaining our forests in a relative state of integrity is legislation.

My own opinion is, that a law declaring that, as a general rule, no woodland, unfit for cultivation when cleared, shall be granted to settlers, would be the first finger-post on the right road. What do we see, now? A great extent of land, without any agricultural value, has been granted away; the first settlers have cleared it of wood, and have immediately vanished from the scene. Their successors, dying with hunger on these ungrateful soils, have also vanished, and taken their departure for the stranger's land. There lies the ground, stripped for ever of its natural wealth, useless, and utterly lost to all the ends of rural economy. Had the government retained it in its own hands, it would now be returning a revenue. Wood for building and for firing could be sold, certain rules as to the preservation of the young growing wood being laid down. Wood-cutters, too, might be compelled to free the land from chips &c., which tend very much to increase the number of fires. Instead of the sad sight of devastated and sterile districts which now distresses us, we should look upon many a fine forest, ready to furnish all kinds of wood to the succeeding generation.

Next, the general cutting of the timber (*bois de commerce*) must be so regulated that all the trees that do not exceed a certain size shall be left standing. If, in addition, the law prohibits the felling of timber on land that has been once cut over more frequently than once in ten years, these "limits," instead of being worn out, as they are at present, would be always ready for use (*exploitation* — a terrible word!). The same precautions as to the chips, &c., will be necessary here as elsewhere.

The third clause of the law which I propose refers to the clearances made by settlers. The settler is the sworn enemy of the forest. In his blind hatred, he attacks it in single combat, and as he is the stronger, his axe never stops until the last tree is felled. A few years later, if his land does not turn out to be of the best quality, the settler is forced to leave it, and to seek a foreign soil, unless he sets to work to clear, and therefore to ruin, some other part of his own country. To put a stop to this evil, nothing would be easier than for the government to compel each settler to keep a

certain number of acres of his farm uncleared. At the end of fifteen or twenty years he would bless those who had thus forced him to observe the injunctions of foresight. The cleared townships would thus have all the wood necessary to the wants of their inhabitants, and we should no longer see whole districts absolutely deprived of their growth of timber.

So much for the means of prevention. The guardianship, to be exercised as a *moyen curatif*, would include the sanction of the preventive means, and would consist in establishing a well organised police to watch over the observation of the law.

When I say police, I make use of a general term, intended to express the forest-guardians and other agents whose duty it will be to see the proposed regulations carried out. These regulations relate, first, to the concession of the lands only fit for agriculture; secondly, to the restriction of the cutting of trees to those of the proper size; thirdly, to the removal, or burning at certain fixed times, of the chips, wastage, &c.; fourthly, to the forbidding settlers to burn the bush (*faire des brûlés*) at fixed periods, and to hinder tourists, hunters, and others, setting fire to the bush in preparing their food; fifthly, to fix the reserve wood to be made by each settler on his farm; sixthly, to the fines to be paid for each infraction of the law.

Let us consider, briefly, these regulations. First, the agents should be authorised to refuse leave of occupation to all those lands which the government land-surveyors have pointed out as unfit for the purposes of agriculture. Secondly, their duty would be to see that no tree less than six inches in diameter be cut, and that the cut be not renewed at less intervals than ten years on the same spot. Third, they would have to make the wood-cutters burn the chips &c., at times fixed by the government, which times should vary with the locality.

It is my duty to say, that this part of the programme has met with much opposition from those who term it impracticable. I am, nevertheless, of opinion that it should be tried, on account of its evident utility. Fourthly, the police must watch with extreme care to prevent farmers, settlers, &c., from bush-burning in summer, when woods are most easily set on fire. Hunters, fishermen, tourists, should be the object of special watchfulness. Fifthly, instant report should be made to the government if a settler neglects to observe the rule as to the reserve of wood on his farm. Sixthly, they will have to make the declarations necessary to the recovery of the fines incurred by the transgressors of the law. Thus, to sum up, the government may pass a law to regulate the concession of farms, the cutting for sale of the timber-limits, the reserve of wood on the settlers' farms, the duties of the agents specially appointed to see to the execution of the law, and the fines to be imposed.

This, doubtless, would not be perfection, but it would be an approach to a better state of things.

#### CHAP. III.

##### THE DUTIES OF THE MANUFACTURER, THE LUMBER-MERCHANT, AND OTHERS, AS REGARDS THE PRESERVATION OF THE FORESTS.

The government in passing such a law as I have sketched in the preceding chapter, would impose no obligations on manufacturers except those which it would be their duty to assume, even if they had not the force of law.

To state more clearly what I mean by these obligations, I will quote the example of a firm which has been engaged in the lumber-trade for thirty years, and which turns its limits to profit in a very intelligent manner, as the following account will show. When the firm began business, it determined never to fell any tree below a certain girth. Another principle was, not to cut over the same place several years in succession, but to allow ten years, at least, to elapse bet-

(1) To hunt, in English, means to pursue the stag, the fox, the otter, or the hare, with hounds. The idea of a gun is utterly excluded.