

### *The Forests of Belgium.*

Forests were common in the western war zone, embracing a part of northern France and almost all of Belgium, when the conflict began, and showed evidence of careful management that must have extended back at least fifty years and in some cases a full century. Belgium alone had 1,290,000 acres of productive forest land valued at \$100,000,000. The province of Namur, in which such heavy fighting took place shortly after the beginning of the war had 31 per cent of its total area wooded. The forests of Belgium were among the most productive of Europe before the war, yielding 1.7 cords per acre and year. Since the war began this area has not only been considerably reduced in acreage, but what is more lamentable the remaining forests have lost all the "earmarks" of that careful management which characterized them in the past.

That the people of Belgium will feel the loss of their clean, attractive, productive, and well-organized forests is most certainly true. The small forest acreage in proportion to the population—only two-tenths of an acre per inhabitant—and the industrial conditions, recommended an intensive management of all areas suitable for the growth of trees. The native forests in spite of their high productivity—1.7 cords per acre and year—yielded only a small portion of the total amount of wood consumed by this most densely populated civilized country—660 inhabitants per square mile. About \$28,500,000 worth of wood was imported annually, some of it coming from the United States. For many years the demand for wood has been so great that every square foot of ground not required for other more important purposes has been used

for the production of this much-needed product. About 84,000 cords were obtained annually from trees bordering roads and canals. These trees, however, did much more than yield wood, for they made the thoroughfares attractive and comfortable, and in some instances produced choice fruit. Few countries could boast of such inviting and distinctive highways, byways and waterways as Belgium before the war. These attractive and useful avenues of communication helped, in a measure, to satisfy and solidify its citizenry, and develop a pardonable patriotic pride in its soldiers.

### *Private Ownership.*

The kind of forest ownership that prevailed in Belgium at the outbreak of the war presents a sad aspect. Private individuals and small communities owned 93.8 per cent of the total area, the state and institutions owning the remaining 6.2 per cent. The loss under such a decentralized form of ownership is certainly felt much more keenly than in countries such as Germany where the several states own 31.9 per cent and private individuals only 46.5 per cent, the remainder belonging to the crown, communities, municipalities, and institutions. When one thinks how slowly forests grow and how difficult it is to reconstruct them, one's pity naturally goes forth not only to the altruistic and beneficent people who were building them up, but also to the oncoming generations for whom they were being developed. A rich heritage for subsequent generations was in the process of development, but the sudden onrush of an enraged neighbor with no respect for property or posterity, and the necessary destructive activities of the defenders of the homeland, soon converted this prospective heritage into acres of desolation.

The forests of northern France differ little from those of Belgium in condition, composition and ownership. The hardwoods—chiefly