

It is certainly a moderate statement to say that, by the middle of the present century, when our population will have reached the two hundred million mark, our best and most convenient coal will have been so far consumed that the remainder can only be applied to present uses at an enhanced cost which would probably compel the entire rearrangement of industries and revolutionize the common lot and common life. This is not a mere possibility, but a probability which our country must face.

The prospect of the iron interest is even more threatening and more sure. Our available iron deposits have been carefully catalogued. All the fields of national importance have been known for at least twenty years. Within that time their boundaries and probable capacity have been estimated, and the whole country has been prospected. The most reasonable computation of scientific authority affirms that existing production cannot be maintained for fifty years, assuming that all the available iron ore known to us is mined. In fact, the period of free supply is likely to be much shorter.

In 1870 the United States produced a little more than 3,000,000 tons of iron ore. It increased by about one hundred and fifty per cent. for each decade to 1890. As late as 1895 it was a trifle short of 16,000,000 tons. In 1902 and 1903 it was, in round numbers, 35,000,000 tons, and in 1905 it rose to about 42,000,000 tons. At this rate, as all the trade statistics indicate, and as our present policy and growth in population require,