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FOREST FIRES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON TRADE.

We learn from the American lumber papers that forest fires have been more than usually prevalent and destructive this spring. Following closely on the heels of the late destructive fire at Chicago, and the enormous amount of prepared timber actually turned into smoke and ashes and returned in that shape to the land and the atmosphere, have been the widespread visits of the fire fiend to the raw material where it grows. In the month of May forest fires were raging along the line of the Mackinac and Marquette railroad, settlement visited, timber and logs destroyed, and people driven from their homes. Fire had also been devastating along the Harrison branch of the F. & A. P. M. railroad, and besides the destruction of standing timber 400,000 feet of Norway logs, on skids, were burned, also 800,000 feet of 15 per cent. white pine logs, on skids, were totally destroyed. In fact, the fires seem very impartial, and to visit most of the northern States indiscriminately, Pennsylvania, Maine and New Jersey having also suffered seriously from them. Nor has Canada been exempt, and even the remote region of British Columbia has suffered a heavy visitation. The town of Farwell was stated to be totally destroyed, railway property burned up, and other extensive damage done. It seems as if fires were an epidemic that breaks out uncontrollably, and at unexpectedly odd times and seasons, and it is said that the year 1885 will be noted for its forest fires and great destruction, even before the snow was fairly off the ground or had disappeared from the woods.

It is remarkable, too, that town fires seem to rage in sympathy with the forests, for it is not easy to understand why the buildings and timber stocks in a settlement or city should be destroyed because the forest next to the locality happens to be on fire, with broad lands cleared and cultivated between. One would not imagine a saw mill to be without a considerable space of ground, well cleared of its timber around it; yet we are told that the water-power, saw-mill, boarding house, etc., on the estate of Paul Carmine at Old Stronach (Michigan) was totally destroyed to the value of \$20,000, and that "the fire originated from forest fires, which have been very destructive in that vicinity. Lakeside, near Muskegon, was also visited. The fire originated in G. E. Wood's lumber yard. Mill saved, but 5,000,000 feet of lumber licked up." Surely the forest fire must be held guiltless of these disasters? Yet somehow they occur, so simultaneously that there appears to be some latent connection between them, which is allowed as a reasonable excuse for them if the forest, miles away or just within sight, were on fire. On this subject, a moralist in a recent number of the *New York Record and Guide* makes the

following sensible remarks, not unworthy of Touchstone, or even of the "Melancholy Jacques" himself:—

"Our philosophy and knowledge of the occult forces of nature are not deep enough to explain the laws that govern casualties and crimes. One railway train jumps the track, and directly following a half dozen similar accidents are reported from different sections of the country. A steamship is blown up, burned, or foundered, and on several widely separated seas the casualty is repeated in various modified forms. Boston followed Chicago in an attempt to imitate or initiate the general conflagration with the Second Adventists predict, and murder and suicide are confessedly epidemic. Who can explain this mystery? A despatch to one of the morning papers, dated Hornellsville, May 17th, gave an account of 12 suicides in a single week in that town and vicinity. We mention the fact but attempt no explanation. Probably this frightful record of self-immolation would be thought no mystery by the people of some of the adjacent towns, rivals to Hornellsville. They would call it only a natural expression of the disgust which all people whose experience of life is limited to Hornellsville must feel. But this would be only ill-natured and furnish no clue to the philosophy of which we are in search."

The conclusion arrived at from these frequent fires is that the price of timber must harden at the fountain head, but in the meantime the lumbermen's labor is not interrupted. For instance, it is stated that a gentleman from the Lake Superior lumber region reports as follows:—

"The cut on Bad and White rivers has been greatly in excess of what was intended, but the lumbermen are hopeful, and fear their log supply will not be adequate to fill the demand. Shipments by lake as well as by rail are steadily on the increase, and orders accumulating as the season moves on." Thus it appears that, while fires are destroying the woods wholesale, enough remains to keep the lumbermen as fully employed as if there had been no fires at all.

The trade reports from America like those at home, speak unfavorably of the actual state of trade, though always hopeful. The opinion of the paper just quoted is that "the business of the country is depressed. Enterprise of all kinds is discouraged. Speculation is dead, and hence railroad business in the aggregate is not profitable, more from the cutting of rates than the decrease of tonnage carried. The one hopeful sign is that the railroads do more business than ever before, but at unremunerative rates."

But in describing decay of trade in vast commercial communities like those of Great Britain and America such statements must not be taken too literally, and they are often accompanied by information, incidentally brought forward, which is directly opposed to this doctrine. As for instance the *New Orleans*

Times Democrat tells us that the *Baltimore Manufacturers' Record*, in its review of new enterprises reported for the week, tends strongly to show that there is a great deal of activity and not a little progress in nearly all the States. Alabama has a new land and improvement company, with a capital of \$100,000, and which, it is said, will have charge of the Mobile and Ohio lands. Florida is alive with new sugar and saw mills. Georgia reports a new street railway in Rome, and saw mills, planing mills, and many small industries are being started. Kentucky appears with a new flour mill, a large saw mill, and the large distillery at Owenboro, lately burned is being rebuilt. In Louisiana, New Orleans people are starting a company to manufacture textile fabrics. The capital, \$375,000 is reported as subscribed. Monroe is to have enlarged shops of the Vicksburg, Shreveport, and Pacific Railway, and street cars and improvements are under way in many parts of the state. A new oil and fertilizer manufacturing company has been organized in Mississippi, at Aberdeen. North Carolina comes to the front with a tobacco factory chemical works, saw mills, and planing mills. Tennessee is credited with a new coal and coke company, a tobacco factory, and many new enterprises before reported or not yet ready. Texas is heard from through a paper mill, a flour mill, saw mills, an iron foundry, and so on. Virginia has a new steam flour mill company, development plants for coal and gold mines, a carriage factory going up and several minor matters. West Virginia has Bessemer steel works, now building at Wheeling, with capacity of 300 tons of steel daily. A new coal mine has been opened near Mt. Carbon. Charleston is a new foundry ahead, and the state is generally doing her duty in the matter of progress. It is very pleasing to encounter these constant evidences that the section is awake to the necessities and opportunities of the hour. The Exposition has been availed of to interest both "home folk" and strangers in many industrial chances, and the results are beginning to be apparent in all portions of the south. As the financial situation of the country improves these evidences will be largely multiplied, and especially as to the leading industries, such as iron, coal and timber.

In like manner, while we are lamenting over the depression of trade and the absence of speculation in our own country, in common with our contemporaries, other parts of our paper, for example our columns of "Building Notes," and our "Building Supplement," bear testimony to what an immense deal of good business is still doing in spite of every drawback.

These forest fires, of course, do mighty mischief, but they burn up a great deal of rubbish that would never have been exported. Some effect they may have on prices, but the

quantity to come forward to this country will hardly be diminished by them. Our American correspondent's letter published on 6th June, takes this view, as he calculates the excess of this year's cut in the States will greatly exceed that of last year, and the lumbermen of Canada are not likely to be behindhand. Conventions may meet and propose to raise prices by combination, but after they separate each individual is apt to look out for himself, and, perhaps, to forget the conditions to which he has formally assented. At all events, some do; and even one dissentient breaks up the good faith of the understanding, and prices relapse into their old irregularity.

At present it looks as though there would be plenty of timber in the British market from all the shipping countries, and the best hope is that there may be plenty of home trade to render it welcome.

The unexpected they say is the likeliest to happen, and a good demand may spring up when we have almost abandoned the hope of it. There is plenty of trade still, but its profits are too much subdivided. There are so many in the race that not a few must be out of the running. — *Timber Trades Journal*.

THE CANADIAN LOAN.

LONDON, June 29.—The tenders for the Canadian loan of four million pounds sterling were opened to day, and it was found the loan was subscribed for three times over. The minimum fixed was ninety-nine, and the bonds were for fifty years with the option reserved by the Government of Canada to redeem them at the end of twenty five years. No sinking fund is attached to this loan. The first coupons will be due the 1st January next. The whole four millions have been tendered for at rates which bring up the rate per \$100 to £1 17s. 8d. premium. The three and a half per cent. loan obtained in June, 1884, was equal to 102 for fours with sinking fund attached. The sinking fund in former loans is one half of one per cent. The loan just effected without sinking fund is, therefore, three-eighths of one per cent. better than the three and a half per cent. loan of last year with its one half per cent. sinking fund, without calculating the gain made in consequence of the change in the plan of allotment and in time of first payment of interest coupons. The allowance in the loan of to day is about one half per cent. In 1878 Sir Leonard Tilley's four per cent. loan netted ninety-five and a half and in 1874 Sir Richard Cartwright's loan netted eighty-seven and a half. Both these loans had sinking funds attached. The success of this new loan shows the desire of British capitalists to invest in Canadian securities.

GEO. A. FRIST & CO., Fort Arthur, Ont., are succeeded by the Fort Arthur Lumbering Company.