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Ferdinand Augustus Silcox, Forester and Humanitarian

By E. A. SHERMAN, '96

FIFTH in the regular succession of Chiefs of the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Ferdinand Augustus Silcox was the third Chief to gain his forestry experience and win his administrative spurs in the great practical school of the National Forests of the West.

Scion of one of the old aristocratic families of the deep South, Silcox was born in Georgia; received his B.S. degree from the old College of Charleston, South Carolina, in 1903, and his Master's degree in forestry from Yale with the class of 1905. He was an outstanding member of that brilliant group of crusading young foresters whom Gifford Pinchot attracted to the West to administer our public forests when Congress, in 1905, transferred the Forest Reserves from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

It is fitting that the editor of this publication should have asked the writer to prepare this dedication. The first graduate of the Iowa State College to make forestry his profession, I had opened the first Forest office in Western Montana, consisting of a single room, April 1, 1906. Here the young forest graduate from Dixie, after a brief assignment to the Holy Cross National Forest in Colorado, reported for duty as Forest Assistant to the Forest Supervisor from the prairies of Iowa. Thus North and South met in cooperation on a mission of public service and formed a friendship that was terminated only by the grave.

GOD was good to Mr. Silcox. He gave him a pleasing personality and so much of charm of feature and grace of form as is good for any man. Facility of speech was his special gift. He never had to search for a word or strain for an effect. Always he found simple terms with which to express subtle thoughts. In the field of constructive forestry his interests not only comprised all phases of that activity, but the vital problems of our people and the National as a whole. He was a great humanitarian and his sympathies and interests could always

be enlisted on the side of justice in business and mercy in administration.

His was a charming personality. A smile that care could not eradicate; a good-natured tolerance above personal prejudices; ready acceptance of the bona fides of the other fellow's motives. No stranger ever entered his presence on an official mission without being made to feel that he was greeted by a personal friend. His radiant personality commanded instant charm, and even his most casual caller left with extreme reluctance. To the duties of his official position and for the people of this Nation his talents and strength were drawn upon in generous extreme. He died a comparatively young man, just as he had won to a place of unquestioned leadership in the profession and the industry. Peace to his ashes.

