PART IV.—FOREIGN SUPPLIES.

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GENERAL REMARKS.

Appended hereto are details of the principal forest countries in the world, and, although it has not been possible to obtain as full information as is desirable, yet sufficient data has been gathered to enable citizens of this Dominion to realise what the supplies of timber from outside New Zealand are likely to be in the near future, and what extent they may be drawn upon by our timber-merchants.

The timber-supply of *Great Britain* is not nearly sufficient for the needs of its population, large quantities having to be imported from outside. The forests in other *European* counties are mostly only sufficient for the needs of their own populations, and Sweden is apparently the chief country which is able to export to any considerable extent, although the Central Bureau of Statistics stated that, in 1900, 106,000,000 cub. ft. were annually being withdrawn from her forests beyond what is annually produced. Its distance from this Dominion, moreover, renders a large importation of timber (except at very high prices) somewhat problematical. In 1907 France imported 6,769,560 pounds' worth of timber, and only exported £2,773,760; Germany imported £11,622,754 and exported £1,669,552; whilst Sweden in 1906 imported only 322,630 pounds' worth of timber, but exported £13,136,943.

It has been thought that the supply from North America would be sufficient to stave off any fear of a timber-famine in Australasia during this century, but on referring to the Government statistics in section (B) it will be seen that the timber-supply of the *United States* is only sufficient to meet the demand for another thirty-three years at most, and that even now the States draw large quantities of timber from Canada. Mr. Gifford Pinchot, the Chief of the Forest Service of the United States, asserts that "the United States has already crossed the verge of a timber-famine so severe that its blighting effects will be felt in every household in the land. At the present rate of consumption, the supply of timber in the United States will be exhausted in thirty years. The lumber business, now the fourth greatest industry in the country, will disappear. All forms of building industries will suffer. Mining will become vastly more expensive, and there will be a corresponding rise in coal and iron. The railways, unless a substitute for the wooden sleeper is found, will be profoundly affected, and the cost of transportation will rise. Farming will be more expensive. Water-power for lighting, manufacturing, and transportation will be affected. Irrigated agriculture will suffer most of all, for the destruction of the forests means the loss of the waters as surely as night follows day. With the rise in the cost of producing food, the cost of food itself will rise. Commerce in general will necessarily be affected by the difficulties of the primary industries upon which it depends. In a word, when the forests fail, the daily life of the average citizen will inevitably feel the pinch on every side—and the forests have already begun to fail."

Turning to *Canada*, we find that its forests are certainly enormous, and until very recently were expected to supply all possible local and foreign demands for at least a century. Yet Mr. Sheck, a forest expert attached to the German Consulate in Montreal, in December, 1905, reported to his Government that, after most careful investigation of the matter, the time had practically arrived when, outside spruce and birch, no timber could be exported from Canada. He stated that the best quality of white-pine had almost entirely disappeared, that there were insignificant supplies of red-pine, that the supplies of low-grain timber, cedar, and hemlock were rapidly disappearing, that all valuable hardwood was at the vanishing-point; but that there were large supplies of spruce, balsam-fir, Banks pine, birch, and poplar. For example, he found that in 1881 17,000,000 ft. of white-pine (the most important Canadian timber) had been felled and used, but that in 1891 the fall was down to 9,000,000 ft., and in 1901 it was only 2,250,000 cub. ft. Oak yielded 5,500,000 ft. in 1881, but only 1,800,000 ft. in 1891, and 100,000 cub. ft. in 1901; larch, which in 1881 furnished 4,500,000 cub. ft. and in 1891 3,500,000 ft., had practically disappeared in 1901; and so on in proportion. In 1904 Canada imported 11,000,000 ft. of hickory, chestnut, and cherry, and 46,000,000 ft. of oak, together with 15,000,000 ft. of pitch-pine, 2,500,000 ft. of ash, and 1,250,000 ft. of walnut.

It must, however, be pointed out that Mr. Sheck probably alluded chiefly to the eastern provinces of Canada, as we know there are still immense forests in the west of Canada (which Mr. de Schryver mentions in his article further on) which will be available for New Zealand requirements for many years to come. But it is also certain that the forest resources of Canada will be taxed to their greatest extent before long to supply the United States and European requirements, and that the present fairly low price of timber (especially Oregon pine) cannot be expected to last much longer. It is to