

**WOODLANDS:
THE RELIANCE
OF PRAIRIE
AND PLAIN.**

The latter half of the century now closing witnesses a material change in the relative area of farm, forest and prairie. In the older states which were formerly dense woodlands, each succeeding year has recorded additional areas in cultivation as acre by acre the forests have disappeared before the woodman's axe.

The virgin soil so prized on account of its productiveness for a few years while the vegetable mould remains, has long been exhausted, and only by arduous toil are moderate crops produced.

Each season now brings protracted drouth in the Middle States, and frequent complaints are made by farmers that the climate has changed from that of forty years ago. Streams which were formerly of large volume the entire year now become dry, or mere rivulets, during the summer months. At the same time, with a hard bare surface, devoid of spongy soil to retain moisture, when sudden rains do come the water rolls rapidly away, swelling the streams to flood, yet leaving the surface without adequate moisture to suffice for growing crops.

In the Trans-Missouri region many groves were planted by the earlier settlers, and others have been established by many farmers, with noticeable results in the improvement of climatic conditions; rainfall has increased and crops improved in proportion as the woodlands have been extended.

All this is but a repetition of history. Europe and the Orient, as well as America, have numerous recorded facts demonstrating the evil effects of forest destruction, and beneficial results from extending the woodland areas.

While vegetation cannot exist without some degree of moisture, although certain plants flourish in localities which are quite arid, and under conditions unfavorable to the growth of other species, nature has wisely provided that water shall be supplied for the support of vegetable life, and is constantly making efforts to cover the entire surface of the land with plants. Masses of trees attract moisture and cause precipitation, the millions of leaves, twigs and tree trunks aiding in this attraction, while the fallen leaves, mossy logs and underbrush, retain the water for future supply.

Ten per cent of all the lands in the plain and prairie region, should be converted into woodland. The remaining portion would be far more productive from more careful cultivation, and nothing would be lost by devoting one-tenth to timber.

The principal object in pioneers who have settled the great western country has been to provide homes for their children. How can they better provide, than to devote a tenth of the estate to woodlands, which continue to grow

while they sleep, and which will increase in value more rapidly than bonds and interest?

Twenty years growth will make a tract of woodland valuable for manufacturing purposes. There are numerous trees in Kansas and Nebraska planted within twenty years, which prove that timber has grown to such size in two decades; and if planted in large quantities, given fair cultivation in the start, and cared for as they deserve, will pay better than anything grown on a farm.

One-tenth of the state in timber would mean the building up of a manufacturing community superior to any in the older states, whose timber supply is now nearly consumed.

While certain manufactures, as furniture, require lumber from large trees, yet the most important industries demand young growths, from fifteen to thirty years' age, the wood of which is strong, elastic and full of life.

Railways are great consumers of wood in various forms; the supply is fast being exhausted. Timber for this use should be growing on the prairies, the demand will only cease when railways are abandoned.

Those localities which have for more than a century been denuding the land of its timber, cannot be induced to plant trees, or even preserve what few remain, and the West should take advantage of the situation and create on the prairie and plain such groves and woodlands as will supply the continent with lumber and ties.

Violent winds will be diverted into higher air currents; evaporation be reduced thereby; greater regularity in rainfall will be secured; springs and rivulets will be fed continually as the spongelike soil of the woodlands permits the water to percolate slowly; snows melting more gradually will be of greater benefit to agriculture; while the soil will become, each year, more fertile by the addition of leaves and vegetable mould.

By changing the industries of the state from one purely agricultural, adding the manufactures' and mechanics' arts, in the consumption of wood grown in the state, all will enhance the value of farm productions by providing a home demand for them.

JOHN P. BROWN.

Connersville, Indiana.

During the year 1897 the state of Nebraska shipped for consumption in other states and in Europe, 76,346,362 bushels of corn, 18,040,915 bushels of wheat, 657,942 head of cattle, together with 1,958,752 hogs.

All this bread and meat was produced on the prairies of Nebraska, known less than fifty years ago as a part of the "Great American Desert." In this case the desert has certainly been made "to blossom as the rose," although there was never a rose that produced bread and meat with such celerity and perfection.

**THE VALUE OF
FORESTS.**

Cultivation of the soil embraces agriculture, horticulture and arboriculture. The first of this trinity is the real source of all prosperity and national advancement. But the source can not be maintained in its original potency, if all adjacent or contiguous lands are denuded of timber. Treelessness is an enemy to the farmer.

In Europe the governments have taken control of the forests. They have established special bureaus of arboriculture. Thus the forests of Europe are being made instruments of health and fertility. More than that, governments derive increased revenues from the forests over there.

Phœnicea and other provinces of Asia and Africa, once fertile in cereals and in fruits and inhabited by a dense and prosperous population are now nothing more than arid deserts. Their forests, their prosperity, their existence as political factors perished together. Spain with constantly diminishing forests is rapidly becoming an infertile and arid desert. In Scotland, however, and in France, the cultivation of trees has demonstrated the beneficent influence of forests; and even in Egypt there is a perceptible increase of rainfall since tree-planting on a large scale has been introduced.

During the year 1897 Otoe county shipped eastward and southward 3,411,821 bushels of corn, 332,075 bushels of wheat, 7,000 head of fat cattle, and 33,116 head of hogs. During the same time Otoe county ground into starch and cereal goods 1,250,000 bushels of corn and made into flour about 100,000 bushels of wheat. And during the same period Otoe county furnished the Chicago Packing & Provision Co.'s house with nearly 200,000 hogs.

These facts and figures only faintly suggest the productive possibilities of Otoe county when nearly all of our four hundred and odd thousand acres of land have been put to their utmost capacity by improved methods of tillage.

**BLIND
CHAPLAINS.**

A sinner suggests that the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Congress of the United States can be more hopefully and zealously prayed for by clergymen who cannot look their members in the face. Few preachers with good eyes, saith the sinner, would have the moral courage to invoke wisdom and blessings on average congressmen whose habits and morals are not taught in Sunday schools. The present chaplains—Mr. Milburn and Mr. Couden—are blind.

In the next issue of THE CONSERVATIVE there will be a brief sketch of the schools in Nebraska City, beginning with the spring of 1855. For this the readers will be indebted to W. H. Skinner, superintendent of public instruction for Nebraska City.