

Attention has been called from time to time to the evils threatening the northwestern states because of the rapid destruction of their forests. The San Francisco *Alta*, in speaking of the necessity of united action in the matter of forest preservation, points to the sad condition of affairs in the California counties of Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Merced and Mariposa. The immense destruction of timber in the mountains along the streams which supply irrigation for most of those counties and water for them all, has roused amongst them the keenest anxiety. They have held a mass meeting at Fresno and made an organization, and are now circulating a petition to congress to withdraw the mountain timber from the market, and to the legislature to adopt effective measures to prevent and punish forest arson. In this mass meeting it was shown that the sheep-herders are responsible for most of these mountain fires, which they start willfully and with malice. It was further shown that a large majority of the flock-masters in that section are aliens, as are their herders, and they don't own an acre of sheep-walk anywhere. Their flocks feed upon the private property of others or upon the public domain, and the shepherds burn the timber to make next year's pasture upon the clearing. It was shown also that along the rivers which supply those counties with water, where a few years ago were dense and noble forests, now not a tree stands, and only the prone and charred trunks remain to show that timber once grew there. The Visalia *Delta* has been very active in rousing public sentiment to the danger, and appeals have finally secured one of the strongest voluntary protective organizations in the state. These counties should exercise great care in the election of their members of the legislature next year, and should strive to get men who have ideas on the subject of forest preservation, and will enforce them. The state lost, as has been heretofore shown, \$25,000,000 in the lumber value of the timber destroyed by these incendiary fires this year. And by and by, when the destruction is complete, and our water sources are destroyed, this \$25,000,000 may be multiplied by ten to represent the economic damage to the rural industries of the state.

From one point of view the effort now being made in the Washington legislature to secure an appropriation to establish a jute bag factory at the Walla Walla penitentiary is a good one. It is certainly desirable to make the convicts self-sustaining, and to do this without bringing their labor in competition with free workmen. It is for this reason, chiefly, that jute bags were selected, as there is no factory of the kind in the northwest, and the state uses several million bags annually. A saving of two cents a bag to the farmers would mean one cent a bushel more for their grain,

which amounts to \$50 each to every farmer having 5,000 bushels to sell. This is certainly something to warrant the state in going into this business, provided there are not serious objections. There seems, however, too little account taken of the fact that the method of handling grain is undergoing a change, and that the days of the jute bag are numbered. The elevator system is now being introduced, and experience indicates that it will entirely supersede the old method of handling grain. The result would be that in a few years the state would find itself with a costly plant on its hands and that the market the plant had been secured to supply had vanished. Another difficulty presents itself in the price. How shall it be fixed and who shall fix it? If bags are sold at market price, where is the saving to the farmer, save in the matter of penitentiary expenses? If less than market price, how much less, and how will it be arranged so that it can always be kept less? If the "bag trust" should put the prices down below cost of manufacture at the penitentiary, will the factory be kept running or be closed down? There seems to be several serious objections to the embarking of the state in this project, the greatest of which is that the article proposed to be manufactured gives promise of soon falling into disuse.

In his report the secretary of the interior calls attention to the rapidity with which the government coal lands are being gobbled up. He says that extensive bodies of coal lands are being illegally appropriated by certain wealthy individuals and corporations, and recommends a geographical survey of all public lands supposed to contain coal, and that the secretary be given discretionary power to reserve such lands from sale, and to lease them if he deem it advisable, upon such terms as will guarantee coal to the people of that locality at reasonable prices. He also wants a more stringent law preventing a third party from playing dummy in the matter of coal locations. It is in this latter direction that fraud is the most common. Thousands of acres of timber and coal lands have been entered by men on the Pacific coast who were but the agents of some speculator or corporation, to whom title was transferred as soon as the government patent was secured. This thing is going on constantly. It is common talk on the streets. There is scarcely a young man in our cities who has not been approached with a proposition to take up a quarter section of timber or coal land in his own name, the money to pay for which will be supplied him, and \$500 extra for his trouble or timber right. How this can be prevented is not quite clear, but one thing is certain, timber and coal lands are rapidly being reduced to possession in large tracts by corporations and speculators.