FORESTs OF WISCONSIN.

FORESTRY OR AGRICULTURE.

The point is raised that this land is needed for agricultural purposes; that all of it will soon be settled since even on the poor sand lands improved methods and potato crops have proved a success. While the statement is certainly true of all good clay or loam lands, it applies but doubtfully to over half and certainly not at all to nearly 40 per cent. of this area. How long it takes to improve a territory, how much unproductive waste remains even in the older so-called "well settled" counties appears from the following concrete cases.

Of old Sauk county not one-half is improved land; the five counties of Adams, Waushara, Juneau, Marquette, and Monroe, with an aggregate area of over 2 million acres of uncommonly level land, have 30 per cent. improved land, or over one and one-half million acres of waste and brush land, most of which is not even serving the purpose of pasture. Adams, Marquette, and Waushara counties with their 800,000 acres of waste land, instead of having 80 million feet of pine to sell which might be growing every year on its non-productive area, supported in 1895 a wood industry whose product amounted to the pitiful sum of $13,000 and probably the material for this was imported.

But even where the land is good and might all be farmed it remains doubtful whether the forest can entirely be dispensed with. Experience in older countries and the Eastern States speaks against this; the farmers of the fertile prairies are planting trees for the sake of wood, on land of unexcelled fertility. Some of the farmers of Trempealeau and other counties who go 20 and more miles, invading jack pine groves for their fuel, find that wood is both too necessary to do without and too bulky to haul far; and valuable as pasture land is to the thrifty farmer of southern Wisconsin, the great importance of a convenient wood supply has led to an actual increase in wooded area in most of the southern counties of the state.

How soon the 17 million acres of wild land of North Wisconsin will be settled no one can tell; the likelihood is that over
10 million acres, and among these much of the best land, will still remain either woods or unproductive brush land in 50 years to come. What advantage it is to a county and to the state to have poor, unproductive sand lands settled by poor and ignorant people, and support farms "without barns," cannot here be discussed. In the same way, it is not here contemplated to enter into the question of communal property, i. e., whether it might not be well for a county, which can get land for the mere taking, to hold a few townships in county forests and have these county forests at least defray the county expenses, and give work to many people. If not the counties, certainly the state can afford to acquire and hold for the future all cut-over lands. Such communal properties have been mainstays of European states in all financial crises and have been eagerly sought and guarded by all European governments as well as by towns, counties, and cities. With a county holding 100,000 acres of good forest land, every citizen becomes part owner, his store or shop is valued in proportion as it shares these advantages, and instead of hindering the development of a county, as is often claimed, such a forest property would stimulate immigration and help to develop both directly and indirectly all the resources of the county.

**RECOVERY AND PREVENTION OF WASTE.**

What can be done to save the enormous loss to the state is clear: The land must be restocked and the young timber must be given a chance to grow on all lands which are essentially forest soil and not desirable for agriculture.

*Forest Fires.*—What the fire has done to the pine supply is apparent from the conservative figures of original stand of pine. Besides this injury to pine, the fire has killed more than 5 billion feet of hemlock, at least 1 billion of cedar and several billions of hardwoods besides large quantities of tamarack. In addition fire has killed stands of young and sapling pine (under 8-inch diameter) covering many thousand acres, which today