

THE FORESTS OF AMERICA.

[An address by John P. Brown, Secretary of the Indiana Forestry Association, before the Retail Lumber Dealers Association at Indianapolis, January 15, 1901.]

In a country so extensive as ours, having no forest policy, it is difficult to determine our forest possessions. What is the extent of our woodlands? How much is available for our Middle States' markets? How long may we expect to continue the industries which are dependent upon wood? Are there any methods for perpetuating these industries?

Two Centuries of Clearing.

Two centuries of clearing, making of homes and states, have greatly reduced our original forests. The land area of the United States is 2,968,700 square miles. The arid plains and treeless prairies occupy 1,730,000 square miles; almost 60 per cent of the total area. The clearings of two hundred years; the cultivated farms of timbered states; the vast areas lumbered over; and the fire swept forests; should all be deducted from the 40 per cent originally timbered. Yet, the geological survey of the United States estimates our present forest area at 1,094,496 square miles; 37 per cent of the total area. If this authority is correct, we have consumed less than 12 per cent of the original forests.

"Is a Timber Famine Imminent," was the subject of an article in "The Forum" for October, by the chief geographer, Mr. Gannett, who places the stand of timber in the East at 1,500, board measure, per acre, 750 billion feet. Since he classes the East as all territory east of 103° west longitude, he vastly overcalculates the wooded areas; includes brush lands, abandoned farms, large areas now under cultivation, and makes no deduction for years of clearing, nor for fires. I enter a protest against the acceptance of such estimates.

Erratic Methods Employed.

East of 103° west longitude, are thirty-six states and two territories. Of these six are prairie states; five have been partially examined by the geological survey, while in the remaining twenty-five states, comprising 1,152,747 square miles. The estimates of forest areas were taken from the census reports of 1880. Since that census was taken two decades of vigorous lumbering have destroyed more than half the forests. Thus the basis being so erratic, the estimates are worthless and should not be employed to form public opinion. In Indiana and many other states the most productive farms were forests twenty years ago.

"The Forum" article claims that the stand of timber in the United States is 1,380,000,000,000 feet and will last fifty

years. Such an extravagant statement from a recognized authority has done incredible injury by increasing the apathy or indifference among all citizens and especially congress.

East of 103° west longitude are 1,782,420 square miles, of which there are in prairie 782,840 square miles, leaving 999,630 square miles which, at the discovery of America, were forests. All of our great agricultural states have been taken from this area. As an example, Indiana is claimed to still possess 10,800 square miles of forest, 6,912,000 acres, at 1,500 feet per acre. More than ten billion feet of walnut, oak, ash and poplar, worth \$500,000,000,000. Indiana has not one-tenth that amount of forest. There is not a state in the Union but has been grossly overestimated.

A few scattering trees in a pasture lot does not constitute a forest to be estimated at "1,500 feet per acre." Timber lands, cleared of all valuable trees and turned over to the state, as no longer worth paying taxes upon, as in Michigan and elsewhere, should have been omitted. Broken and mountainous lands, partially covered with immature brush, only here and there a tree, gives a very erroneous conception of our resources when counted to swell the area of a states' forest wealth.

What We Do Possess.

The forest commissioner of Maine says: "While a large area exists, it is not all virgin growth by any means. All has been lumbered. Some townships are nearly exhausted. It would convey a much more intelligent idea to say 50 per cent is in forest growth."

The New Hampshire forest commissioner reports: "The only forest with which economic forestry will have to do for many years is that which clothes the slopes of the White Mountains." This is less than one-fourth the state's area. Much which has been classed as forest consists of abandoned farms and pasture.

The Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture says: "2,340 square miles or 29 per cent are forest."

The commissioner of forests of Pennsylvania says: "Our white pine forests are practically gone. A few years cutting of hemlock remains in the northern part of the state. We cannot secure enough of good white oak in the state for railway ties, and the rock oak has ceased to be available because so scattering. Approximately twenty per cent of the state has fairly good timber."

In the Carolinas, where the timber is near enough to tide water for exporting lumber, none will go to help the shortage of our northern markets. My correspondents agree that there are only between 9,000 and 10,000 square miles of commercial timber in North Carolina or 19 per cent.

Throughout the mountain regions of Kentucky are large areas of rough land,

partly covered with brush, here and there a red oak tree, the good timber having been removed.

In the less accessible regions are tracts of chestnut oak, chestnut, some white oak and more or less pine. Everything that would float having been moved down the streams. The valuable white oak has been cut for staves, while half a hundred railways have for years had agents gathering up cross-ties. From 8,000 to 10,000 square miles of commercial timber remain.

The best authorities in Tennessee agree that only 10,000 square miles are wooded. Dr. J. B. Killebrew writes: "Nominally 24,000 square miles is the wooded area, but it would be misleading to suppose all this area to abound in timber trees. More than half has been denuded of its large trees. The state will not go beyond 10,900 square miles of timber."

Arkansas oak has been shipped to northern markets in increasing quantities each year, since walnut ceased to be a fashionable wood. At the same time western railways have drawn largely upon this state for ties and timbers. The wood is not increasing to keep pace with the consumption. Twenty to twenty-five thousand square miles is a large estimate of present supply.

Colorado's Disappearing Conifers.

The damage done by fires has been beyond the ability of man to estimate. The Colorado Forestry Association estimates the present stand at 5,000 square miles, which my own observations would confirm.

Puget Sound forests all go to the export trade. Transportation forbids its shipment eastward to any great extent. They will not fill the yards of our Middle States. Vast losses by fire and denudation by wasteful lumbering have reduced the supply amazingly.

The same may be said of California's vanishing red wood. The timber of the Rocky Mountain region will all be required for local use in the mines and building improvement.

The president of the Wisconsin Forestry Association writes: "Our pine lands have been pretty well lumbered over, so that from 130,000,000,000 feet of forty years ago, we have probably now less than 17,000,000,000 feet, and at the present rate of lumbering this will soon be exhausted."

"Many lumbering concerns have quit the business or gone to other states. The annual cut is 3,000,000,000 over and above the annual increase in growth—which is not to exceed 200,000,000."

The lumber situation is similar in Michigan—several million acres of once finely timbered pine lands, cleared of its forests, sandy, non-agricultural soil, have been turned over to the state as not worth paying taxes upon.

Indiana Situation.

Our state was formerly one of the best