

CLUB NOTES

THE WEEK'S REVIEW

The paper on "Forestry" read by Mrs. H. M. Bushnell before the state federation of clubs in Columbus, two weeks ago, was pronounced by the delegates one of the best features of the program and the general interest which has been aroused in the subject all over the country makes it especially appropriate to print the paper, which follows:

FORESTRY.

When the program committee asked me to give a talk on forestry, my mind immediately reverted to something I had read a few days ago, advising club women never to talk on a subject that they were not familiar with, and I had decided, I thought, to take the advice and had formed several negative replies in my mind, with the excuse, "For want of information on the subject," when this question rather suddenly confronted me, putting me to shame. What right have you to be uninformed on the subject, when there is such an awakening all along the line, from Maine to California? We can scarcely pick up a newspaper or periodical without coming upon something that shows what vigorous and earnest efforts are being put forth, for the protection and propagation of forestry. We hear of meetings being held, where men and women who are keenly alive to the best and most progressive needs of the country were present to advance the interests of forestry. With these reflections the subject began to grow upon me and everything bearing upon it had a new interest. I forgot the advice and a more inspiring quotation came to me, "That which you so earnestly desire, in a measure do you possess." This question of the preservation and propagation of forestry has come with comparative suddenness upon us and if the facts are the voices of the people we have not far back to go to see that the utilitarian idea of the forest as we now know and see it, had not occurred to them. The poetical, the artistic, the sentimental side, they saw in all its beauty, grandeur and sublimity; and it is perhaps best that the spiritual side came first. In that sublime poem of Bryant's,

"The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above him—ere he framed

The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems."

and so he goes on with this grand old hymn that contains one of the most eloquent sermons on eternity that ever fell from the lips of man, and closes with this beautiful reflection—

"Be it ours to meditate in these calm
shades thy milder majesty,
And to the beautiful order of thy works,
Learn to conform the order of our lives."

Still, with his beautiful and sublime communion with the trees, the forests, he had no conception of the blessings the trees are able to bestow upon the temporal wants of mankind, and of the great disaster that would follow the denuding of the forests, or that by the planting and cultivating of trees the desert would be turned into a garden.

N. P. Morris, who wrote the poem, "Woodman, Spare That Tree," a poem that has been mutilated by the majority of school boys since it was written, if he could know the value of the trees and the forests as men know them today, he would want to remodel his poem. This appealing verse,

"Woodman, spare that tree,
Touch not a single bough,
In youth it sheltered me
And I'll protect it now,"

seems narrow in the light of today.

I am digressing somewhat, but it goes to show that necessity begets knowledge and the people of that time had no conception of the strenuous efforts that would be put forth for the protection and propagation of trees. How much they would be needed to maintain an adequate water supply for

the needs of agriculture. When the forests are destroyed, the soil no longer holds the moisture to sustain the perennial springs. The rain runs off as it falls, the streams become torrents. Ample opportunity of this is seen in the old world. All over Asia Minor and in many parts of Africa and in southern Europe are to be found deserts that in ancient times were among the richest on the globe and supported a large population in comfort and perhaps luxury. The great change that has come over Egypt and very much of the surrounding country, as the result of a system of irrigation which permits the cultivation of crops the year round. In that land there are no forests to speak of, but the extensive cultivation of grasses and various kinds of plants that has had the same effect upon the soil, converting it into a huge sponge for the absorption and retention of water, the result has been a notable change in the whole region, and whereas, in times past, a slight rain once in two or three years was noted as a thing to be remembered, there are now frequent showers, and so great has been the change, that it is having its effect upon the granite monuments of the country and the old sphinx that has stood for ages is now showing signs of disintegration in the moist atmosphere, that is bringing grass and verdure upon the barren sands.

But what have we done and what is being done for forestry in Nebraska? Here is one of the laws on timber land: "If any purchaser of timber shall before receiving his title in fee simple, cut or destroy any timber on said land any further than shall actually be necessary for building and repairing of fences and for the family of the occupant, he or she shall be liable in a civil action for the recovery of the amount of damages done to the land." Here is a good law that was passed in 1879 giving a bounty for the cultivation of timber: "When any person shall plant and properly cultivate, for the term of five years, six rows of trees, eight feet apart, and the trees four feet apart in a row, along either the north section or half section line, running east and west, said rows to be not nearer to said north section or half section line than four feet, or the south line of any road that shall be laid out, or when any person shall fill out to the standard above prescribed and shall keep the same in a proper state of cultivation, any rows of trees that may have been previously planted, it shall be the duty of the county commissioners to pay to such persons by warrant on the county treasurer, a sum of money amounting to three dollars and thirty-three cents for each acre so planted and cultivated annually, so long as the same is planted and kept growing in a proper state of cultivation, for a period not to exceed five years and in extent not to exceed three acres." You will see evidences of this law in a great portion of the state. It was not passed for the purpose of cultivating timber for the timber, but for windbreaks on the north side of section lines. Ample provisions have been made by law, if the laws had been properly executed, for the planting of shade trees in the cities and villages of Nebraska "and it is the duty of the corporate authorities to cause the shade trees to be planted, and for this purpose a tax of not less than a dollar or more than five dollars shall be levied on each lot adjacent. The authorities shall provide by ordinance the distance from the side of the street, the size of the trees, etc. If the owner of the lot plant trees according to the above prescribed rules he is exempt from the tax. The penalty for destroying said trees shall be a fine of from five to fifty dollars, one half to be given to the owner and the other half to the school fund."

Here is a law of our state that

should be of interest to us: "If any person shall wilfully and maliciously and without lawful authority box, bore, bark, girdle, saw down, injure, or otherwise destroy, to the amount of thirty-five dollars or upwards, any shade or other trees standing or growing in an orchard, or nursery, or grove, the property of another, every such person shall be imprisoned in the penitentiary at hard labor for not more than ten nor less than one year, and shall moreover be liable to the party injured for double the amount of damage done." So various laws have been passed from time to time, but they were not sufficient. The National Bureau of Forestry took up the matter, sent out agents over the country to report conditions, and the result to our state was that two tracts of land were set aside last spring for forest purposes by President Roosevelt. One of these is in Thomas county, and extends from the Dismal river on the south, to the Loup river on the north, and contains about 86,000 acres, and is known as the Dismal river forest reserve. The other is in Cherry county, and extends from the Niobrara river on the north to the Snake river on the south. It contains about 126,000 acres, and bears the name of the Niobrara river forest reserve, making in all 212,000 acres of land in these two reserves.

I am indebted to Professor Bessey of the state university for much of this information. He has very recently visited this country, and further speaks of some native growing timber, but for the most part the country is a surface of sandhills. In fact the forestry bureau selected as far as possible the sand hills for these experiments.

The sand hills of Holt county were experimented upon a few years ago, and the result was gratifying. The pine trees have thrived in this soil, and we are finding that the sand hills are full of surprises, and as I see these barren hills rescued from the stigma they have borne so long, I think of that little country across the seas and hope we possess some of the will and perseverance of the people who took their homes from the very ocean.

We have a new department of forestry in our state university and I asked one of the professors the other day to tell me something of this department, its outlook, etc. He says, "It is going to be one of the strongest departments in the United States." I said, "Professor, what do you do?" He said, "I keep the bugs off the trees." And so we all have our part in this work. It may be ours, as women, to sit in the little schoolroom with the children on Arbor day, to listen to the exercises, take part in the planting of the trees, and pay a tribute to the father of Arbor day, who spent so many years of his useful life within our borders, and who must be accorded first place in the ranks of Nebraska citizenship. And when the news flashed over the wires that J. Sterling Morton had been stricken there was mourning not only in the state of Nebraska, of which he seems a part, but all over the nation. And when his friends were permitted to take leave of him it was in his old home, under the sunshine of a perfect day. The homestead and surroundings were impressively beautiful; between great forest trees apple and peach blossoms drifted through the air. The beds of spring flowers were profusely beautiful; the fields were alive with greenness; the town below, silent in sympathy, the river, yellow as gold in the light, and the long line of hills beyond, turning to blue in the distance framed the picture. There was largeness and life in the panorama—a largeness such as had been the life of the dead, an inspiration of strength as J. Sterling Morton was strong and inspiring; for to do and accomplish was his constant influence through life. There was mingled with the service a realization of the absolute completeness of Mr. Morton's life, and every friend, eloquent in heart, had a tribute, unspoken, which he left at the coffin lid.

For a lifetime J. Sterling Morton has been the constant optimistic friend of Nebraska. It is a long time since

1854. Marvelous changes have been wrought in the years past. All that Nebraska has and is, has come in that half century; and Mr. Morton has not only seen it, but has been largely instrumental in the development. He, from the commencement, combated the all prevailing idea that the land beyond the Missouri was a treeless waste, and unfit for cultivation. Today his work, his influence and his strong character are a fixed part in the history of Nebraska, and when the flower-laden casket was lowered into his narrow home so intimately was he associated with the literal Nebraska, that it seemed as though the earth of the grave had a visible welcome for him. Mr. Morton was essentially a home-builder from 1854 to 1902; one place was his home, and that was Arbor Lodge. He preached Nebraska as the inviting

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