

Timber Resources of Australia*(Continued from Page 1015)*

farms, referred to above, they grow two crops of maize each year.

Some Dangerous Types

Any standard work on botany will give a full list of Australian trees, from the scientific point of view. Science nearly always seems to neglect the practical, and does not give much detail about mercantile value, or the utility of the trees. It does, however, warn against dangerous types. In the coastal region, especially in the tropics, there are several very dangerous trees and shrubs. Some, even to touch the leaves with the naked skin, gives intense pain, others have saps of lethal quality. One in particular, a very handsome shrub, with broad, beautifully tinted leaves, invites one to pick them for their sheer beauty. On the writer's first visit to the Barron Falls, a party of tourists arrived at the same time. An elderly lady of this party picked some of these leaves with her bare hands; and was in agony for over 24 hours. Her hands swelled like boxing gloves. She had prompt attention too.

In the jungle areas, there are some very mean vines. One called "wait-a-bit" catches the unwary, and it takes patience to get free.

Another is called "the lawyer." This has large curved thorns, and it is claimed that the vine bends round anything touching it and these hooks fasten into the clothes. Once well caught, it is hard to escape with a rag of clothing. The writer never experimented personally, but people who have, speak of it in very evil terms.

White Ants Devour Windfalls

In the inland side of the range, the forest is not so dense, and one thing in particular strikes anyone who may have seen these natural forests, that is the absence of dead trees, and rotten logs on the ground. Probably as many windfalls occur as with us, but the white ants devour the fallen trees there very speedily. There are two trees which the ants will not touch, the ti-tree, and gidyea. These are consequently in much demand for fence posts, and building blocks, to erect wooden buildings on. All wooden houses are built on blocks, to preserve them from the ravages of the white ants. The gidyea is a free bloomer, and a grove of these in flower gives out the most nauseous thing in scents known to the writer, and he has met skunks, which, on this side seem to hold the record in that line. This fetid odor of the flower may have something to do

with the ants refusing the wood as an article of diet.

The ants do not always wait for a tree to fall before attacking. They build a mound around the trunk, and devour the tree as it stands; when the tree is all used up, they roof over the vacant spot. Most of the very large ant hills are no doubt made in that way. Anyone who has not actually witnessed the ravages of the white ant, can hardly credit the destruction these insects commit, on anything of wood. The trees mentioned in eastern Australia and the jarrah of west Australia are the exceptions. The jarrah is even more immune to insect attack, as even the teredo will not touch it, consequently this timber is in much demand for wharf piles, in all sea ports.

Ant Hills As Ovens

It is a common practice with mining prospectors, to select a small ant hill for an oven. He breaks a hole in the side with his pick, clears out the cell divisions, makes a draft hole in the top; and the oven is ready for firing. While the oven is heating up, he is busy mixing his "damper" as they call their bread in the bush.

A former town clerk of Charters Towers, in north Queensland, (where the writer resided for over 20 years) had a fine collection of cabinet woods. He had about 30 different trees sectioned in various ways, and polished to show the grain and color. These were all good. Perhaps Queensland rosewood was the choicest. This collection had quite a range of color from almost clear white (satin-wood) through shades of yellow, brown, red,

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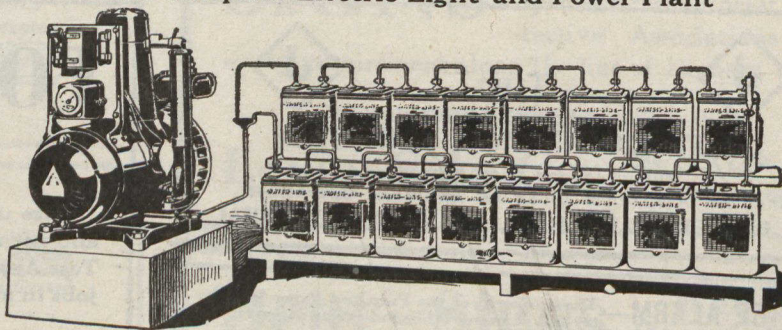
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and almost black, besides variegations. Anyone who has seen a similar collection, cannot doubt that there will arise a large demand for most, if not all, of these some day.

The timber business is not conducted so efficiently in tropical Australia as in Canada. The Canadian winter gives us a big advantage in operation. For size and clean appearance of the saw-logs, however, we have to go to British Columbia to find the equal of the Australian ones.

Queensland has a wide range of botanical species, and has been searched pretty thoroughly, by experts from all over the world. It has many curious trees and plants, one in particular that everyone writing on the subject always mentions—the bottle tree. It is really shaped more like a demi-john but has been duly started out with the former title, and is likely to hold it to the end of time.

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