not set aside for all time something which is not stable, something which is changing as the seasons change. It would be as sensible as to suggest making a park preserve out of a particularly brilliant stand of oaks because of their fall coloring as to propose such a reservation of a growing forest. Both are passing conditions. One is more transitory than the other, but the principle is the same.[1]

Of course individual trees grow old and die. So do human beings, but should they all be poisoned or asphyxiated as soon as they are mature? Is it not one of the basic facts of forest science and one that we might expect every one in the Forest Service, even if only one of the wood chopping engineers, to be perfectly familiar with, that a forest under natural conditions maintains itself, as the population of a human community does, the trees being of all ages, the younger individuals that have been growing up taking the place of the aged ones that die off from time to time? A forest may and often does maintain itself unimpaired century after century. If this were not so, why was a large part of this country covered with magnificent forest with trees several to many centuries old when the first settlers came? Can we doubt that it would still be so but for human interference?

And as for the individual trees, is it not true that most of our native timber trees are long-lived, able to live and grow in a flourishing condition for 200 to 300 years, some of them very much longer? No more pernicious nonsense can be disseminated than the idea that if we do not hurry up and cut the rest of our dwindling supply of timber the forests are going to fall down and rot like a crop of weeds. Were cutting down what our forests need, it would seem as though they had been getting it in plenty for nearly three centuries.

We shall never get any real conservation in this country until people wake up to a realization of how the tentacles of commercial interests have penetrated, not only the branches of our government, but also most of the conservation organizations.

WILLARD G. VAN NAME

NEW YORK

THE NEW SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AS A SUPPORTER OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

GREAT satisfaction and pleasure have been manifested over the appointment of President W. M. Jardine to the position of Secretary of Agriculture. During the two weeks intervening between the time of the announcement of his appointment and the induction into office (fortunately for his welfare it was no longer) he has been hailed and extolled as the "cow puncher" who has come on up, farmer, educator, economist, level-headed citizen, Rotarian, golfer and all with approximately correct estimation and the warmest sincerity.

However, several of the most excellent, perhaps some of the most significant characteristics of the new Secretary of Agriculture have not appeared to receive the public notice that they deserved. One of these is his attitude towards serious scientific endeavor. During the thirteen years that he has been director of the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station and then president of the college, science, even just for science's sake, has hardly had anywhere a more keenly open-minded and generous supporter. Whether the project called for the investigation of the fauna of the alimentary tracts of termites or the physics involved in a musical tone, if there was prospect of the exercise of energy and integrity in the prosecution of it, his support was enlisted. On the other hand, if the investigation gave promise of valuable economic results, either immediately, or remotely, it was not thereby "tainted" as science. An investigator might superintend the economically important rodent project calling for end results as rapidly as they could be secured, and, at the same time, diligently seek the causes of the absorption, during sexual activity, of the pubic symphyses of female pocket gophers.

The secretary, although most responsive to wholesome public sentiment, has not been deluded by that harmful myth to the effect that farmers, boards, governors and others are constantly bringing desperate pressure to bear on state institutions to secure exclusively results that are capable of immediate practical application, thus enforcing superficiality. Only this year he was able to say that difficulties of this nature had not been imposed upon him.

ROBERT K. NABOURS

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Principles of General Physiology. By SIR WILLIAM MADDOCK BAYLISS, 4th Edition, 1924, Longmans, Green & Company, London.

THIS edition of a book unique among all its kind appears just a decade after the first, and only a few months after the author's death. The tautologous title is still retained and is still somewhat misleading. For treatises on the principles of any science heretofore have led us to look for a style almost stereotyped. One recalls Newton's "Principia," v.

[1] *American Forests and Forest Life,* February, 1925, p. 71.