

The Training of a Forester

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An Interesting Description of an Undergraduate Forester's Training in Canadian Forest Schools

The education of a forestry student centres upon and revolves about a living tree, since the chief object of the forestry profession is the production of trees for utilization by the various wood-using industries. So long as nature unaided produces trees in quality fit for the manufacturing arts, in quantity as great as that used by lumbermen and destroyed by disease, fire and wind; there is no economic necessity for creating trained brain power to be applied to the production of trees in order to supply the manufacturing industries. Such need develops slowly, and is dependent upon many economic and industrial factors. The realization of the need comes even more slowly, for public opinion is lethargic, often insensible to the solution of problems whose effects lie beyond the present, and the making of trees for pulp-wood spans one generation, and the production of good saw logs spans two generations of men. Of necessity foresters have been more propagandists than foresters in the strict interpretation of the word. After thirty years of unremitting toil the tide is beginning to turn in their favor. The oft-repeated statements that over one-half the commercially forested area of Canada, about 1,000,000 square miles, has been burned, and that forest destruction by fire still continues practically unabated, except in wet seasons, in some of the most valuable forest regions in the country, are bearing fruit, and the significance of such facts in relation to the future prosperity of Canada is beginning to penetrate the public consciousness. In order to maintain at reasonable cost continuous supplies of wood for the industries, forestry should begin with forests which nature has made and not with deserts that man has made. It is both

illogical and expensive to destroy and build anew after many years what might have been kept continuously productive under intelligent direction. It must be admitted, however, that recent events such as the soaring prices of lumber and newsprint, the disclosures of callous indifference to the just dues of the people on the part of those charged with the administration of the forests in certain portions of the country, the possibility of strained international relations over pulpwood exports, the scramble for supplies in far remote regions of the country on the part of certain great wood-using industries have focussed the attention of the public upon the necessity of conserving our forest resources. In fact, some of the conditions foretold by propagandists are already upon us, conditions which we are in a measure unprepared to meet because we have not developed a sufficient number of men properly trained to solve some of the most urgent problems, and a good portion of these very problems are concerned with the habits and peculiarities of our most valuable trees.

The Tree as a Starting Point.

With this introduction, I will come back to my first statement. For the actual practice of forestry, the tree or rather an aggregation of trees, the stand, is the nucleus about which all knowledge revolves. In the first place the forestry student is introduced to trees as individuals. He studies their characteristics as revealed by their flowers, fruits, leaves and bark, and he learns how to recognize them and call them by name when he meets them in the forest. A tree is a plant, and in many ways the most successful plant nature has ever produced. Thus in order that the student may gain a proper perspective he is given a course in