

Rambles in the Mountains

BY COL. FRED A. OLDS.

Palmyra, Sept. 1.—Fate is certainly most kind to me. As I went up into the mountains a fellow passenger was State Geologist Joseph Hyde Pratt, and coming down to-day I met at Baltimore station Prof. Collier Cobb, of the State University, who is a real globe-trotter by the way. For a month he had been doing his usual August stunts, teaching geology at the farmers' school of forestry in the heart of Baltimore forest. He had gone there direct from Areachon, on the French coast, where he had been with a scientific party headed by Professor Davis, making studies of sand dunes and the best methods of controlling them. He has for years made studies of the dunes on the North Carolina coast, where at Nags Head and at Hatteras they are 90 feet in height. At Areachon they are 150 feet high. There the French government has checked them by pine planting, using a tree which has wide spread of roots, and which yields resin and is also used for telegraph poles in North Carolina, these dunes go on with their work of destruction, covering farms and forests and affecting the waters also. At Areachon the bay used to be very shallow and valueless, but now, since the reclamation work, the bay is used for oyster planting and yields a handsome revenue.

A few minutes before Professor Cobb was met I had made some notes on the value of the great forests of the world as an object lesson as to the need of the Appalachian forest reserve and of forest conservation generally. Professor Cobb said I was entirely right. In 1873 this State was over 70 per cent. of the area in forest. Now there is a little over 50 per cent. It is the farmers in the mountain region who are bitterly fighting the forest reserve plan. This is utterly selfish on their part. They look no further than their own yard. They are not aware that what benefits all benefits them.

WORK OF THE FLOODS. As we ran down in the lower levels and along the valley of the Catawba river we saw what destruction the recent floods have wrought and saw what lack of conservation of woodlands and careless cultivation and handling of soils will do and are doing. Property and life are lost because of the ignorance, carelessness and selfishness of some people. Mr. Cobb went to Europe early in May. For years he has studied sand dunes, here and in other parts of the world, except in the desert of Sahara, where he goes on his next trip. He found that France plants on these shifting sands the tree known as the maritime pine. In 15 years these are tapped, not boxed, for resin. When cut for us as telegraph poles they are impregnated with blue-stone or copperas. The conditions at Orchar are every like those in the dune section of the North Carolina coast.

In the past five years Mr. Cobb has lectured at the Baltimore forest school. Not one hundred men in North Carolina know that in this State there is the finest technical forest school in the United States. Extremely few men from the South go there. As yet these have not risen to the height of the situation, the men are the best and most thorough students. Massachusetts rank next. Yet the South is the section which of all others most needs this particular branch of instruction and knowledge. This school was opened 10 years ago and on Thanksgiving Day it celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Dr. Clifford Howe, for several years a botanist at this Baltimore school, goes to the University of Toronto, in Canada, to lecture on forest botany. The work at this Baltimore school goes on the year round. The number of students is limited to 25. There are always many on the waiting list, waiting to enter. After the course there is finished, Dr. Schenck, the head of the school, takes the class to Europe for 3 months' study along the same line. Italy and Spain have no woodland, England only 3 per cent. of its area. France 28 and Germany 26 per cent. Put in Italy there is great care in protecting the land with cover crops and in terracing, etc. In England, of course, there is also great care of lands. France and Germany have made studies of these matters for a great many years. In Europe the effort is towards reconstruction; in North Carolina with one or two exceptions it is towards destruction.

Mr. Cobb lectures at the Baltimore school on geology in its relation to forestry. For example, on certain sandstone formations is grown the best furniture timber, and the same species grown on such rocks as Harvard schists, produces the type of oak and hickory, required by manufacturers of vehicles, the latter not taking the high polish, however, of the same woods grown on the first named formations. These are things to know. How many furniture and vehicle-makers know them?

OF EDUCATIONAL VALUE. Don't you think this sort of a school of high value, set in the midst of the largest hardwood forest in the United States? This is George Vanderbilt's Pisgah forest, with its 150,000 acres. The writer spent ten days there in August, 1907. The place is the best in the country for such studies. And this brings up the fact that at Asheville there are certain scribbles who find it worth their poor while to belittle George Vanderbilt, who with the sole exception of Providence has done most for Asheville and the region round about. A few days ago I rode through the Pisgah estate, devoting a whole afternoon to this, and looked at buildings and grounds in Asheville and its suburbs. This enables me to say that George has done a number of really great things, each an object-lesson, and each educational. First, his forest is the finest and largest in the country. He has illustrated the proper methods of tree planting, has shown the finest way to plan and build highways and the best and most attractive uses of shrubbery. He has shown also the right way to build houses and in the pebble-dash houses, which he introduced in this State, set the pattern for Asheville. The Pisgah village is a model, from end to end. Nothing in the State approaches it in point of taste, comfort and cleanliness. The whole village is cleaned twice a day. Mr. Vanderbilt is the largest taxpayer in the State. He pays taxes in six counties. His founding of the school of forestry was nobly planned and nobly carried out. His dairy, piggery and general farm work have been a model. He is a modest man, bookish, fond of nature, and has expended \$7,500,000 at least in this State. His wife has done another line of work. She has encouraged the mountain women and girls to revive the old home industries which many years ago marked this mountain region. The modern had forgot-

ten how to make the dyes. Mrs. Vanderbilt bought the best old fabrics to be had and put these in the hands of a lady friend who is a most accomplished chemist. She analyzed the dyes used in these old articles of use and discovered what they were. Then Mrs. Vanderbilt gathered the women and told them what to do, put them to work and arranged for a market for all the articles turned out, and this at prices higher than the old ones. She is a modest woman and she likes friends and friendships. She has felt most keenly the slurs now and then cast upon her husband, and when she left Billie House, in July, did so in tears, because of a published detraction of her husband.

This part of this article is therefore a reply to such detractors and their spiteful articles. I am happy in being able to write it, and to pay a passing tribute to a man and woman who most surely deserve well of North Carolina.

OLD "MUD CUT." It is odd how quick lessons are often fitted to our uses. As Professor Cobb and I were talking about forest conservation we passed "Mud Cut," which thirty years ago was the most talked of place in the mountains. A special session of the Legislature and the sale of the Western North Carolina Railway to the Richmond & Danville now the Southern Mud Cut slid and along came Major Bomar, of the Southern, a son-in-law of Major James W. Wilson, the chief engineer of this western road, and evolved a plan which was simple, yet effective. He piped water from the mountain side above and literally by the hydraulic process washed down all the earth and stopped the landslide. Then trees were put out and the slope thus forested has never given any more trouble. The idea of it in this way protecting the high embankments or hills and much other land near the tracks in the mountain division has been fully carried out and the use was largely of the honey locust and the black locust. These have gripped the hillside and now in many cases stout trees. There are no longer bare hills. All are guarded by greenery.

This western North Carolina railway is in its mountain division particularly of note. Major Wilson was its master-spirit. His location was the one chosen. He has made good use of the geological conditions. He could not get any further up the line than at Mud Cut, and the latter simply had to be mastered.

Mr. Cobb was delighted to hear that I had been in the Cherokee Indian country so recently. He referred particularly to that remarkable Indian Sequoia, or George Green, who made the Cherokee alphabet. It was in his honor that the greatest tree in all the world, the Big tree of California, was named Sequoia. By the way the Cherokee nation gave a \$400 annual pension to the family of this great Indian, after his death, and the first and only case on record in the United States where a literary pension has been given.

Mr. Cobb gave me a good picture of Sequoia. This is a copy of a painting of him made by George Green, one of the numerous painters of Indians. Sequoia was born in North Carolina, but the portrait of him was made in the far-away Indian Territory after the great partially enforced emigration of the Cherokees from their North Carolina reservations.

The writer has from time to time, in descriptions of the North Carolina coast, spoken of the strange houses of brushwood, or often seen along the "banks" in the National Geographic Magazine. Mr. Cobb illustrates and describes these coast dwellings, along the coast from the Virginia line to lower Florida.

In 1797 Jesse Cobb entered the University of North Carolina as a student and the following year Joseph Battle entered it. In a fortnight William Battle Cobb, the direct descendant of both these, will enter. He is the oldest son of Professor Cobb. He is the fifth in descent on either side.

AN ATTRACTIVE HOME. At Asheville I had a talk of an hour with Foster A. Sondley, Esq., a very able lawyer, close student and ardent collector along several lines of things which bear upon North Carolina; a most modest man who has built himself a strikingly attractive home, a novelty in its construction being its preparation for housing his collections. His collection work began in 1872, and in the way of North Carolina books and pamphlets he has now some 2,500. His collection of archeological objects numbers nearly 1,000. It is rich in objects taken from the mounds of the Cherokee Indians and includes an admirably cut image, ten inches long, which was found in Graham county, and which weighs about four pounds. It represents a whip-poor-will. Mr. Sondley's collection of the eggs of birds is certainly unmatched in North Carolina. It contains all those of North Carolina birds and it was made by the late Mr. Carnes, who lost his life while on a hunting trip. It includes a special collection of western North Carolina eggs. Mr. Sondley's collection of North Carolina gems and minerals is exceedingly fine. Most of the 250 gems are cut and set in very effective style. There is some type of all the gems. He also collects coins, notably those made by Bechtler at Rutherfordton. William Earl Haderly has the largest collection of these coins. He pays great prices for some of them. The United States allowed Bechtler to make these coins to prevent loss in shipping and handling. They were really never given government official sanction in the way of declaring them to be a dollar and so on, and so were really only valued as bullion, though they contain more gold than standard coins. They are now worth a premium. For example the \$1 brings from \$2.50 to \$25, and the \$2.50 piece, which is the rarest, fetches a far higher figure.

Mr. Sondley gave me a leaflet containing a list of the birds found in Buncombe county and it names 204. I was quite surprised to see a very large white gull, a coast bird, on the French broad river, a little below the railway bridge. This leaflet says these birds have been there in the past, and strange to say cormorants also.

The play of light and shade in the mountains is wonderful. Like the ocean, the mountains are never exactly the same. I was one afternoon in the State of Brook, the photographer, at Asheville, when happening to look out of window there was Billie House. The setting sun smote fairly on its vast western side and really it did not appear to be over a mile away. It seemed almost as near as Victoria Inn, yet it was a good 7 miles off.

THE BINGHAM SCHOOL. While at Asheville I visited the noted Bingham Military School and was shown over the place. Discipline is strict. Col. Robert Bingham returned this week from Europe, his daughter with him. Some of the devices at this military school are admirable and novel. In the mess hall there is over a door a sort of clock-face, very large as to figures. At each meal the one hand of this is set at a different figure. At each of the many tables sits an officer and some private. Each seat is numbered and no changing of seats is permitted during the session. The boy at each table whose number is shown on the dial is required to help himself first. This gives the small boy an even chance. I never saw anything quite so clever, and it is said two other schools have adopted this plan.

I paid a little visit to J. E. Rumbaugh, an old friend, whose home is one of the most beautiful in Asheville, which is a city of attractive homes. He has recently opened an iron mine in about 8 miles of Asheville. The ore said to be some private. Rumbaugh has an entirely white deer; the only one I ever saw. It is a stag with fine antlers, and is very large.

BUNCOMBE COUNTY HOME. Part of an afternoon was devoted to a visit to the county home, five miles from Asheville. It is quite safe to say that the buildings are the finest in the State for this purpose. They are of brick, steam heated, and amply supplied throughout with running water from a spring high up in the mountainside. They cost \$25,000. The grounds are made beautiful with flowers, and the whole equipment cost \$50,000. The design of the buildings, which have slate roofs, is very pleasing. The superintendent's house is so built that all these buildings are on a terrace the way to the main building leads through it.

I was told by an Asheville man that the extremely rich people from the North do not go to Asheville now nearly so much as they did a few years ago, but the bulk of the winter visitors are of what some people are pleased to term "the middle class." The very rich change fashions quickly, climate, etc., being more woe-wentils so far as they are concerned. The "middle-class" people may not have so much money but they are good stayers. In the summer Asheville and all these mountains are full of people from the far South. It is said in spite of the hard times that there have been 100,000 such in the North Carolina mountain region. In the most remote places they are found, at farm houses and at tiny inns. Some live in tents and rough it, really the best life of all.

FRUIT CROP ENORMOUS. The fruit crop is simply enormous in the mountains. A day or two ago I ate Delaware, Niagara, Empire State and Concord grapes in the Cherokee Nation which were delightful. There are the big red Indian peach, one never seen down-country, and half a dozen other kinds of peaches, while being more literally green or brown with the thick-hanging apples. People down-country don't know what apples are. The trees simply cannot hold up the heavy crop of fruit, so much of it falls; yet there is an abundance.

I have referred to the very heavy apple crop in the west this year. Professor Stevens, of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, tells me that this year the rot is prevalent throughout the State. It often does damage amounting to \$3 or \$4 a tree. He tells me that all the way from Clayton, Johnston county, to the west, he has numerous instances of this disease, in which the fruit rots while on the tree. This disease can be almost entirely prevented, at a cost of about 20 cents a tree in an annum, thus netting several thousand per cent. on the money invested in spraying. Professor Stevens will inform apple growers of the proper method of spraying materials to be used, etc.

I arrived this afternoon at Lenoir and drove over to "Palmyra," the beautiful home of Commissioner of Agriculture Samuel T. Patterson. The place is in the marvelous, attractive valley of the upper Yadkin river, 20 miles from Blowing Rock, the source of this stream, and it was more than three-quarters of a century ago most fortunately named "The Happy Valley." It is one of the very few places in the State where "before the war" taste, culture and hospitality continue to flower.

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"Plant Juice Soap" is another favorite Dillingham seller. It is manufactured from quill bark, cocoon oil and amole, and is one of the most valuable toilet soaps manufactured. It is especially adapted for shaving purposes, and is having a tremendous sale wherever introduced, taking the place of the standard brands of shaving soap which have been in use for years.

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