

what they get for the transaction.

The situation is comparable to a fruit-grower who picks a ton of luscious grapes from his vines. Fine! That's what the vines are for.

But consider the ass who would rip up vines, roots and all, whenever anybody came to buy his grapes! The next year there would be no more grapes to sell.

Next decade or so there will be no more lumber to sell.

That's the story. It is the story of a singular creature known as The Great American Ass.

* * *

Three hundred years ago the forests and the fertility of America were supposed to be inexhaustible.

Today vast tracts of once fertile soil are exhausted and can be bought for almost nothing. And three-fifths of the original timber of the United States has disappeared.

Today we are using lumber *four times* as rapidly as we are growing it. Once the uncut forests of our country covered 822,000,000 acres. One-sixth remains. All woodlands, even including cut-over and burned areas, amount to about half the original virgin area.

Of idle, fallow, unused, and stupidly neglected land suitable only for forest growth and once bearing trees, 81,000,000 acres have been so ruthlessly cut or burned that it has become a wretched, useless, unproductive waste.

Three-quarters of the forests of New England are exterminated.

In a few years New England will *import* what lumber it requires.

New York, today, produces less than one-tenth of the lumber it requires.

Pennsylvania is now obliged to *import* eighty per cent. of the lumber it uses.

The white pine of Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, is nearly gone; the yellow pine is three-fourths gone from the South; in the Middle States the timber is practically exhausted; twenty years will end both the hardwood forests of the Appalachian region, and those of the Mississippi.

In twenty years the cypress, too, is doomed to vanish.

What remains? The Pacific Coast timber. And in thirty years that, too, will disappear.

When the forests go, the waters go, the fish and game go, crops go, herds and flocks go, fertility departs. Then the age-old phantoms appear,

stealthily one after another — Flood, Drouth, Fire, Famine, Pestilence.

* * *

The picture painted here isn't a pretty one. Nor have the colors chosen been too lurid or too thickly laid on. Alas, they have even been toned down! It's a rotten situation.

There are two ways of facing a rotten situation; get under the bed-clothes and try to forget it; or get up, put on your pants, go out and face it.

Of course the thing to do is to cut out the rottenness from the situation and turn it into a hopeful and practical one.

There is time, still. We'll have to pay for our asinine ignorance and indifference — pay in hard cash. Every pocket will feel it; every pocket feels it now. It's going to cost us what Broadway calls "real money." That can't be helped. The Piper must be paid. The thing to do is to pay him, send him away, and get down to brass tacks.

Now, then, here is the problem and the necessity:

We ought to grow sufficient timber in this vast land of ours for our own needs.

We ought to grow enough for profitable export.

We ought to grow enough permanently to protect our springs, watercourses, rivers, our water power, our navigable streams, the fertility of our fields, the welfare of our herds and crops.

We ought to grow enough to protect the health of our people.

We ought to grow enough to protect our birds; for, without them, our crops ultimately would be destroyed.

We ought to grow enough to give shelter and expansion to our game birds and animals, to our fur-bearing animals, to our fish.

There is no reason why we should not use our timber and have it, too—take each year what we require from our forests, and still retain our living forests — stately, permanent, useful, beautiful forests, paying in a hundred charming ways for the room they take and care they require — yes, paying even in money, and paying well as first-class, profitable investments.

The Government should assume control of all lumbering in the United States.

This proposition is radical and it sounds like interference with private business. But it must come to that or

our country becomes like China, a land of perpetual famine and poverty — like China which not very long ago could boast forests as magnificent as our own.

All lumbering should be under governmental control. The most drastic regulations should govern every operation which entails the felling of trees for whatever purpose.

For every tree felled in the United States a permit should be obtained. For every tree felled, another should be planted immediately.

Our hundreds and hundreds of thousands of waste acres — acres sterile, fallow, burnt over, cut over — which now yield nothing, should be planted to forests.

Where is the money to come from? For every "market" felled a fraction of a cent tax to Government — the entire sum to be spent in reforesting this wasted, mutilated land.

Federal control first of all; then Federal and State encouragement.

Seedlings, two-year, three-year transplants, grown in Federal or State nurseries, should be made attractively available to all who desire to start a patch of woods.

Every farm has its sterile, arid strips, of little or no use to agriculture, unless even for scanty pasturage.

It often has occurred to the writer that in the country, when two young people marry, no better provision for children, who ought to come, could be imagined than the planting of the waste acres with trees that would be a source of income to those children when grown and ready to marry.

As a nation we Americans are inclined to live for the present only. Seldom do we take thought for those who are to follow us—even for those to whom we owe every responsibility.

All woodlands ought to be, and can be, a source of perpetual income to their owners. On the acreage depends the income. Always lumber will be in demand. Always there will be need of home consumption also.

Let the Federal Government control; the State foster and encourage and make acquisition easy. Would it be a hardship if a State law made it obligatory that a certain percentage of every farm should be planted and maintained in forest?

There is another matter which the writer has considered recently; the planting and maintenance of county forests in every state. Every county contains land worthless for any other purpose.

What finer memorial to those who served in the Great War than a County Forest, offered,