

## A STATE FOREST PRESERVE.

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As reported by a national senate committee, the consumption of American timber is now four times greater than production. Many deserts and waste places of the earth were formerly timbered and fertile, densely populated by leading nations of their time. Man with all of his industry, commerce, science, apparently is the great destroyer. His ambitions and enterprise fill the river beds, destroy the forest, and lay waste the fertile plain. Endowed with intelligence, education, incomparable to all the inhabitants of the land and sea, he is the most wasteful, the one great embarrassment of creation.

This is not a sermon, however; neither a thing highly scientific. Merely I have dropped in here neighborly, informally, for ten minutes, to inquire if there is not some pleasing method or plan, whereby we scientifics might add considerably to the park and forest conservation movement. The awaking people are enthusiastic; enterprise runs wide and deep. The state highway project, a forerunner, has been an unexpected and a pleasing success. Electricity and gasoline quicken the pace. The people are doing more and quicker thinking. Perhaps without our help much of the forest lands would be saved and nature's balance in a large measure preserved. As with the older states, the land may not be stripped altogether of its verdure and fertility; however, with our help the saving movements can be started much quicker and more usefully, beautifully, certainly.

It is not needful at this time, in this audience, to discuss the merits of forest preservation, values in public health, protection of navigable streams, effects upon water levels and atmosphere, or the moral effects and educational features as applied to ourselves. If you do not know more of this entire subject than I do, I am sorry. The newspapers and libraries are full of this. The editors, disinterested as they are, have caught on. They find that a truthful story of the hop-toad, an ode to a spray of the Golden Bell, or the portrait of a tumbleweed holds the subscribers better than a whole page of

colored screams and rough stuff. Doc Calomel is losing his best customers. The old folks are camping in the woods, also the young ones and their school master.

We scientifics have a large influence with that virile group who make the laws, levy the appropriations and shape the policies of the state. Perhaps you have noticed yourselves that a botanist or a geologist is viewed with a peculiar awe or reverence by legislators and aldermen. A scientific gent, to these law and constitution builders, seems something above and beyond a common creature—something ordained, a super thing, loaded for bear. With busy people, also, toiling eight hours daily at a dollar and a quarter per hour, or sweating around the bulletins of a stock exchange two hours at a time, Coulter, Trelease, a Chamberlin, Ridgeway, Doctor Evans and each of a lot more of us is a larger man than some governors of the state. Any old timer who can chop a log between his feet with these hustling moderns is an architect, a landscape authority or a wizard equipped to build a navy or fix a clock.

There is reason for much encouragement in Joliet playgrounds, parks and an arboretum of 836 acres publicly owned and the 70 acres in parks and forests owned by the Street Railway, all free to everybody. About 330 acres of the arboretum is a matured forest of native trees. Privately owned until recently, it had received five years or more of excellent care and planting before given to the public, and the planting and forest conditions will now be continued.

The Cook County Forest Preserve, within four miles of the Joliet arboretum, is one of the very best enterprises of this character, a splendid testimonial to the industry and the courage of its promoters. Over thirty thousand acres of the Cook County forest land has been purchased, and the purpose is to secure at least forty thousand. To preserve the native forests in their regular, natural order, to build trails and roads in and between, to provide shelters and picnicing conveniences, in short, to develop an outer park belt of wild woods accessible to the people of a greater Chicago is the object of the Park Commission. The Joliet Park District intends to connect its

arboretum with the Cook County Preserve along a small river with wooded hills and banks, thus becoming a part of this greatness and beauty.

Winnebago County followed Cook with a county preserve, and already has saved a forest selected for destruction. Peoria, East St. Louis and other cities of the state have their ambitions, and with the Chicago-Joliet link as a commencement, this Queen of the States may do something worth while, namely, save the forest before it is cut over, the soil before it is washed away.

Some of us can remember when Central Park, N. Y., and the Commons of Boston, parkwise, stood alone in the nation. The Arnold Arboretum is just fifty years of age this year. White pine lumber in our time sold in Chicago for sixteen dollars per thousand, firsts, and eight for fencing. Some of us cut down the trees for the nuts, the honey, or the coons, and set the woods on fire to warm our hands.

Now the national government is buying back the mountain ranges of the Atlantic and Pacific slopes and the water sheds of the navigable streams in between, and sixteen states have adopted various forms of parks or forest protection. Thus there is much encouragement, the going is good, and why not continue to preserve all the land in and about the forests not suitable for agricultural purposes?

To do it largest, to do it first, pleases the taxpayers. The best state in the Union should lead the way. Why wait for New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts or boastful California?

The deep water route from the Lakes to the Gulf is now well under way, and the suggestion of forest saving along the scenic banks from the Lake to Cairo is receiving some attention from the press and Chambers of Commerce. Here would be greatness—probably the longest enterprise of the character nation wide, the most used and useable in the state. The Illinois counties on the banks of this canal have a population twice as large as all the other counties of the state, with four more counties in Missouri to be heard from. The last census, 1920, gave the waterway counties of Illinois a population of

4,129,859; the whole state, 6,485,280. The scenery itself is fitted exactly for our purpose, parks already made, with wide stretches of water, deep forests, high bluffs, lakes, lily ponds, the greatest of Indian mounds, ever changing scenes, and all delightful.

The makings, the formulas, are before us. The O'Neil bills now at Springfield, house numbers 181, 182, and 183, cover the situation. The first named provides that the state department of public works, now in charge of the state highways and numerous activities of the kind, may acquire tracts of lands of natural scenic beauty, embodying cliffs, forest covered bluffs and forested or woodland areas, of which the chief values are best adapted for natural park areas, reservations and preserves; also to maintain, improve and establish public parks and fish and game preserves in their natural state of beauty. Bill number 182 provides \$100,000 to be divided between the two coming years in the acquisition of land. Bill number 183 provides for a board of agricultural advisers of fifteen persons.

The friends of Our Native Landscape, an organization of real workers, containing some of the best authorities of the state in these matters,—Jens Jensen, Stephen A. Forbes, Dr. Cowles and others of their stature—have made an extensive survey of the state, although they contend there is much more to be done. This authority is back of the O'Neil bills. Their survey is mapped and illustrated artistically and to the purpose. Leaving out the Chicago-Joliet corner of the state, this survey suggests twenty locations fairly located, the state over, from the pineries of the northwest down the Mississippi, Savannah, Lima Lake, Piasa Bluff, Ft. Gage, Fountain Bluff, and then through the Ozark Hills to the Ohio, Pomona Natural-Bridge, Giant City, Bald Knob, Wolf Lake, Fern Cliff, Parker, Jackson Hollow, Dixon Springs, and Cave Hill, one near Effingham and three on the Illinois, Greater Starved Rock, Lake Senachwine and Havana, and another in the Rockford pines and hills.

Though the appropriation per the O'Neil bills is small, it is a beginning, and in view of the highway triumph there is a reason for activity upon our part. The Cook

County plan is the result of much study, good talent and time. The method of selecting the governing body is one promising the best talent and is working well. They have made the forest preserve method one of the great achievements of the nation. Their legislative work gives any county in the state the same advantages taken by Cook. Any 500 voters in a county may now call an election for the purpose of adopting this law. Cities have the most votes and the doing is easy. Only one mill upon the dollar of assessed valuation is permitted, but it brings in a large annual revenue. One per cent upon the same valuation is the limit of indebtedness. In my county, with an assessed valuation of fifty-five millions, we can raise \$55,000 annually by direct taxation without the taxpayers noticing it, and run in debt for ten times as much for investments to their great profit and pleasure.

There is much encouragement for the preservation of this beloved state, and while things are going our way may we scientifics do our full duty and a little more, and stick.