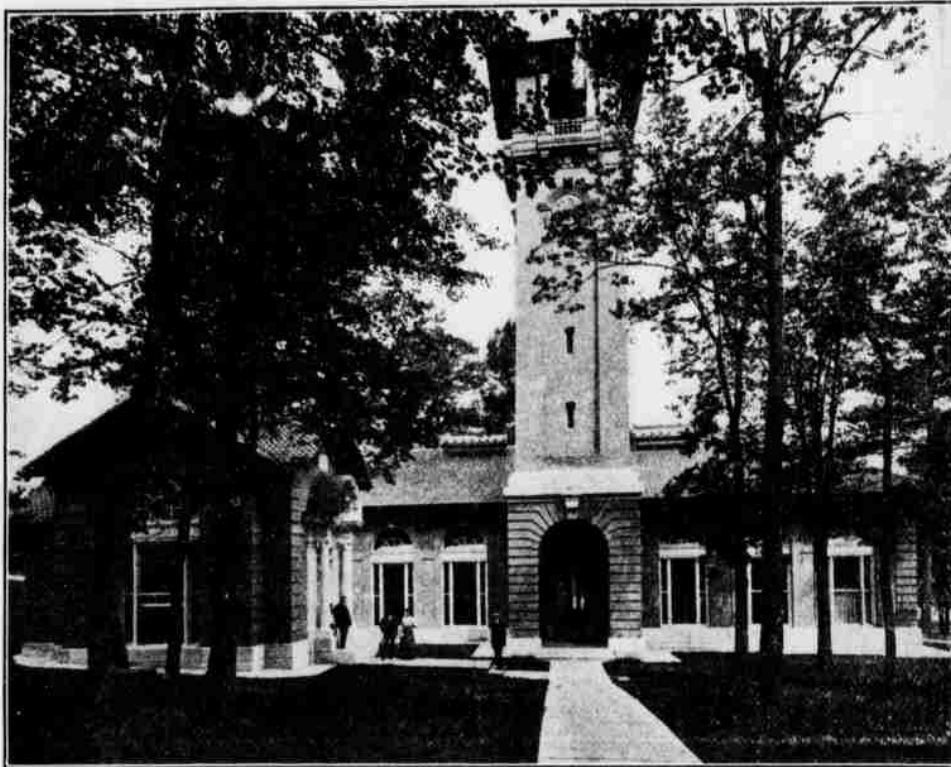


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NOTE—The following is the third of this season's North Carolina stories; a continuance of the series which aroused general interest last year—EDITOR.

**C**ERTAINLY no greater interest has ever been felt in any private estate than that awakened by George W. Vanderbilt's magnificent "Pisgah Forest", situated in Transylvania county, North Carolina, one of the most exquisite sections of all the noble mountain country which the western part of the state affords.

Something over 100,000 acres is the extent, and nearly all of it the forest primeval, Mr. Vanderbilt having been fortunate enough to secure a section in which nature has been unmolested save for occasional fires. Here he has and proposes to let Nature have her own sweet will, gently aiding when it is necessary; but never intruding, and it is about this forest and the things least known, that I shall write; speaking from knowledge gained during a fortnight spent there.

The park takes its name from the dominating peak, Mt. Pisgah, the most perfect mountain amid the hundreds in the lofty plateau lying between the Blue Ridge and the Smoky mountains; a landmark for hundreds of miles about. In this vast tableland, lying between high and nearly parallel ridges, is the heart of the forest, wonderfully beautiful, with its dense tangle and marvelous vistas, and threaded with a network of streams which gleam like burnished silver as they wend their way through the forest or flash downward from lofty heights, filling the air with their murmurings throughout the vast extent. Go where you will you cannot escape them; ever and always there is the sound of falling, rushing water: high overhead, far below; near at hand or far off in the distance. It is above all else, the recollection of Pisgah forest which one carries away, with which the grandeur of the mountains, and the mystery of the forest blend into a perfect whole.

The cost of acquiring this tract was something like a quarter of a million dollars, or about \$2.50 an acre, and now his rangers are its only denizens. There are five of these, all picked mountaineers, good horsemen and dead shots, to whom the forest is like an open book, and they are kept busy for their duties are many. First of all there is a three hundred-mile boundary fence to be looked after, and the fish and game to be cared for; not to mention a continual lookout for timber stealers or the poachers who are always ready to dynamite the superbly stocked trout streams or to bag a fat deer, turkey or grouse.

The forest is now leased for use by one of the most exclusive hunting and fishing clubs in America and the preserve is made accessible by two hundred and seventy-five miles of well kept trails and seventy-five miles of wagon roads, the latter running alongside the trout

streams. There are also many miles of what are known as "shooting paths," fifteen feet wide, and branching out right and left from certain woods, so that deer running ahead of the hounds, may be seen by the hunters. So dense are the rhododendron thickets that a deer, standing a dozen feet from the hunter, is perfectly concealed.

With the acquisition of Pisgah Forest Mr. Vanderbilt began the work of restocking its trout streams by protecting them; the simplest and most effective method, for trout have always abounded and needed only opportunity to become plentiful. Years ago the abundance of these fish was incredibly great, three fisherman, it is said, catching in two days, sixteen hundred and fifty, and for years slaughter much like this, was kept up; dynamiting the big pools even being resorted to. In some streams rainbow trout have been placed, but these are not nearly so satisfactory as the native trout and no steps are being taken to increase their numbers. Along the same lines has been the preservation of large and small game, of both fur and feather; always plentiful in spite of wanton slaughter. In addition to this protection club members are limited as to kills and as a result, grouse, turkeys, squirrels and deer are all multiplying rapidly.

Extermination is being waged against only beasts, birds and reptiles of prey, particularly the rattlesnake. These are the black variety, and while short are unusually large, three inches in diameter sometimes. One of the rangers keeps a tally-stick with a cut for each rattler killed, and said that during one season he killed 26 himself, his three employees saying they had killed as many more. Surprisingly few people are bitten, however, and of these, few die; whiskey being an effective antidote for the poison—and what southern mountain region is without this drink!

Pisgah Forest has largely been chosen as the place for the study of forestry, under the direction of the very talented Dr. Schenck, who succeeded Gifford Pinchot, now head forester of the United States. As all the world knows, Mr. Vanderbilt has at Biltmore, which adjoins and with its 10,000 acres forms in a way a part of Pisgah Forest, an arboretum of over 300,000 trees and shrubs. Pisgah Forest is the complement of this arboretum, and in these magnificent woods Dr. Schenck has a lodge where he spends much of the summer with his classes, making forestry study under wonderfully favorable conditions.

In these classes are youths of wealth and high social position, who study forestry, a study sorely needed in this country, where there is so much destruction and so little conservation. Nowhere east of the Pacific slope are there nobler trees—tulip trees or poplars, Spanish and red oaks, hemlocks, chestnuts, black walnuts, cucumbers and pines of half a dozen kinds—rising in stately symmetry in this primeval forest. It is this forest which gives that tender blue to the mountains of the "Blue Ridge".