

## Careful of Forests in War Areas

A unique description of the effect of war on the forests of Poland is contained in a letter written by Dr. C. A. Schenck, for sixteen years the director of Biltmore Forest School, Biltmore, N. Carolina, U.S.A., and wounded some months ago while fighting in the German Army.

Due allowance will be made by the reader for Dr. Schenck's unctiousness in describing lands and peoples, trampled under the Prussian invader, with the solemn piety of an annual charities report. The description is taken from a letter written to Prof. J. S. Illick, and published in "Forest Leaves."

### *In Poland.*

1. "Poland.—I have seen only that part of Poland, during a stay or rather a meandering of 5 months, which lies south of Lodz—where I was wounded quite unnecessarily. The woods and forests belong to the landed aristocracy and to the crown—in this case the Czar. The poor farmers have never had a show. It is amazing to think that the poor were formerly compelled to go begging for fuel with gigantic forests lying at their doors and the timber and wood therein going to waste. Those poor fellows were never allowed to gather even the decaying stuff. I tell you, if the land policy, from a national point of view, has been wrong in the good United States of America, then it certainly has been infernally and cursedly wrong in Poland. All these forests are now placed in charge of German foresters who have been taken from their jobs at home. No timber or wood is being cut without being previously marked. Fire patrols are maintained during the hot season. Industries, such as sawmills, paper mills, tannic acid factories, and naval store establishments, are being developed. *Never have the woods been handled better than they are now.*

II. "Belgium.—There are practically no forests in Belgium, except-

ing that gorgeous stretch near Brussels. The wooded areas in the Ardennes are "woodlands" or, in a few cases, park of the wealthy *e. g.*, that of Sir William Schlich. The rest is scrubby stuff, so conspicuous in the sandy plains of Flanders and the province of Limburg. There is nothing I should like to own in the province of Brabant, Hainaut, and Liege. Such were the conditions before the war. All that the Germans have done, has been to insist that the woods do not suffer from fire. I have been active along this line myself. *There is no such thing as reckless cutting by the Germans.* Wherever the woodlands have been laid low by the armies of *both* sides, it was done to build trenches, log houses, and above all to gain a free sight for the guns. A few fine avenues of trees had to come down, but upon my best knowledge and true belief less than 3 per cent. of all the avenues were thus ruined. To speak of wholesale destruction of fine woodlands by reckless soldiers, is in the case of Belgium absurd, because they did not exist before the war, excepting the famous ones at Brussels, which stand as beautiful to-day as they ever did.

### *No Devastation.*

III. "Occupied Part of France.—I have no personal knowledge of this part of the war zones, for I have not been there. My informants are my relatives who have been fighting there and forest ranger Pfeifer, of Lindenfels, whom you may remember. They tell me that there is a committee on economic questions with each army corps. A forest officer of rank is a member of each committee. He is assisted by forest rangers taken from the ranks. Not a tree is cut without being marked, *except those cut by shells.* Whenever a battalion wants wood for fuel, charcoal or building purposes a forest ranger is sent out to mark the trees. Naturally, no