

VALUE OF TREES TO MAN TOLD ROTARIANS

(Continued from Page 6)

ing places for birds that destroy insects and sing for our entertainment.

5. They make our homes, schools cities more beautiful.

6. They furnish us with books, papers and pencils we use in our homes and business.

7. They furnish employment to many thousands of men and women and are a source of wealth in our forests.

8. They furnish wood, and the most important and extensively used material in the construction and furnishing of the home in which we live.

9. They cover our hills and valleys with a green forest growth that helps to store the rain water we drink, which might otherwise become torrents, washing away the fertile soil, filling up our rivers and harbors, and they help purify and filter the water that feeds the springs, and to provide a shelter for fish and game.

Life of the Tree

Trees start from seeds, like the smaller plants, or from sprouts arising from the roots or stumps, or even from branches properly inserted in the ground. As a rule they are long-lived and of slow growth as compared with annuals and the lesser perennials. Even under the most favorable conditions it takes from ten to forty years for a tree trunk to attain post size and from fifty to two hundred years or more to attain saw-timber maturity, though the trees may grow slowly for hundreds and even thousands of years. Perhaps the longest lived trees in the world are the Sequoias of California, which are also among the oldest of living species, having survived from pre-glacial geologic times. Ring counts have proved some of the Sequoias to be more than 4,000 years old, and it is believed that they attain to an age of more than 5,000 years. The Sequoias—both the so-called Big Trees and the equally big redwoods—are also among the giants of the tree world. They sometimes reach a height of between 300 and 400 feet and a diameter of other good-sized trees. Most of the trees with which we are familiar are under a hundred feet in height. Eventually there comes a time when decay or disease destroys the substance of the trunk faster than new growth comes on, and the tree finally falls. A tree is ripe at different times, according to use and value. Old trees that are still sound produce the best quality of wood, but growth is usually very slow at 60 to 100 years. Most of the original trees now cut are from 100-200 years old.

The Forest

Large groups of trees are called forests. At various times in geologic history forests have covered most of the earth. Even in historic times forests occupied by far the larger part of the land area of Europe and nearly one-half that of North America south of the arctic regions. Climatic changes have resulted in the denudation of some regions, but the activity of men in felling forests, to clear dwelling space, roads and fields, for utilization of tree material, and destruction by fires are accountable for the great restriction of forest areas of our times. At present about 30 per cent of the land area of the United States may be classed as forest; about

25% of Canada, although it should be understood that in both countries the original stand of timber in these forest areas has been greatly depleted. Europe as a whole is 31% forest. Of all European countries Great Britain and Ireland—once almost unbroken forest—are the most completely denuded, having only 4% of forest area; Finland is the best forested, with 60% of the land in forest. Asia as a whole has 22% of forest but China is down to 7%, and Afghanistan, Arabia, and Thibet have less than 2%. South America is about 44% forested and Africa (characterized by enormous natural deserts) less than 11%. Australia and Oceania are 15% forested. As regards political distribution, Russia ranks first with 1,582,000,000 acres of forest; the British Empire second with 1,571,000,000; Brazil third with 1,000,000,000 acres; the United States and its possessions fourth with 685,000,000 acres; and France and its colonies fifth with 295,000,000 acres.

Forest Values

Forests, quite apart from the actual utilization of their individual trees, have great climatic, economic, sanitary, salubrious, and aesthetic values. Although climate primarily determines whether a country shall be forested, grass land or desert, forests react on climate. Humidity and summer coolness of the air are greater in forest regions than in open country. Rainfall is not so rapidly evaporated or drained off, the moisture content of the soil is greater and the force of windstorms is broken. Consequently, a forest country escapes much of the seasonal aridity that marks an open country with an equal amount of rainfall and the same periodical distri-

bution. The removal of the forests has thus emphasized climatic effects in some countries, resulting in their virtual sterilization. Spain, Syria, and North Africa are commonly cited as illustrations of countries that have been rendered barren by denudation of their forests. As the forest cover gives up moisture slowly there is more water in forested regions for the sources of streams and lakes and a tendency to avoid the extremes of flood and drought flow.

They are favorite resorts for recreation and health restoration. Man was primarily a forest animal and he still finds his physical being restored and his emotional and intellectual life stimulated by life in the forests.

The groves were God's first temples.

Ere man learned

To hew the shaft, and lay the

architrave,

And spread the roof above them—

ere he framed

The lofty vault to gather and roll

back

The sound of anthems; in the dark-

ling wood,

Amid the cool and silence, he knelt

down,

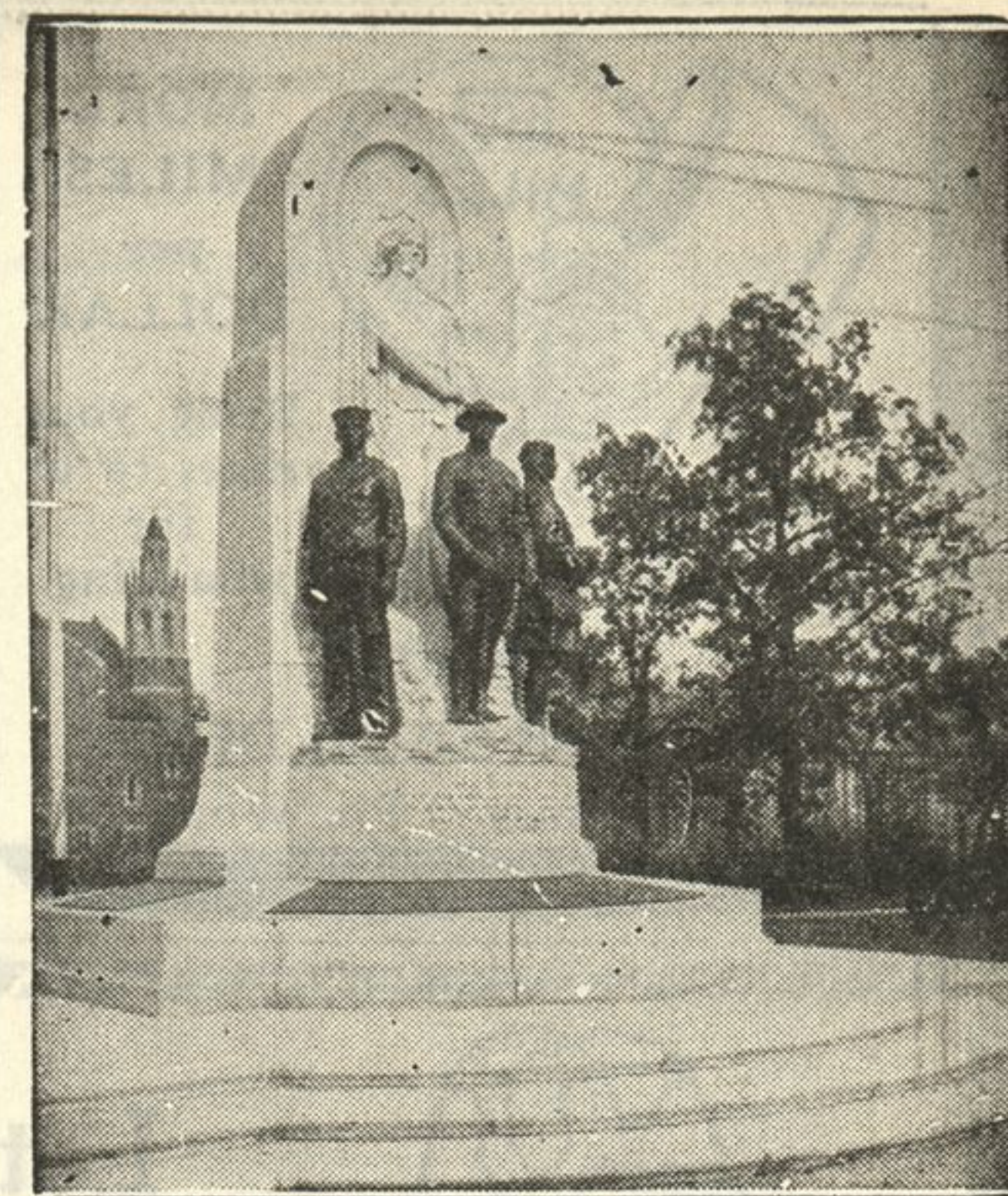
And offered to the Mightiest solemn

thanks

And supplication.

The chief enemy of trees and forests is forest fires. Over \$4,000,000 is spent annually in protecting our forests from fires. In spite of this, there are 50,000 forest fires annually in the United States with an average burn of 200 acres or 10,000,000 acres laid waste, due to carelessness. The probable ultimate loss is as much as \$500,000,000. Tom will un-

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