

THE CRISIS IN THE SOUTHERN FORESTS¹

By HENRY E. HARDTNER, President of the Louisiana Forestry Association
and Chairman of the Louisiana Conservation Commission

THE conservation of natural resources is a question of great importance and is engaging the attention of many of the foremost citizens of our country who are now endeavoring to formulate such plans as will be calculated to prevent the destruction of these resources.

The national forest reserves are being handled carefully and systematically according to the most up-to-date methods, and can be depended on to produce crop after crop for all ages. Not so with the forests of the South, which are chiefly in the hands of private owners, for they are handled carelessly, criminally, and with the idea of getting every possible penny out of them regardless of their future usefulness to mankind. Under existing conditions with no efforts heretofore made by the states to cooperate, we cannot say that the lumberman is any more to blame than are state and National governments. The lumberman does not wish to convert lands, now rich in natural resources which yield handsome returns to himself and the state, into barren wastes, which will not even serve as pasturage. He knows much better than any one else what they are chiefly valuable for, and only awaits the opportunity to be of service to the state and Nation in conserving these resources.

Therefore, the preservation of our forests is the most important question that we have to deal with at this time, and we cannot wait years before we attempt to solve the problem. No doubt

the National Government will ere long offer substantial assistance to the states in the difficult and costly work of reforestation, but the states cannot afford to wait for assistance; they must go to work at once and handle the question honestly, intelligently, conservatively, and successfully. Louisiana should take the lead in this great movement, and while protecting her own resources, point out to others the correct course to pursue in carrying out these plans for the general good.

Louisiana has a great extent and wealth of forest, but it is rapidly and surely being depleted. Under present conditions she may continue for years to hold her present position as the second lumber producing state in the Union, but fire and the ax are reducing her producing capacity steadily, and when the present stand of mature timber is gone, Louisiana cannot remain in the front rank, unless effective steps are taken to protect and reproduce her forests.

The South, with twenty-seven per cent of the total area of the United States, contains about forty-two per cent of the total forest area of the country, and produces forty-eight per cent of all the lumber manufactured in the United States. It might be interesting to state that the lumber industry alone brings back into the South over \$10,000,000 for every working day in the year.

The forest area by states is as follows: Alabama, 20,000,000 acres; Arkansas, 24,200,000; Florida, 20,000,000; Georgia, 22,300,000; Kentucky, 10,000,000; Louisiana, 16,500,000; Maryland,

¹This article is the main body of an address delivered by Mr. Hardtner at the Conservation Conference of the Southern States held in New Orleans, November 1, 1909, by invitation of Governor Sanders of Louisiana. Mr. Hardtner is a prominent lumberman as well as an earnest advocate of forestry and conservation.

Cypress Growing in the Swamps (page 14)