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### THE INCREASING CONSUMPTION OF WOOD

So that none of our readers may rest under the delusion that the subject of forest conservation is one of merely academic interest, it will be well to give a resumé of some of the points made in a very striking address, by Dr. Judson F. Clark, Forester of the Province of Ontario, before the Canadian Forestry Association.

It is an admitted fact that other materials, such as iron, steel, cement, etc., have largely taken the place of wood in construction work. At the same time, while this is undoubtedly going on, the ratio in which the consumption of wood increases is growing larger than ever. In most, probably all, countries of the civilized world, the per capita demand for wood becomes larger with every year, notwithstanding the substitution of other materials.

Dr. Clark gives the case of Great Britain as a notable illustration in point. That country offers a good test, for she imports practically all her lumber, which is thus apt to be used with economy, and she is also a leading country in the consumption of iron and cement. Surely, there, if anywhere, would be shown a falling off in the consumption of wood commensurate with the increase in price. The exact contrary, however, is shown to be the case. The increase in the consumption of wood by the United Kingdom in the fifteen years from 1886 to 1900, was eighty per cent. Not only this, but per capita tables show that the average man increased his use of that material by sixty per cent. in the same period. The per capita consumption of cabinet woods also increased one hundred per cent., while that of wood pulp actually increased by three hundred per cent. In the United States a similar story is told, with heightened emphasis, the consumption of wood having grown from 160 feet board measure per head of population in 1850 to 460 feet in 1900. Dr. Clark avers that, were it possible to limit the annual cut in North America to a

volume equivalent to the annual growth, as is now commonly the case in Europe, there would be such a shortage of supplies that not only would exportation be impossible, but prices would advance to unheard-of figures. The gradual exhaustion of the remaining forests and the continued devastation by fires, will soon, he prophesies, force this result; and the day will come, not so far ahead, when North America will import at high cost a poor substitute for the cargoes of the finest timber in the world, which she has been sending abroad at little more than the cost of cutting and transporting.

Coming still closer home, Dr. Clark refers to the forest resources of Canada, which he acknowledges to be very great. However, speaking of what a mistake it would be to declare that these resources are inexhaustible, he says:—

Twenty years ago the white pine in Michigan was regarded as inexhaustible. To-day six million acres, which thirty years ago carried the finest white pine forest in the world have been abandoned by their owners for taxes, and lie almost wholly waste, a man-made desert, the combined result of a reckless use of the axe and a still more reckless use of fire. While it is very improbable that any considerable body of men hold that the forests of Canada are inexhaustible, I believe that not a few over-estimate the national forest wealth. True, we have some hundreds of millions of acres of forest lands—lands which on account of their non-agricultural character must, or at least should, always remain under forest cover. Such an area is almost beyond human comprehension. So, too, I fear is the destruction of the forest by fire in this northern vastness. I have read with some care the stories told by explorers, surveyors and trappers, and all tell a tale of forest destruction by fire during the last twenty or thirty years, which, if the total could be brought together, would stagger belief. I have myself made a somewhat extended trip beyond the height of land in northern Ontario, and during the three weeks' travel I did not see a square mile of forest which did not show traces of having suffered by one or more fires during the last 150 years. A section of Banksian pine, cut near Mattagami, on the western border of the Temagami forest reserve,

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