

CHAPTER II

CYPRESS PINE AND PENCIL CEDAR

Cypress is so well known that we need not discuss it in detail. It is advertized to the world as the "wood eternal." The cypress business has been profitable which cannot be said of all lumbering. Even the pecky or worm-eaten cypress was at one time in great demand.

The largest tree now standing in this State is called the **Sovereign Cypress**, near Sanford. It is seventeen feet in diameter, almost a rival of its famous relative the Redwood of California. The old world cypress is an emblem of mourning and sadness and cypress trees the world over have been planted in cemeteries.

Our native cypress drops its leaves for a short time in winter; its trunk is a silvery grey; it is often heavily festooned with epiphytes or air-plants, and in groups in sloughs and prairies form striking features of the landscape, especially when they begin to break into masses of pale-green foliage. Aside from the superior quality of its wood and its beauty as a typical part of the Southern landscape there is apparently no place too wet if its roots can get a foot-hold in the mud. It grows in places, even in lakes, where the water may be several feet in depth for months at a time. The old trunks swell into abnormal shapes due no doubt to the irritation caused by water. In swamps the cypress as well as some other trees produce upright branches from horizontal roots called "knees." They are supposed to furnish air to the roots, possibly help support the tree or for some other purpose or no purpose at all. On the highland where the tree also grows these knees fail to form. They have something there-

fore to do with the water and mud in which the tree grows. Anyway, this noble tree has been striving to cover the Everglades for ages. Before the white man the Indians used it for canoes. It would have covered this mucky land long ago but the odds were against it. It can fight water and wind but falls before the axe and fire.

What the cypress has been to the lowlands the old Caribbean-pine has been to the sand and rock-lands, although it too will grow in swamps in case the water is not too deep or long-standing.

The Caribbean-pine is in some parts of Florida called slash or swamp-pine. In Southern parlance a slash is a wet place overgrown with bushes. The specific name *caribaea* is spelled with one "b." I presume this was the original spelling and holds by the law of precedence. There could be no better name than the Caribbean-pine. The word "caribe" commonly used in the West Indies means very wild. This tree grows in Florida on rock and in sand, down on Big Pine Key, over in the Bahamas, in Cuba, the Isle of Pines and on upland dry ridges in Central America. It grows sometimes in swampy places and at one time, according to Chapman, grew on the Island of Key West. It is a tropical pine and in many places grows beside the palms and mahogany.

The Isle of Pines gets its name from this pine and not from pineapples, but the pineapple gets its name from the fact that it resembles a pine cone.

The Spanish *pinal* and *pinar* mean a grove of pines and is the source of the euphonious name *Pinar del Rio* in Western Cuba. One of the many striking pictures of the Florida of old, now rapidly passing, is the old gnarled Caribbean-pines picturesquely silhouetted against the sky. One must admire their sturdiness, bending and twisting in the wind with the storm clouds sweeping by during a tropical gale. In viewing these old pines still standing on ridges of rock extending into the Glades one is reminded of the mari-

time-pine of the Landes of France, once a malarial morass, now a health resort covered with profitable pineries. There are similarities in the Glades of Florida and the Landes of France but there is a big difference in the efficiency of their development and treatment. The maritime-pine of France in its habit of growth and general appearance is very much the same as the Caribbean-pine of the American Tropics. It is tapped for pitch but in such a way that conflagration, desolation and destruction never follow in its wake. It is more than likely that the Basques were once here. It would seem to them like their homeland. The word Biscayne belongs to their Bay of Biscay and over in Quintana Roo there is a place called Laguna de Bacalar, the word "bacalar" in the Basque tongue meaning codfish.

Although the Caribbean-pine is a tough old tree they will soon be gone and be replaced by another landscape with other trees from distant places. The wood produced by this old tree on hot dry rocks is also tough, heavy and hard. It is never safe to spurn the common things—they are common because they can endure; they are common because they are fit.

This old pine lumber is used when green. Even then it is necessary to soap the nails to get them in but once in they hold for keeps and many of the old houses built of this wood are sound and still standing. We must not forget that it is the wood that grips the nail and not the nail the wood. The trees were cut and burnt to give way to groves of fruit. Log rollings were common. Sometimes they were used to burn out the stumps, sometimes for lime kilns. In the construction of rockhouses, the rock, the wood, the lime, the sand and the water were all from the same lot. The kind of wood, however, yielded by this pine depends altogether upon the place where it happens to grow. In some cases it is quite the equal of the famous yellow-pine. The question of wood is not so important as it once was. The time may come when

it will be just wood regardless of its quality. Trees will be selected for their silvicultural-qualities. The demand for industrial products may completely change in a lifetime. Our old pine can stand a lot of fire; it is hardy and quick growing in youth; it is a great seed bearer, and is remarkably stormfast if it can find good rootage. It does not like civilization. It dislikes a carefully kept lawn.

Over a period of many years this old pine has been scorned and wasted by lumbermen and carpenters. Thousands of cords are burnt every winter in fireplaces. Old stumps, roots and knots full of pitch yield a bright, hot and lasting fire. Although deadenings, where trees were girdled to die standing, are now not common, the heavy heartwood is still in demand for fence posts and firewood. On some exceedingly poor rocky soils it is crooked, twisted and grotesque; in other places where it gets what it wants it grows thick and tall. In choosing land it is well to look up as well as down. When the tree gets big and the top heavy a hurricane may topple it over, but when it goes tons of rock clinging to its tough roots go with it. It is a good wind-break for any country where it can be grown. It will do its part in breaking the fury of the gale.

They are beginning to use young pines for paper-pulp. They cut them under five years of age before the heartwood has time to form. The Caribbean-pine is a favorite for this purpose because of its great rapidity of growth and hardness in youth. In time we may have great fields of pine saplings like fields of corn mowed down in youth for the manufacture of newsprint paper. The wood is often light in weight and in color where it grows on sufficient soil on the edge of the Glades. It grows on land which is very low and might be used some day to advantage even in mucky places. The old heartwood and stumps rich in pitch are good for dry-distillation, yielding more and better products than the old charcoal pit and tar kiln.

30 *Reclamation of the Everglades With Trees*

Centering about Cedar Keys on the Gulf Coast the pencil-cedar grows in swampy places and is worthy of a trial in similar sites farther South. Thoreau was one of our first pencil men. He not only manufactured the pencils but used them to good purpose. In 1845 he built for himself a hut in the woods and lived in solitude. After this he moved into Concord and pursued the trade of his father, a pencil manufacturer. I like to associate this master mind with good lead pencils. A good smooth-working pencil not only marks the contact of thought with paper but the flow is stimulated or retarded by the character of the pencil. Reeds were used for pens, also quills, but some ingenious individual filled a reed with carbon of some kind and thus began the pencil. Graphite, which means "to write," was the kind of carbon used. It is the little wooden cases which hold the graphite with which the forester is especially concerned. The Floridan foresters should be interested because the best pencil wood is produced by the pencil-cedar of Florida. This tree is in danger of extermination because of the constant demand for its wood. It has been reported to me that there are thickets of young pencil-cedar on the West Coast of Florida that will survive if accorded a reasonable degree of protection. The wood is soft, easily sharpened and fragrant.

The term cedar is loosely applied to almost any kind of wood which is soft, light and fragrant. The term true cedar probably only applies to the genus *Cedrus*. It comprises the Atlas-cedar of North Africa, the famous cedars-of-Lebanon and the deodar of the Far East appropriately named the gift of God. These tree names, both scientific and common, are often confused. Dr. Small places our southern cedars and our cypress in the juniper family. This includes our common cypress, the swamp white-cedar, and the red-cedar, savin or pencil cedar. The genus of red cedars he calls *Sabina*. This includes the red-cedar so common throughout North America and the Floridan pencil-

cedar. The red-cedar is called *Sabina virginiana* and the pencil cedar *Sabina barbadensis* or the cedar-of-Barbadoes. The cedar of the Bahamas is called *lucayana* by Britton. Regardless of this variation in names it is safe to say that the cedar of Bermuda, of the Bahamas, of the Barbadoes and other tropical islands is very much the same as the pencil cedar of Florida. It is not very different from the well-known northern red cedar familiar to all because of its fragrant wood used in closets and chests to resist moths and for pails and other small articles of woodware. The northern red cedar is common in old fields and along fence rows where the seeds have been dropped by birds. In fact there is a bird called the cedar-bird. This probably accounts for its wide distribution. Its tropical sister the pencil cedar is softer and more suited to pencils. There have been many substitutes even of such good wood as the incense-cedar of California, but for some reason or other none wholly as good for pencils as the Floridan cedar. Both pencil cedar and white cedar grow in southern swamps. The pencil cedar and the cypress grow in lands that are wet and mucky, and for excellence among light woods have no superiors. You can hold a wooden pencil safely in your teeth, in your hair, or back of your ear. It must sharpen well and easily in modern sharpeners. Some busy men cannot work well without a full supply of carefully sharpened pencils. Some must have pencils of many colored fillers. There is a homely philosophy in the pencil, and I fancy Thoreau enjoyed the making of pencils because to him it was a necessary tool for the expression on paper of his marvellous interpretations of Nature. Some of our most cherished bits of literature were hastily written on scraps of paper with the stub of a lead-pencil. Some of our artists use pencils of very high grade. Rubber was so called because it was first used to rub out pencil marks and after all one of the great virtues of a pencil is the fact that its mark may be easily erased. It

32 *Reclamation of the Everglades With Trees*

seems desirable that Florida maintain its reputation for the production of high-class pencil-wood. What is good for pencils may be good for many other things and it grows quickly and naturally in our mucky swamp lands; in fact, better here than elsewhere.

NAT

There are few trees
some time scienc
belonging to
only one species
the fruits of fine
common in our
the common fru
It furnished
last ages ago.
Pharaoh's-fig, m
berry turned in
Ficus may be
could be said
regiosa the s
others famous
these trees is us
recorded that the
many cases i
knew how to
The forests
a dessert, but
wood produce
climates free from
sant, and withal
very species of th
world has kno
As a pot plant
were wiped cl
rubber in the ha
some scrupulous
bled rubber in I