

DENUDEMENT OF PLAINS.

Pioneer colonists have testified to the accuracy of the opinion expressed by your writer that the removal of the umbrageous covering which Nature involved the destruction of a valuable asset, but has also caused the denudation of considerable areas in the plains, through the unimpeded flow of flood waters. There is no exaggeration in the claim of a close association between the recent deluges in the low-lying ground and the deforesting of the higher areas. This example of a fatuous policy when the State was in its political infancy is appropriately connected with the remarkable indifference, and even hostility, which were shown towards the native timber by some local manufacturers. If the splendid qualities of our stringybark for cabinetmaking and other kindred purposes had been discovered half a century, instead of merely a decade or so ago millions of pounds' worth of a durable and beautiful wood would have been rescued from the fuel heap. Similarly, but for the extraordinary bias and unbelief against Pinus Insignis for economic application, the beginning of what has proved to be a valuable industry in the shape of case-making with that timber would have been hastened. Now that people who deal in timber have recognised the great merits of the pines and the stringybark the wonder is that they were so long in arriving at that sensible conclusion. In another direction, such residents of the metropolitan area as can afford to buy firewood at 43/ a ton are puzzling over the curious problem which that price suggests. The Forest League believes that ignorance of the subject of forestry is widespread, has declared that one of its purposes is to push afforestation propaganda, and so create a public conscience and a public commonsense concerning the whole matter.

KUITPO A GOOD LESSON.

"In declaring this design the League does not mean to reflect upon the existing Forestry Department in this State. That department has done a great deal, in spite of its limitations; and credit is due to the Government and the University for making possible the fine work of instruction which is being done by that experienced and up-to-date, scientific forester Mr. Corbin, who has the advantage of controlling a capital object lesson in the Kuitpo forest. It is, further, a reasonable occasion for congratulation that South Australia conducts the only really organised forestry college in the Commonwealth, even if that achievement is discounted, in some degree, by the fact that this State has spent much money in educating foresters who have had to leave it to practice their avocation elsewhere because opportunities were not available for them here. The League wants to see established a thoroughly practical educational system in relation to forestry—a system beginning in the public schools and continued through all the necessary gradations. As a part of this arrangement it desires to persuade the Government to arrange for forestry lectures, and issue regularly reports likely to inform the people regarding the benefits of forestry and keep them interested in the subject. At present the only locally produced literature, so far as I know, is the annual report of the Forest Department—an admirable record so far as it goes, but one which does not go nearly far enough. If possible, the League would like to have placed on the Statute Book laws which would remove the forest operations in all but matters of broad policy from political influence. Under a system of this kind there would be less heartbreak among earnest foresters, because of the diversion for political and electoral purposes of fertile lands from forestry into occupation for other uses. There would be fewer instances of members of local governing bodies obliging their friends by permitting them, at a nominal charge, to destroy big and valuable trees growing along the public highways.

With a more enlightened public conscience, reflected in legislation, the recent vandalistic removal of large areas of thick forests in the Mount Lofty district would have been impossible.

NEW ZEALAND'S ENTERPRISE.

"Finally, for the moment, the League wants to see practical encouragement given to the undertaking of forestry by private enterprise and by local governing bodies, as is done in New Zealand, where the Government spends about £100,000 annually on its forests, and finds that the more it spends in this enterprise the more profit it is likely

to earn. Gradually the fallacious idea that people who embarked on private forestry were simply sinking their money for a generation at least, and need not hope for any return during their lifetime, is being dispelled. It is now clear that with forest regeneration and thinning, profits come much earlier than was supposed. In New Zealand recently I visited a private forest which had been planted 40 years ago by its present owner, who has during the intervening period reaped substantial minor rewards for his forethought, and for some years past has drawn, and is still drawing, and should continue to draw indefinitely, £1,200 a year in royalties. He takes precautions for the regeneration of the forest coincidentally with its depletion. Already in South Australia private work to this end, although begun in doubt, is proving to be profitable, with an assurance of steadily maintained returns so long as there shall be a demand for wood as fuel and for more important economic purposes. It is one of the most promising varieties of life assurance available."

"GLAD TO GET BACK."

RETURN OF MR. FRANCIS HALLS.

A man of genial personality, an accomplished artist, and ever anxious to add to his store of vocal knowledge, Mr. Francis Halls has been greatly missed from Adelaide musical circles. An ex-pupil of Mr. Frederick Bevan and an Elder scholar, he won deserved popularity in concert and oratorio work. He might easily have rested upon his laurels, but instead determined to pursue his studies further. He left Australia three years ago and went to Italy, there to study the bel canto method under the great Pieracini, of Milan. The Italians are nothing if not critical, but they took Mr. Halls to their hearts and voted him the equal



Mr. Francis Halls.

of any of their basses or baritones. As he can sing 2½ octaves with ease, such a reputation can be sustained.

In London, subsequently, Mr. Halls met with continued success, and the Scots, in King's Theatre, Edinburgh, so far forgot their habitual caution as to cheer him to the echo. In London he appeared at the Albert Hall, the Royal Colonial Institute, many of the best music-halls, at Sunday concerts, and at one engagement was associated with Madame Elsa Stralis, who is a native of Adelaide, at Ramsgate. In London, at the Festival of Yorkshiremen, Mr. Halls had the honor of singing under the chairmanship of Prince Henry.

"London treated me well, professionally," observed Mr. Halls, "but badly in the matter of health. I was never well there. How different is the climate out here in dear old Adelaide! It is delightful to think that I shall have a chance next Saturday night to let my home town folk judge whether or not my studies abroad were worth while. A welcome home concert, at the Prince of Wales Theatre, has been arranged, at which I have been asked to make four appearances."

"What will you sing?" he was asked. "Some ballads, of course, but bigger items, such as the aria from 'Salvator Rosa,' and possibly 'The Toreador's Song.' I forgot to mention that while in London I did a good deal of wireless broadcasting."

THE WAITE AGRICULTURE BEQUEST.

UNIVERSITY DEPUTATION TO THE PREMIER.

A deputation from the University of Adelaide, consisting of the Chancellor (Sir George Murray), the Vice-chancellor (Professor Mitchell), and two members of the finance committee, Sir George Brookman, and Mr. H. S. Hudd, M.P., recently waited on the Premier (Sir Henry Barwell) in connection with the bequest made to the University by the late Mr. Peter Waite. They also asked for compliance with the requests made by the Council of the University in 1920 in connection with the removal of the restrictions contained in the University Act of 1920, which limits the Government subsidy of 5 per cent. per annum on private endowments to the University to the sum of £10,000 per annum. That limit has now been reached, and the deputation requested that the restriction be removed, and also that the University be exempted from land tax and municipal and water rates. The deputation also presented to the Premier the report of a committee appointed by the Council of the University to consider how the Waite Bequest could best be utilised for the advancement of agriculture.

The committee reported that the problems which ought to be undertaken were found to be so important, and the joint resources of Urrbrae and the University laboratories so well fitted to deal with them, that the main recommendation of the committee was to present the case to the Government in order that the great opportunity which Mr. Waite placed in their hands might not be lost. The report of the committee stated that, after allowing for the cost of labor, the public park or arboretum, and the salary of the professor, the income available might be less than £1,000, even if the estates of Claremont and Netherby were let, and not used as Mr. Waite intended.

The report further stated that the Director of Agriculture had classified under 14 heads the kinds of problem that could be investigated with immediate economic advantage. One item under the first head was a soil survey of the State; and all of them were on the permanent problem of securing the closest settlement on the soil. The professors indicated how their laboratories and services could be used in solving the problems.

The University was required to maintain half the area of the Urrbrae portion of the estate as a public park. It has been decided to make this an arboretum, and to plant about six acres a year for the next twelve years. Part of it would be experimental, and the main purpose of the whole would be to demonstrate the kinds of tree that might thrive in the State. For this reason it would be a pity if the hill constituting the Netherby estate was not also used for the same purpose.

The deputation pointed out that the situation would be adequately met if the Government were to grant a petition which the Council presented in 1920, when the restriction in the University Act of 1874 became operative. By that Act the Government paid 5 per cent. per annum on private endowments made to the University, subject to the restriction "provided that no such grant shall exceed £10,000 in any one year." That limit had now been reached. The council therefore thought it well to revert to the three requests which were then set out,

1. In order to complete the undergraduate schools in the University so that the future professional men of the State should be as well equipped as if they had been trained in Melbourne or Sydney, it was estimated in detail that an additional income of £20,000 was required. This request was granted, and the Council believed that a few years hence, when the full amount was released from the cost of building, it could be said with confidence that the equipment had been provided.

2. In its request for additional buildings the council pointed out that the Governments of all the other Australian States took this charge on themselves, and that the Government of New South Wales had just set aside £300,000, and the Government of Victoria nearly as much, for immediate additions to their university buildings. The request was met with the promise to erect a new building to house physics and engineering. But the equipment which would probably amount to 15 per cent. of the cost of the building, and the erection and equipment of all other buildings were left a charge against the University revenues. During the past three years the council had made extensions for anatomy costing £2,714, for geology £5,417, and for chemistry £3,678. The Darling Medical Building was completed at a cost of £47,630, of which £15,000 was the gift of the family of the late Mr. John Darling.

3. There remained the matter of research a duty on every university, and with a bearing of its own in a country whose resources are still undeveloped. This was the appropriate field for private endowments, and it was for this reason and that purpose that the Council petitioned for the removal of the restriction in the Act of 1874. Such removal on the eve of the jubilee of the University would inaugurate a new epoch by giving the University a definite part and duty in the development of the State.

The report set out that the income from the capital of the Waite bequest controlled by Elder's Trustee Company, less the annual charge of £109 made by the company, was £3,105. The taxes on the whole property amounted last year to £116; the municipal rates to £136; the water rates to £65. The committee thought the Council should take action with regard to the taxation of the Urrbrae land and on the North-terrace. The income from Claremont and Netherby last year was £174. Assuming that they continued to be let for the present, the available income was thus £2,961.

The first charge on this income was the planting and maintenance as a public park of half the area of Urrbrae. The committee was unanimous that these 67 acres should be planted as an arboretum. This might be done at the rate of four or five acres a year, once the whole lay-out had been approved. The provision that must be made for adequate fencing and public paths might be undertaken as planting proceeded. If this plan was adopted it might require a sum averaging £300 a year for twelve or fifteen years. The value of the arboretum would be readily appreciated. It would be a demonstration in forestry, and its experience with different kinds of trees would be of advantage and an example to every district in the State.

The Council had retained three workmen who had previously been in permanent employment on the estate. Their wages amounted to £559 a year. This labor was required for the upkeep of the estate, and more would be necessary when the Director was appointed. Assuming that Claremont and Netherby were let, and including the £300 for the public park, the committee calculated the labor-cost at £1,000 a year. Last year the Council in appointing a plant pathologist decided to charge his salary to the Waite bequest. It amounted to £450, and would rise. These three items of expenditure amounted to £1,450. The annual sum available for carrying out the purpose of the bequest was thus about £1,500.

The Premier assured the deputation of his sympathy and promised to bring their requests before Cabinet.