

FORESTRY AS A PROFESSION.

"What are you fitting for?" is a question often asked the young college student by older men, and in many cases it is found to be a poser if a serious and well-considered answer is to be given. Some young men early determine to follow this or that professional calling because it is hereditary, so to speak, in the family. Others have strong inclinations toward some particular work, some science, perhaps, for which a taste was formed through casual holiday reading or rambling. But there are hosts of young men who begin their college work without a definite purpose. This is not to their discredit. One of their reasons for going to college is that it may help them to discover their particular bent and capacity. Professional callings are plentiful nowadays and so are the aspirants for honors therein. Young men hear a great deal about such pursuits all their lives and very naturally consider them most when thinking of their own futures. Medicine, surgery, architecture, art, literature, engineering in its many branches, law, music, pedagogy, all these already well-supplied callings find confident new followers year after year. It has been said that these professions are well-supplied, "overcrowded" is the word most often used, and yet it is certainly true that there is always room for a hard worker or a genius in any of these fields.

There is another professional field, however, which is now opening to the young men of this country, and as it is new and as yet little practiced, our boys hear of it seldom or never, and consequently it is not weighed in the balance with other possibilities. It is hoped that this article may serve to call attention to this new opportunity for vigorous young Americans. First, however, let the man who is looking for "a snap" be warned that here is no place for him.

The new opening is in forestry, or forest engineering as it is coming to be called, and in a country with such vast forest tracts as ours, tracts fitted for nothing but forest growth and admirably adapted to that, with vast capital and labor depending on the timber supply for employment, it is evident that there is a field for the forest engineer, the man who knows how to keep up the annual supply forever. Forestry as a profession is not new to the world, for it has been practiced with profit by generations of the more thrifty European races. It is new to this country because the time is only just ripe for its employment. It has become essential to the continued prosperity of our lumber industry in its producing and manufacturing branches. With an increasing population and general prosperity local consumption of timber has multiplied rapidly. The

demand from abroad is also continuous and growing. To meet it we have a very certain and fixed stock of growing timber, and much of the best timber land is abandoned to absolute desert waste, after being clean-cut, as the phrase is. Forestry, the applied science of growing trees for profit, would never sanction such shiftless, short-sighted, yea, suicidal methods. It would keep in growing timber, and that of the kinds best suited to the particular soil and market, every acre of land which was not more valuable for agriculture, building or some other form of business enterprise.

In brief, it may be said that the wealth produced from our American forests each year exceeds in value the total product of all the gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and coal mines, and the value of this crop surpasses that of the wheat and cotton fields combined. The statistics of our national trade bear out these statements. In similarly abbreviated form it can be said that this country is now and has been for several years past using fully fifty per cent more wood per annum for all purposes than the forests can produce under natural conditions. What those forests can do when skillfully assisted by future generations of forest engineers is for those men to prove. Surely there will not be the wanton waste which goes on today (and that leakage stopped can properly be charged up to the credit of increased production), and the trees will grow faster for being given the proper conditions without the necessity of their fighting for them single-handed.

All this has been realized by the Federal Government, and some thirty million acres have already been set aside by presidential proclamation as permanent timber reservations. These great forest tracts, mostly in the mountains of the far West, are to be managed according to scientific methods, and this means that the United States government will become a large employer of forest engineers of various grades. The state of New York has established a timber reservation of more than a million acres in the Adirondack region; Pennsylvania has begun to acquire forest lands within her territory; other states will surely follow before long, and all these will become employers of skilled foresters. A few of the large timber operators, concerns which own their forests and do not simply buy the stumpage, have already retained foresters to plan their cut so as to provide for the perpetuation of their capital. The leading lumber journals of the country are constantly reminding the operators of the need of adopting modern methods in cutting if they hope to continue in the business.

It can be clearly seen, therefore, that there is a growing field for the skilful forester. Moreover, this field cannot be

occupied successfully by any but American-trained men. The European forest schools are annually turning out more foresters than can find employment at home, but such men are educated for European forest and market conditions which are totally different from our own. If men from across the sea expect to enter our woods to practice, it will be needful for them to spend some time studying the American conditions, and even then it will be difficult for them to unlearn much of what has been drilled into them at home as fundamental, and which is wholly inapplicable here. Another handicap upon the foreigner is that, except in rare instances, his knowledge of English is most imperfect. But he will come and patiently work out our problem, even to learning their profession over again in our schools and acquire a good use of our language, if our own young men do not grasp the opportunity and fill the positions offered.

Forestry cannot be studied today in any and every college in the land. There are at present three prominent schools devoted exclusively to the subject, and special courses in certain phases of the science have lately been opened by a few other institutions. The three leading schools are here mentioned in the order of their foundation as follows: The school at Mr. George Vanderbilt's forests at Biltmore, N. C.; the New York State College of Forestry, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.; the Yale Forest School, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., Berea College, Berea, Ky., has started a course adapted to the needs of the mountain farmers, for whom that college chiefly exists. The New Hampshire College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, Durham, N. H., has within the year opened a course in the subject, which should be of great help to farmers in northern New England. These are the three chief schools and two of the minor ones. That courses are not opened by more colleges is largely due, no doubt, to the difficulty, even the impossibility of securing competent instructors, and to their lack of suitable demonstration forests where the men can be put to work. This suggests still another field for the young American student who has not yet hit upon his life work, especially if he has an inclination to teach for a living. These schools, and others yet to be, must have professors and instructors in the various branches. Why not study forestry with a view to teaching the science?

It is not in any wise within the scope of this article to discuss the relative merits of the several schools here named. The students should write to the directors of the schools and ask for their printed pamphlets setting forth their courses and special advantages. Biltmore is not an incorporated college, but