

A Land of Illimitable Limits? Canada has the largest forest area of any country in the world, and has also a far greater aggregate of water-power than any other country. Considering the relation of forests to water-powers, and the relation of water-power to electrical energy in a country largely deficient in coal,—at least in its central provinces,—and considering further the relation of forests to those industrial arts in which Canada excels, the conservation of those forests becomes the gravest problem in the whole range of our material life.

The area of the forests of Canada is estimated by Dr. Robt. Bell, of the Geological Survey of Canada, at 2,600,000 square miles, or about 1,657,600,000 acres, of which over half may be in pulpwood. This may appear to afford us timber limits illimitable, but huge areas of these timber lands are inaccessible and will remain so until vast sums of money are expended for transportation facilities, while in our more northerly regions, the annual growth and, consequently, the rate of reproduction, is slower than in areas to the south. Hence, we will find in Canada, as those engaged in the timber trade of the United States have already discovered to their dismay, that the stores of wood commercially available, are by no means inexhaustible. We still have this great advantage, that we can profit by the follies and mistakes of our neighbors, and apply the ounce of prevention rather than wait till we need the pound of cure.

The Self-Consuming Zeal. The zeal and energy of Americans in developing great enterprises, and the devotion of many of them to money, have led them into excesses which have brought suffering to the people, and will, if pursued, cause still more suffering and privation to future generations. The reckless exhaustion of the soil of the western prairies which is largely the cause of the migration of American farmers to the Canadian North-West; the wanton depletion of the white fish and herring on the American side of Lake Erie by American fishermen who after the destruction of their own fishing grounds invaded the Canadian side regardless of Canadian laws or of danger to good relations between two countries; the clamor of the American fur sealing interests for a monopoly of the seal killing in Behring Sea, and the swift decimation of the seals in consequence of securing that monopoly; the fishing by the most destructive methods which has marked the operations of American fishermen on the Atlantic coasts, where many kinds of fish are almost extinct, and where encroachments on the territorial waters of Canada and Newfoundland have caused constant friction between neighboring peoples—these are examples of that zeal or greed for gain which is concerned with its own day and hour, and takes no thought of the claims of posterity.

But the evils that are being brought on the country by all these classes, are of little consequence compared with the destruction of American forests—an evil which in its effects on future generations, may truly be described as the abomination that maketh desolation.