

an important factor in the lumber industry of the world. It is in these forests that the many varieties of rubber-yielding trees are found, but no accurate information as to the number is available. There is not the smallest doubt that the total runs into hundreds of millions, and for practical purposes may be considered inexhaustible; but the supply of latex for the manufacture of rubber for export is controlled by the lack of any large labouring population, and by the cost of collection and carriage to the river-banks for transport to any commercial market.

One most remarkable fact in connection with the waterways of the Amazon Valley is the very insignificant gradient of the rivers. The fall seldom exceeds 10 feet in 100 miles. The difference between sea-level on the Atlantic coast and Iquitos, 2,400 miles inland, is less than 200 feet, or approximately 0·0000015 per cent. In spite of this very slight difference in levels, the average current in the main river and its tributaries in normal seasons is at the rate of four miles an hour, increasing to a noticeable degree in times of flood. This strong current is accounted for by the discharge of water from the melting of the snow in the Andine ranges, and the enormous accumulations of rain-water in the basin through which the upper rivers take their course.

The melting of the snow in the Cordillera of the Andes and the heaviest rainfall take place concurrently during a period extending from the middle of November to the end of March in each twelve months, and it is then that the volume of water in the river channels attains its maximum height. The