

Londoner 61

Chapter 61. Ecological Reserve

Pinoto continued, "After we move the logs away from the stump, we could simply burn them to clear the area faster."

"That may be a good idea," Kivamus said. He added after a moment of thought, "Okay, you can do that, but be sure that you have removed any other flammable wood away from the stumps before putting them on fire. I don't want to see a forest fire in the south."

Pinoto gave a nod. "Leave that to me, milord. I have done that in the past, when I used to work as a farmer. Although in that farm, we usually waited for a year or more for the stump and remaining roots to rot so we could clear the area, but we cannot do that here because we need to start farming in the spring." He added, "However, while it is difficult to fully burn a stump, I will tell the workers to split the stump from a few places, so that it can burn easily. Once the stump has fully burned away in a day or two, it would be easy enough to remove the remaining big roots by pulling them with even a single horse. After that, only the very small roots will be remaining, and those shouldn't cause any problems in plowing the fields later."

"You seem to know what you are doing," Kivamus gave an appreciative nod. Thinking about the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning, he said, "However, don't start burning each tree immediately after cutting it. Once all the trees in an area - let's say a dozen or maybe even two dozen trees have been cut and the logs have been removed from there, then move all the workers to another place - maybe a hundred yards away, and put them to work on clearing the forest there. This way, there would be no danger of the workers breathing in any poisonous fumes from the burning stumps nearby."

Pinoto thought about it for a moment. "That seems like a good idea, milord. Usually we have to cover our mouth with a cloth if we are working close to smoke. As an added benefit, since all the trees in the area we are going to burn would already be cut before we put the stumps on fire, there would be less danger of the fire spreading to other trees."

Kivamus said, "After you have some ash from the burnt stumps, you can also mix it into the ground, which will reduce the acidity of the soil and it should improve the yield of the wheat crop in the future."

Pinoto gave a nod. "I don't know what this acidity of soil is, but I do know from experience that occasionally mixing some ash into the ground before sowing does help the yield if we are growing wheat."

Kivamus said, "If you already know that mixing ash would be helpful, it is good enough for now. I will explain what soil acidity is, some other time." He looked at Duvas, "Have you designated someone as the foreman for the southern area as well?"

"Not yet, my Lord," Duvas replied.

"In that case," Kivamus began, "Pinoto can be the foreman for the villagers working in the south. Unlike the north and other sides, our primary reason for clearing the forest in the south is to start farming there, and with his farming experience, Pinoto seems like our best choice to oversee everything there." He looked at the ex-farmer, "Can you do that? You will also be paid the same wages as other foremen - of course, in grain and coal for now."

Pinoto was surprised for a moment, but then he smiled and gave a respectful nod. "Of course, milord. I was already spending most of my time there, so I can work as the foreman there as well."

Kivamus smiled as well. "Alright. You can leave then."

With a bow, the ex-farmer left the manor hall.

Standing up, Kivamus said to others, "Let's take another look in the north of the village."

Gorsazo nodded and stood up as well to follow him, while Hudan asked him to wait until he could gather a few guards to accompany them. Duvas again told them that he would stay back to take care of everything here.

With a nod, Kivamus walked to the gates of the manor, and soon Hudan was back with another three guards.

"Let's go, my Lord," Hudan said.

They started walking through the village towards the north, and before long, they exited the last row of houses. However, unlike the last time he had come here, when there were towering trees not far from

the houses of the village, there was a decent amount of cleared land in front of them now. Kivamus estimated that the workers had cleared the forest for nearly thirty to forty meters ahead, and for nearly the same width as well. However, the stumps of the cut trees were still standing in that area.

The bigger logs had been kept on a few piles on their left, while the twisted branches had been gathered in a heap on their right. The carpenter Taniok was hard at work near the log piles making planks from the straight logs, along with a few other workers. There was also a small pile of already cut planks kept near them, which Kivamus only noticed now.

In front of them, dozens of workers were hard at work putting all their might to cut the trees with axes, while a few were sawing the base of trees in pairs using a two-man saw. Some other workers were using the newly made machetes to cut off the smaller branches from the felled trees to make logs from them. He also saw the log-mover in use nearby, while it was being used to pull another log to the growing pile.

Yeden was standing near the workers cutting the trees as well, while shouting at them and pointing at something. When he noticed Kivamus, he immediately walked towards the baron, and gave a bow in respect.

"How is it going?" Kivamus asked the bald foreman.

"The logging has been going well, milord," Yeden replied, "especially with the new tools we are getting every day."

Looking at the stumps of the trees, Kivamus said, "What about those?"

Yeden gave a shrug. "I know we have to remove those, but I am waiting for more trees to be cut from this area before I assign workers to do that."

"What about just burning them, like we are going to do in the south?" Gorsazo asked.

"That's not a good idea here," Kivamus commented. "Unlike the farms, where we still have a few months before we need the land cleared, we need this area cleared faster. So we cannot afford to move the workers a hundred meters away while the stumps burn here for a few days. We need to clear this

area as soon as possible to start the construction of the longhouses. And there are already a couple of horses here to pull out the stumps."

Yeden said, "That is true, my lord. By tomorrow, I will tell a few workers to cut out the bigger roots from the stumps, and then we can just use the horses to pull the stumps out."

"That would work," Gorsazo remarked. "We don't need to do any plowing here in the future, so there is no problem in leaving some roots in the ground which would otherwise cause the plows to get stuck or even break. That should be good enough for all the regions where we don't need to do any plowing."

"I'll do that, then," Yeden said. "I'll also put all the stumps aside and if needed we can split those and other smaller branches to use as firewood in the longhouses." Moving his hand over his bald head, he added, "I'd say pulling out all these stumps will take another two or three days, and after that we can start digging the foundations for the longhouses."

"That's very good," Kivamus said. As he looked at the forest surrounding them, he realized that some of the branches which had grown in a slanted direction reminded him of the cranes used for construction on Earth. That gave him an idea. He said to the foreman, "You know what? Don't cut every single tree here. While constructing the longhouses, we will need an easy way to lift the heavy wooden beams and columns into place. So, in this area, if you see a tree which has sturdy horizontal branches - maybe uh... fifteen to twenty feet from the ground, just leave them in place. We don't need too many of those, but even having three or four such trees here would help a lot in lifting those beams."

"You mean by putting a rope around that branch to lift it in place?" Yeden asked.

"Something like that," Kivamus said. When they reached that stage of construction, he could devise a simple pulley system to help with that. "Leave a few such trees in those areas as well where we are going to build the new village walls, which will help us in pulling up the logs and stakes for them. And once the new village walls have been built, we can cut those trees after that for safety purposes. Although we can still leave those trees near the longhouses, to give a place for people to sit under in the summer."

"I don't think we have ropes that long though," Gorsazo stated.

"That could be a problem," Kivamus muttered. "In that case, add it to the list of things we will send Pydas to buy on the next trip to Cinran."

Gorsazo nodded. "Of course, my Lord."

Kivamus looked at Yeden again. "I had planned to keep some trees here for shade in the summer anyway, instead of making the land completely barren and without any trees for hundreds of meters. I have already told Madam Helga to look for shrubs and plants which provide good herbs around this area. So wherever she tells you about any such herbs being found, mark that area and tell the workers not to cut anything within ten meters or so of that area. We will call it an... ecological reserve - which means a natural location which we have preserved for some reason. When we have enough ropes in the future, we will surround that area with a few ropes as well. This way we will have a good supply of those herbs in the future, and we wouldn't have to send people to search again for it in the surrounding forests every time we need such herbs."

Yeden gave an understanding nod. "I will do as you say, my Lord. I can see how that would help the village in the future."

Remembering the conversation about village walls earlier, he asked, "Did you send workers to dig holes for the new walls?"
