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WASTE OF VAST HERITAGE

Forests of Moore County Worth
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IT IS no disparagement to any other section of the world to say that the original forests of the Moore County territory had few peers. I have seen the pine and hemlock woods of Northern Pennsylvania, of New England, of the lake country, of the Pacific slope, of every part of the United States and of much of the old world. But there are few more attractive memories lingering with me than those of the Carolina pine forests. ¶ The long leaf pine is not so large a tree as the big white pine of the North or some of the conifers of the West. But it is a tall, clean tree, and it grows in a clean setting. The Carolina pine forest is free from the undergrowth of the Northern forests. It looks for all the world like the forest reserves of the German reservations, where anything that is not of value is not permitted to thrive. Under the pine forests of the Sandhills scarcely anything interfered with the thrift of the pine tree or obstructed the passage of man or other living creatures. The pine forest was a vast park. The settler's cattle roamed the ranges. His sheep grazed in the shade of the greenwood. Deer thrived in the creek bottoms and could be seen frequently through the more open spots amid the brown trunks. A fox chase among the trees was the easiest thing in the world. The old fellows who lived in the pine barrens in the days of the simpler life were princes. Their wants were few and their necessities were all at their doors. Their amusements were here with the more prosaic dependencies, and with the world miles away from them this Sandhill country came close to being a veritable paradise. The holdings of territory were large. The range supplied food in any quantity, either their own domesticated cattle or the wild creatures of the forest, and every man kept a pack of hounds and a long rifle.

His fuel was at the door. His clothing came from his own flocks, and occasionally you see an old spinning wheel at some of the old homes where the women made the cloth for the household and from the cloth made the clothing. The world was far away. Railroads were not known in the forest. Rude roads to Fayetteville and to other parts of the State were hardly fit to travel otherwise than with a saddle horse. The people lived by themselves, and for themselves, and were content and their lives in a way was ideal. ¶ That was all right in the day when population was scant, and land was abundant enough for many hundred acres for each household. But it could not last. As people multiplied it became evident that the forests would in time have to give way to the utilization of the land in more profitable manner. When men first came into the big pine wilderness a tree had no value. It was so universal that it ranked like the sand of the earth or the

air above. The tree was an encumberer of the ground. Before a house could be built trees must be removed. Before a farm could be opened to raise a few acres of corn and potatoes trees must be removed. To build a house some trees must be cut. For fuel trees must be cut. In almost every transaction a tree had to be sacrificed. And we can see now that it was a sacrifice. The long leaf pine tree was one of the most excellent lumber trees that ever grew. The settlers built their houses at first from the unsawed logs. Then as years went by the old fashioned up and down saw came into the country and the practice of cutting boards followed. What fine boards the first mills produced can be seen by a visit to some of the old houses around the county. Wide, clean, not a knot, not a blemish, straight in grain, every design a picture, the surface hard and smooth under the hand finish of the backwoods carpenter, lots of the lumber sawed seventy-five years ago is better than much that is made today. The early settlers built their houses of this fine pine lumber. They split straight tall trees into rails to fence their small fields.

They rolled up magnificent big trees into heaps and burned them to get rid of the trees that little fields might be made for planting. A pine tree had no value. It was in the way if the land was wanted. Then a railroad pushed down through the Sandhills country, and somebody sent some of the fine pine lumber out to God's country. It paid the freight, and a little more, for the freight can never eat up all the revenue without stopping the shipment. People in the North saw the Carolina pine and realized that it was an ideal finishing lumber. For some years it came into fashion as a flooring material. To be sure the lumber dealers of the North put a good price on it when the buyer wanted his floors made of it, but the retailer and the freight and the rest of the fellows took about all the money it brought and the mill man found that he was getting for his stuff a very meagre income. He had been accustomed to look on mighty little as sufficient return for his pine trees, and if he could get five or six dollars a thousand feet at the railroad it was enough to let him earn a few dollars by his mill work, and he kept at it. As the trees along the railroad were cut out it became necessary to go back a little, and that made the pine lumber more expensive, but as the North became better acquainted with it the price was pushed up a little and the demand grew slowly. The growing demand encouraged going back a little farther, and paid a trifle more for the increased cost, so the mill man paid for hauling logs to the mill and sold his lumber for enough more to make the difference. Then builders learned that the long leaf pine had a value for car material, and for other things that requires strength and endurance. So the demand for it continued to expand and the increasing cost of getting it to the railroad was paid by the increased demand.