

“The present sawmill capacity (inclusive of shingle-mills) of the United States is between 140,000,000 ft. and 270,000,000 ft. B.M. daily, which would indicate, at the very lowest, an annual product of 30,000,000,000 ft. B.M. (requiring 4,000,000,000 cubic feet of forest-grown material), an increase of over 35 per cent. in the last five years. Only a small proportion of this is exported either as lumber timber or manufactures—namely, less than 150,000,000 cubic feet, or hardly 6 per cent. of the total output of lumber; and since we import about 95,000,000 cubic feet of wood material (less than 1 per cent. of our consumption) outside of fine cabinet-woods (of which we import about one and a half million dollars’ worth), the consumption of sawn wood products is over 40 cubic feet *per capita*. If we add the consumption of hewn timber and that used in railways, the requirements for sizable timber increase readily to 50 cubic feet *per capita*. To produce such amounts, the annual growth of not less than 500,000,000 acres of well-managed forest in good condition would be necessary, while the consumption in mining, fences, and especially for firewood, for which in this country body-wood hardly inferior to sawn-timber wood is chiefly used, would swell the necessary acreage to more than double that amount [*i.e.*, 1,000,000,000 acres].

“We have now less than 500,000,000 acres in forest-growth, but even that is neither in good condition nor well managed. We have, therefore, long ago begun to use more than the annual growth, and are cutting into the capital which we inherited at a rate which must sooner or later exhaust it unless we adopt recuperative methods. These figures are approximate, and without fine distinctions, but they will be found by those who study the subject conservative rather than extravagant.

“A computation by one of the journals representing lumbermen’s interests makes the amount of timber standing in the United States 1,200,000,000,000 ft. B.M., and the present annual consumption 10,000,000,000 ft., or one-third of the above figures. There exists, to be sure, no reliable basis for such computation, but even with these figures the supply would be exhausted in less than a hundred years, for our consumption during the last three decades has increased at the rate of about 30 per cent.

“While there are still enormous quantities of virgin timber standing, the accumulation of centuries, the supply is not inexhaustible. Even were we to assume on every acre a stand of 10,000 ft. B.M. of saw timber—a most extravagant average—we would, with our present consumption, have hardly one hundred years of supply in sight—the time it takes to grow a tree to satisfactory log size.

“Certain kinds of supplies are beginning to give out. Even the white-pine resources, which a few years ago seemed so great that to attempt an accurate estimate of them was deemed too difficult an undertaking, have since then become reduced to such small proportions that the end of the whole supply in both Canada and the United States is now plainly in view. The annual product of this pine from the sawmills has reached the enormous total of over 8,000,000,000 ft. B.M., which, if we assume a pine stumpage of 5,000 ft. to the acre—a high average—would require the cutting of 1,600,000 acres annually of their white-pine supplies. Since the three white-pine States (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) have a total reported forest-area of altogether 60,000,000 acres, it is evident that, even if we allow two-thirds of that area to be in the white-pine belt, and consider this area fully stocked—which it is not—twenty-five years would suffice to practically exhaust the supplies. These figures, crude though they may be, leave no doubt that the end of this staple is practically much nearer than we have supposed, and all opinions to the contrary may be set down as ill-founded.”

In *re* Forest Fires.—Inquiry made by the Forestry Division shows that 12,000,000 acres of woodland were burnt in 1891—the return showed log timber killed, 473,387,000 ft. B.M., and damage from forest fires to other than forest property to the extent of \$503,590, besides injury to valuable forest growth difficult to estimate. The loss from prairie fires to buildings and other property was reported as \$1,633,525.
