

## FOREST PRESERVATION—THE PATRIOT'S DUTY

E. M. NORTH, DESPLAINES

America is yet young. It is the springtime of her youth in spite of her spectacular development and the great inroads she has made upon her natural resources. We have made progress that easily outdoes any other nation in history, pioneering as we have done into new lands. We are still far enough this side of actual depletion of most of our natural resources to be able to arrest the usual course of waste to which every nation has fallen a prey. The United States is about to reap another great advantage from her educated citizenship in the promising conservation programs that are meeting with popular approval.

It is true that some of our natural resources are gone forever. In the absence of any conservation plan, the wild-pigeon is gone; the beaver is nearly extinct; the buffalo is maintained with difficulty in a few herds; natural gas, apparently inexhaustible at one time, is now but a memory in some sections of the country. Men here remember the six-or-eight-inch gas-wells in Indiana that were lighted for show day and night, sending a column of roaring flame a hundred feet high and turning darkness to daylight to the astonishment of beholders. They may also remember sitting in an Indianapolis hotel on a cold winter day with a gas-stove giving out a flame the size of a candle's. It is possible then to be recklessly and heedlessly destructive of wealth that belongs as much to the citizens of 2250 as of 1850.

For, after all, to whom does the land of a nation belong? The owners of a farm in one generation camp on it for a few brief years, take leave of life, and involuntarily surrender ownership to the succeeding generation. No man owns his piece of land, no matter how solemnly the Recorder of Deeds may officially declare it. It is to be the possession and the home of uncounted generations after him, who will come like himself, to camp on the spot, draw their sustenance from it for a few fretful years, and then move on in the great caravan of humans.

that press ceaselessly over the Great Divide. It would seem quite evident that the Great Designer of this interesting orb never intended that any single generation should take a mowing-machine to the natural resources of any region on the face of the earth.

This has been done in some lands with some of their natural resources. China today is reaping a harvest of penury and famine and flood through the indiscriminate exploitation of her forests for many generations. The inspiration of her sages and religion makers has not been wise in this matter; their deity failed to reveal this vital failure to them. Their people perish, often a million a year, from floods that need not occur. One would expect this in a country where the people do not read or write, and where national life has not been developed in any real sense whatever. They are like the over enthusiastic youth at the circus who spends all his loose change for red-lemonade and peanuts and finds himself without car-fare at midnight, twenty miles from home. Before it is too late for our own young nation it is the part of a patriot to thrust the problem of conservation into the daily thought of his countrymen. The extent toward which forest depletion has been rapidly driving will make the average citizen rub his eyes and stare in amazement. As for our forest-resources, we are like a young man with all his front teeth out at twenty-five.

America once had inexhaustible forests over wide reaches of her territory—easily inexhaustible with any sort of early national inventory and planning. No section of this country outside of the great treeless plains needed ever to be a pauper begging for lumber. They had enough and to spare. But pioneering was done at fever-heat. Almost as by legerdemain the forests of whole states were cut away to such a degree that people can not today live upon millions of acres that once supported a thriving population. One can travel today in eastern states, in some regions for miles, and see only an occasional farm. The one time wealth-producing acres have been abandoned; farms that once had enough timber upon them to support a good-sized family today have only an occasional tree. In fact, all sections of the

United States except the far Northwest are wearing more and more the emaciated look of a hunger victim.

The Northeastern States, once rich in forests, are now hard put to it to run their huge paper pulp-mills, shipping in two-thirds of their supplies from Canada, and they are feeling much as did the Irishman who cut off the limb between himself and the tree. Already Canada has put an embargo on crown-forest shipments, and the paper-print factories are panicky lest export from private forests be also forbidden. Is it not humiliating to be an industrial suppliant at the feet of a British province for such a prime necessity as print-paper? Now some few attempts are being made in the East to remedy this matter by intelligent tree-farming, but it is too late to overtake the lost opportunity. What can we do if the Canadian supply fails us? Canada is not the one to worry about that. England with her serious housing scarcity, and her determined attempt at reforestation, is almost sure to call upon her loyal province over here to help her out, and an embargo of Canadian lumber-products is not at all improbable.

The great Northwest Territory from the Ohio to the Lakes was plentifully supplied with timber, almost an unbroken forest of noble hardwoods, when its doors were opened to the settlers who poured in like a horde of invaders to appropriate her natural resources. Restless, ambitious, energetic, resistless, they first laid the axe to the forests. Billions of feet of the finest lumber were fed to the Moloch of unregulated exploitation. Have you never heard men yet living tell how they cleared these forests for the domesticated plants of agriculture? The neighbors would gather upon invitation for a log-burning. The trees had been felled and partially trimmed; they dragged them into great piles as high as a house, and attaching cables, their horses in tandem drew them up inclined planes until they looked like grouped cottages and farm-buildings. Then the fire was applied, and respecting no aristocracy of species, quality or size, it consumed with lurid greediness black-walnuts, sugar, oak, poplar, elm and ash, often as much as six feet in diameter,



monarchs upon which Nature had spent two or three hundred years of architectural efforts.

Even where some of the timber was left standing, often when taking out the salable timber, the wood-cutters were entirely careless of the trees about them, and many younger trees were and are still being destroyed when the giant falling ruins a score of others about him. Unscientific and ruinous pasturing has trampled down the soft forest-earth until it is hard and often baked, very inhospitable to struggling seedlings that do their best to preserve the species.\* Forest fires too have been very destructive, and even today the forests actually burned would equal a strip ten miles wide from New York City to Denver, annually consigned to destruction. Careless campers, hunters and automobilists are responsible for the largest percentage of losses from this cause. The U. S. Forestry Department expects to accomplish a very large annual saving, 1,000,000,000 cubic feet, and \$17,000,000 worth, by effectively curbing this loss. In our own state of Illinois more than half the fire-loss is due to the railroads, wood-cutters and careless campers. It is not unusual to see the tell-tale scars left by a dozen successive campers who built their camp-fires among the roots of some lordly roadside elm that had gladdened the eye of a generation of admirers of beauty.

What is the result among us in the Central West? 90 per cent of the original forest is gone, and at very heavy cost for transportation, you and I and our needy neighbors are importing 47 per cent of our lumber from distant regions, some of it from the South, herself already in straits for some species, but mostly from the remote Northwest Pacific States. From kings to paupers! There is more reality in the term than is pleasant to recall. Members here who are familiar with the housing conditions in our great cities and their suburbs are well aware that thousands of our citizens are living in dwellings of about the size and quality of store-boxes, unsanitary, unfit for habitation, such as no farmer would think of housing his animals in, for he would be sure that pneumonia would destroy them. This is a national wrong. Good patriotism can not rest without bringing about a

change. America is too young a nation to be preparing a pauper class in any such numbers as these.

Even the South is beginning to realize that she has cut back her fingernails too close to the quick. Once the Southeast used to supply practically all the world's naval stores of tar, pitch, rosin, turpentine, etc., and she still claims to supply 85 per cent of it. But slowly and surely France is overtaking us with products from her artificial pine-forests under government supervision. We no longer have a monopoly on these products, and it seems probable that we must gradually say goodbye to a large percentage of it. Again the cause is found in the reckless handling of the patient pines that have suffered themselves to be vandalized by unscientific exploiters. From this same cause in other sections of the South other species are being so rapidly depleted that Florida citrus-growers are sending S. O. S. calls in every direction for crating for their fruits.

In the telling of the whole tale, volumes could be written by our Forest Department, but our time limits here are wisely narrow, and we can do little more than mention some of the main features. But before such a body as this it is worth any citizen's time if even but one more recruit is made in ten minutes for the policy of intelligent conservation of this valuable resource.

In the remaining minute or so it will be worth our while to hear the program of the U. S. Forestry Department, now drawn up in the form of a law under discussion in Congress under the name of the McNary Bill. This provides:

1. The initiation of a definite Forestry Policy, in which both the Nation and the States will bear an equal share of the responsibility both of oversight and financial support.

2. By bringing the nation to realize that it must no longer treat our forests as an inexhaustible resource, but that lumber must become a crop to be cultivated as wheat and corn are cultivated. This means additional educational facilities for teaching the new science of forest culture.

3. Legislation changing the present unfair tax-system that taxes growing forests that cannot yield any return, at the same rate as those acres beside them that are annually producing wealth.

These are all included in the McNary Bill, and any influence members may have for getting this bill through Congress can be turned to a service of intelligent patriotism in its behalf.