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Forestry—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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A request to write a review of forestry of today for the Ames Forester, brings vividly to mind the conditions of twenty years ago, when the writer was just beginning forestry work as a student assistant in the government service. Since that time the changes have been many. Forestry is now one of the great recognized professions, and is being applied commercially in great industries.

The forest schools have meant everything in the development of forestry in this country, and the standing of the profession today is due to the insistence of the colleges upon high standards of training.

The greatest development of the present day is the manner in which the forester is coming into his own as a technical man in industry, rating with the chemist, the mechanical engineer, and other professionally trained men in the functioning of the modern business machine.

In the old days, all was uncertainty. The public was indifferent, if not actually against the forester. We leaned too heavily on European practice, and Schlich's Manual was about the only forestry literature.

The establishment of the national forests put forestry onto its feet, and without such practical demonstration, the work of foresters in the East would have been of little avail. I well recall the discouragements of the early days at Iowa State College, when forestry was merely a sideline in most of the colleges which have since developed strong forestry schools.

Then forestry was deemed a sentimental development, and practical business men laughed at the idea that it might be needed within fifty years. Every forester was constantly on the defensive and was forced to be a salesman of his work, as well as of himself. Many failures were recorded because the foresters failed to appreciate that one of their first jobs was the building up of an interest in forestry, and a public state of mind which would lead the people to accept reasonable forestry suggestions.

Today the situation is far different. Foresters are holding important positions with industrial organizations, trade associations and large manufacturing organizations. Their training is now in demand. The paper industry, possibly the leader in this development, has many foresters in the employ of paper manufacture, applying practically their technical
training. And this is not only in the cutting and harvesting of the crops, but the foresters in the paper industry are now being called upon to reforest cut over lands, and to make scientific plans for continuous production of a forest crop on forest lands. This is mentioned just to show that the forester is actually beginning to come into his own.

After twenty years there is still tremendous need for public education. This is evidenced by the fact that Henry Ford’s suggestion as to the handling of his forests are being seized upon by newspapers as something new, when, in fact, they are the most elementary principles which foresters have been talking for more than two decades.

Typical picture of stored pulp waiting for use in the paper mill. The size is evidenced by the man standing in the center of the pile.

It is not the intention to put the practical man always before the scientist. Knowledge of forestry is absolutely fundamental. The difficulty, however, has been that we have had proportionately too many scientists with too much knowledge and too little real salesmanship, with the result that we are still trying to get the man on the street to appreciate that forestry means keeping our forests productive and the putting back onto our forest lands of a forest that they will give us regular and continuous returns. The importance of research in forestry is in no way way minimized, but it should not be made a fetish by the forester who goes out of our schools, and he should not become discouraged or embittered if his honest attempt at research in forestry and the handling of our forests as he has been taught in the schools is rather laughed at, and he is forced to lay his ideals aside temporarily for something more practical.
It is my belief that we are just passing out of the sentimental stage in forestry and that in the next five years we are going to see the beginning of a real economic development in forestry. That is, the time has come when it is going to pay in dollars and cents to grow trees. In another year, as business becomes better and our industries come back to reasonable production, we are going to come again to the condition which faced us a year ago; that is, that wood for our industries will cost us more than it costs to grow it. When we can

Grinder Room of Abitibi Power and Paper Company, Cochrane, Ont.

This company, like many other paper companies, maintains a staff of trained foresters for its woods operations. Though tremendous quantities of wood are used in the manufacture of paper, the paper mills are looking forward to maintaining their forests in productive condition.

demonstrate to business men, and it will not be difficult to so demonstrate when the paper manufacturer, for instance, is paying $30 a cord for peeled wood, that they can afford, from a business standpoint, to go out and grow pulp wood and other products of the forest, we are going to see the same sensible turning to forestry as we have seen our business men turn to better banking methods and better methods of manufacture.
The worst of the fight is over. We might almost say that the forester can now sit back and wait for industry to come to him. However, if we take undue advantage of the opportunity which appears to be before us, we are, of course, going to have a great many failures, both on the part of the forester and on the part of the business man seeking to practice forestry. The forester is going to think that matters have turned his way and that he can use impractical or too expensive methods in the handling of forest lands. The business man is going to worry over the initial expense and carrying charges, so that until we get the first cuttings from our new forests there is going to be slow development.

The forester is in many ways an engineer, and he should think of himself as an engineer and rank himself in the matter of ability and income with engineers. It has been a serious mistake, in my opinion, during the past ten years for foresters to put their service on too low a basis of income. All too often foresters have been afraid to ask what their services are worth, with the result that they have come to be considered as rather cheap labor. It is going to better every forester in the country, as foresters in different activities are paid reasonable salaries.

Twenty years of contact with the public in forestry work makes me an optimist as to the future. There has been such tremendous development in forestry in that period that I can see even greater development in the next ten years. The country is going to need more and more effectively trained foresters. The industries are going to lead, in my opinion, in the development of forestry and in the use of foresters. Naturally, they are going to be able to pay very much better than the federal government or the states, and they are, therefore, in many instances going to attract to their forces the best foresters in the country. This, in my opinion, is a very satisfactory development and one which every thinking forester should stimulate. The industries will call for trained and practical men. If possible we want men with breadth of view and with knowledge of economic and political conditions. Therefore, it is my belief that there should be more economics, more of business law, and more public speaking taught in our forest schools. After all, the forester in the next ten years is going to succeed as he succeeds in his contact with the public. The majority of the foresters coming out of our schools in the next ten years will go into public service.

Back of the steady stream of men going from our forest schools into public service we should have not only strong forest schools, but well organized experiment stations. Re-
search must go hand in hand with the application of forestry in this country. Without research, and without strong schools, there will be a gradual weakening of effort that will eventually result in disaster.

There is plenty of room in the profession of forestry today for every man from every one of our schools who is willing to take the preliminary experience necessary for responsible work, who is willing to give of himself freely, and that in every way in the development of his work. There must be preliminary experience in the woods, and there must be advanced experience in the woods. There must be a little franker facing of just what forestry means and what it is going to demand of men who succeed in it in the years to come. Forestry is not an office job but is a job in the woods. The man who goes into it with the idea of working in the woods has a splendid future.