

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen  
London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte  
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# **The Young Forester**

Zane Grey

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# THE YOUNG FORESTER

By Zane Grey

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## I. CHOOSING A PROFESSION

I loved outdoor life and hunting. Some way a grizzly bear would come in when I tried to explain forestry to my brother.

"Hunting grizzlies!" he cried. "Why, Ken, father says you've been reading dime novels."

"Just wait, Hal, till he comes out here. I'll show him that forestry isn't just bear-hunting."

My brother Hal and I were camping a few days on the Susquehanna River, and we had divided the time between fishing and tramping. Our camp was on the edge of a forest some eight miles from Harrisburg. The property belonged to our father, and he had promised to drive out to see us. But he did not come that day, and I had to content myself with winning Hal over to my side.

"Ken, if the governor lets you go to Arizona can't you ring me in?"

"Not this summer. I'd be afraid to ask him. But in another year I'll do it."

"Won't it be great? But what a long time to wait! It makes me sick to think of you out there riding mustangs and hunting bears and lions."

"You'll have to stand it. You're pretty much of a kid, Hal—not yet fourteen. Besides, I've graduated."

"Kid!" exclaimed Hal, hotly. "You're not such a Methuselah yourself! I'm nearly as big as you. I can ride as well and play ball as well, and I can beat you all—"

"Hold on, Hal! I want you to help me to persuade father, and if you get your temper up you'll like as not go against me. If he lets me go I'll bring you in as soon as I dare. That's a promise. I guess I know how much I'd like to have you."

"All right," replied Hal, resignedly. "I'll have to hold in, I suppose. But I'm crazy to go. And, Ken, the cowboys and lions are not all that interest me. I like what you tell me about forestry. But who ever heard of forestry as a profession?"

"It's just this way, Hal. The natural resources have got to be conserved, and the Government is trying to enlist intelligent young men in the work—particularly in the department of forestry. I'm not exaggerating when I say the prosperity of this country depends upon forestry."

I have to admit that I was repeating what I had read.

"Why does it? Tell me how," demanded Hal.

"Because the lumbermen are wiping out all the timber and never thinking of the future. They are in such a hurry to get rich that they'll leave their grandchildren only a desert. They cut and slash in every direction, and then fires come and the country is ruined. Our rivers depend upon the forests for water. The trees draw the rain; the leaves break it up and let it fall in mists and drippings; it seeps into the ground, and is held by the roots. If the trees are destroyed the rain rushes off on the surface and floods the rivers. The forests store up water, and they do good in other ways."

"We've got to have wood and lumber," said Hal.

"Of course we have. But there won't be any unless we go in for forestry. It's been practiced in Germany for three hundred years."

We spent another hour talking about it, and if Hal's practical sense, which he inherited from father, had not been offset by his real love for the forests I should have been discouraged. Hal was of an industrious turn of mind; he meant to make money, and anything that was good business appealed strongly to him. But, finally, he began to see what I was driving at; he admitted that there was something in the argument.

The late afternoon was the best time for fishing. For the next two hours our thoughts were of quivering rods and leaping bass.

"You'll miss the big bass this August," remarked Hal, laughing. "Guess you won't have all the sport."

"That's so, Hal," I replied, regretfully. "But we're talking as if it were a dead sure thing that I'm going West. Well, I only hope so."

What Hal and I liked best about camping—of course after the fishing—was to sit around the campfire. Tonight it was more pleasant than ever, and when darkness fully settled down it was even

thrilling. We talked about bears. Then Hal told of mountain-lions and the habit they have of creeping stealthily after hunters. There was a hoot-owl crying dismally up in the woods, and down by the edge of the river bright-green eyes peered at us from the darkness. When the wind came up and moaned through the trees it was not hard to imagine we were out in the wilderness. This had been a favorite game for Hal and me; only tonight there seemed some reality about it. From the way Hal whispered, and listened, and looked, he might very well have been expecting a visit from lions or, for that matter, even from Indians. Finally we went to bed. But our slumbers were broken. Hal often had nightmares even on ordinary nights, and on this one he moaned so much and thrashed about the tent so desperately that I knew the lions were after him.

I dreamed of forest lands with snow-capped peaks rising in the background; I dreamed of elk standing on the open ridges, of white-tailed deer trooping out of the hollows, of antelope browsing on the sage at the edge of the forests. Here was the broad track of a grizzly in the snow; there on a sunny crag lay a tawny mountain-lion asleep. The bronzed cowboy came in for his share, and the lone bandit played his part in a way to make me shiver. The great pines, the shady, brown trails, the sunlit glades, were as real to me as if I had been among them. Most vivid of all was the lonely forest at night and the campfire. I heard the sputter of the red embers and smelled the wood smoke; I peered into the dark shadows watching and listening for I knew not what.

On the next day early in the afternoon father appeared on the river road.

"There he is," cried Hal. "He's driving Billy. How he's coming."

Billy was father's fastest horse. It pleased me immensely to see the pace, for father would not have been driving fast unless he were in a particularly good humor. And when he stopped on the bank above camp I could have shouted. He wore his corduroys as if he were ready for outdoor life. There was a smile on his face as he tied Billy, and, coming down, he poked into everything in camp and asked innumerable questions. Hal talked about the bass until I was afraid he would want to go fishing and postpone our forestry tramp in the woods. But presently he spoke directly to me.

"Well, Kenneth, are you going to come out with the truth about that Wild-West scheme of yours? Now that you've graduated you want a fling. You want to ride mustangs, to see cowboys, to hunt and shoot—all that sort of thing."

When father spoke in such a way it usually meant the defeat of my schemes. I grew cold all over.

"Yes, father, I'd like all that—But I mean business. I want to be a forest ranger. Let me go to Arizona this summer. And in the fall I'd—I'd like to go to a school of forestry."

There! the truth was out, and my feelings were divided between relief and fear. Before father could reply I launched into a set speech upon forestry, and talked till I was out of breath.

"There's something in what you say," replied my father. "You've been reading up on the subject?"

"Everything I could get, and I've been trying to apply my knowledge in the woods. I love the trees. I'd love an outdoor life. But forestry won't be any picnic. A ranger must be able to ride and pack, make trail and camp, live alone in the woods, fight fire and wild beasts. Oh! It'd be great!"

"I dare say," said father, dryly; "particularly the riding and shooting. Well, I guess you'll make a good-enough doctor to suit me."

"Give me a square deal," I cried, jumping up. "Mayn't I have one word to say about my future? Wouldn't you rather have me happy and successful as a forester, even if there is danger, than just an ordinary, poor doctor? Let's go over our woodland. I'll prove that you are letting your forest run down. You've got sixty acres of hard woods that ought to be bringing a regular income. If I can't prove it, if I can't interest you, I'll agree to study medicine. But if I do you're to let me try forestry."

"Well, Kenneth, that's a fair proposition," returned father, evidently surprised at my earnestness "Come on. We'll go up in the woods. Hal, I suppose he's won you over?"

"Ken's got a big thing in mind," replied Hal, loyally "It's just splendid."

I never saw the long, black-fringed line of trees without joy in the possession of them and a desire to be among them. The sixty acres of timber land covered the whole of a swampy valley, spread over a rolling hill sloping down to the glistening river.

"Now, son? go ahead," said my father, as we clambered over a rail fence and stepped into the edge of shade..

"Well, father—" I began, haltingly, and could not collect my thoughts. Then we were in the cool woods. It was very still, there being only a faint rustling of leaves and the mellow note of a hermit-thrush. The deep shadows were lightened by shafts of sunshine which, here and there, managed to pierce the canopy of foliage. Somehow, the feeling roused by these things loosened my tongue.

"This is an old hard-wood forest," I began. "Much of the white oak, hickory, ash, maple, is virgin timber. These trees have reached maturity; many are dead at the tops; all of them should have been cut long ago. They make too dense a shade for the seedlings to survive. Look at that bunch of sapling maples. See how they reach up, trying to get to the light. They haven't a branch low down and the tops are thin. Yet maple is one of our hardiest trees. Growth has been suppressed. Do you notice there are no small oaks or hickories just here? They can't live in deep shade. Here's the stump of a white oak cut last fall. It was about two feet in diameter. Let's count the rings to find its age—about ninety years. It flourished in its youth and grew rapidly, but it had a hard time after about fifty years. At that time it was either burned, or mutilated by a falling tree, or struck by lightning."

"Now, how do you make that out?" asked father, intensely interested.

"See the free, wide rings from the pith out to about number forty-five. The tree was healthy up to that time. Then it met with an injury of some kind, as is indicated by this black scar. After that the rings grew narrower. The tree struggled to live."

We walked on with me talking as fast as I could get the words out. I showed father a giant, bushy chestnut which was dominating all the trees around it, and told him how it retarded their growth.

On the other hand, the other trees were absorbing nutrition from the ground that would have benefited the chestnut.

"There's a sinful waste of wood here," I said, as we climbed over and around the windfalls and rotting tree-trunks. "The old trees die and are blown down. The amount of rotting wood equals the yearly growth. Now, I want to show you the worst enemies of the trees. Here's a big white oak, a hundred and fifty years old. It's almost dead. See the little holes bored in the bark. They were made by a beetle. Look!"

I swung my hatchet and split off a section of bark. Everywhere in the bark and round the tree ran little dust-filled grooves. I pried out a number of tiny brown beetles, somewhat the shape of a pinching-bug, only very much smaller.

"There! You'd hardly think that that great tree was killed by a lot of little bugs, would you? They girdle the trees and prevent the sap from flowing."

I found an old chestnut which contained nests of the deadly white moths, and explained how it laid its eggs, and how the caterpillars that came from them killed the trees by eating the leaves. I showed how mice and squirrels injured the forest by eating the seeds.

"First I'd cut and sell all the matured and dead timber. Then I'd thin out the spreading trees that want all the light, and the saplings that grow too close together. I'd get rid of the beetles, and try to check the spread of caterpillars. For trees grow twice as fast if they are not choked or diseased. Then I'd keep planting seeds and shoots in the open places, taking care to favor the species best adapted to the soil, and cutting those that don't grow well. In this way we'll be keeping our forest while doubling its growth and value, and having a yearly income from it."

"Kenneth, I see you're in dead earnest about this business," said my father, slowly. "Before I came out here today I had been looking up the subject, and I believe, with you, that forestry really means the salvation of our country. I think you are really interested, and I've a mind not to oppose you."

"You'll never regret it. I'll learn; I'll work up. Then it's an outdoor life—healthy, free—why! all the boys I've told take to the idea.

There's something fine about it." "Forestry it is, then," replied he. "I like the promise of it, and I like your attitude. If you have learned so much while you were camping out here the past few summers it speaks well for you. But why do you want to go to Arizona?"

"Because the best chances are out West. I'd like to get a line on the National Forests there before I go to college. The work will be different; those Western forests are all pine. I've a friend, Dick Leslie, a fellow I used to fish with, who went West and is now a fire ranger in the new National Forest in Arizona—Penetier is the name of it. He has written me several times to come out and spend a while with him in the woods."

"Penetier? Where is that—near what town?"

"Holston. It's a pretty rough country, Dick says; plenty of deer, bears, and lions on his range. So I could hunt some while studying the forests. I think I'd be safe with Dick, even if it is wild out there."

"All right, I'll let you go. When you return we'll see about the college." Then he surprised me by drawing a letter from his pocket and handing it to me. "My friend, Mr. White, got this letter from the department at Washington. It may be of use to you out there."

So it was settled, and when father drove off homeward Hal and I went back to camp. It would have been hard to say which of us was the more excited. Hal did a war dance round the campfire. I was glad, however, that he did not have the little twinge of remorse which I experienced, for I had not told him or father all that Dick had written about the wilderness of Penetier. I am afraid my mind was as much occupied with rifles and mustangs as with the study of forestry. But, though the adventure called most strongly to me, I knew I was sincere about the forestry end of it, and I resolved that I would never slight my opportunities. So, smothering conscience, I fell to the delight of making plans. I was for breaking camp at once, but Hal persuaded me to stay one more day. We talked for hours. Only one thing bothered me. Hal was jolly and glum by turns. He reveled in the plans for my outfit, but he wanted his own chance. A thousand times I had to repeat my promise, and the last thing he said before we slept was: "Ken, you're going to ring me in next summer!"



## II. THE MAN ON THE TRAIN

Travelling was a new experience to me, and on the first night after I left home I lay awake until we reached Altoona. We rolled out of smoky Pittsburg at dawn, and from then on the only bitter drop in my cup of bliss was that the train went so fast I could not see everything out of my window.

Four days to ride! The great Mississippi to cross, the plains, the Rocky Mountains, then the Arizona plateaus—a long, long journey with a wild pine forest at the end! I wondered what more any young fellow could have wished. With my face glued to the car window I watched the level country speed by.

There appeared to be one continuous procession of well-cultivated farms, little hamlets, and prosperous towns. What interested me most, of course, were the farms, for all of them had some kind of wood. We passed a zone of maple forests which looked to be more carefully kept than the others. Then I recognized that they were maple-sugar trees. The farmers had cleaned out the other species, and this primitive method of forestry had produced the finest maples it had ever been my good-fortune to see. Indiana was flatter than Ohio, not so well watered, and therefore less heavily timbered. I saw, with regret, that the woodland was being cut regularly, tree after tree, and stacked in cords for firewood.

At Chicago I was to change for Santa Fe, and finding my train in the station I climbed aboard. My car was a tourist coach. Father had insisted on buying a ticket for the California Limited, but I had argued that a luxurious Pullman was not exactly the thing for a prospective forester. Still I pocketed the extra money which I had assured him he need not spend for the first-class ticket.

The huge station, with its glaring lights and clanging bells, and the outspreading city, soon gave place to prairie land.

That night I slept little, but the very time I wanted to be awake—when we crossed the Mississippi—I was slumbering soundly, and so missed it.

"I'll bet I don't miss it coming back," I vowed.

The sight of the Missouri, however, somewhat repaid me for the loss. What a muddy, wide river! And I thought of the thousands of miles of country it drained, and of the forests there must be at its source. Then came the never-ending Kansas corn-fields. I do not know whether it was their length or their treeless monotony, but I grew tired looking at them.

From then on I began to take some notice of my fellow-travelers. The conductor proved to be an agreeable old fellow; and the train-boy, though I mistrusted his advances because he tried to sell me everything from chewing-gum to mining stock, turned out to be pretty good company. The Negro porter had such a jolly voice and laugh that I talked to him whenever I got the chance. Then occasional passengers occupied the seat opposite me from town to town. They were much alike, all sunburned and loud-voiced, and it looked as though they had all bought their high boots and wide hats at the same shop.

The last traveller to face me was a very heavy man with a great bullet head and a shock of light hair. His blue eyes had a bold flash, his long mustache drooped, and there was something about him that I did not like. He wore a huge diamond in the bosom of his flannel shirt, and a leather watch-chain that was thick and strong enough to have held up a town-clock.

"Hot," he said, as he mopped his moist brow.

"Not so hot as it was," I replied.

"Sure not. We're climbin' a little. He's whistlin' for Dodge City now."

"Dodge City?" I echoed, with interest. The name brought back vivid scenes from certain yellow-backed volumes, and certain uncomfortable memories of my father's displeasure. "Isn't this the old cattle town where there used to be so many fights?"

"Sure. An' not so very long ago. Here, look out the window." He clapped his big hand on my knee; then pointed. "See that hill there. Dead Man's Hill it was once, where they buried the fellers as died with their boots on."

I stared, and even stretched my neck out of the window.

"Yes, old Dodge was sure lively," he continued, as our train passed on. "I seen a little mix-up there myself in the early eighties. Five cow-punchers, friends they was, had been visitin' town. One feller, playful-like, takes another feller's quirt—that's a whip. An' the other feller, playful-like, says, 'Give it back.' Then they tussles for it, an' rolls on the ground. I was laughin', as was everybody, when, suddenly, the owner of the quirt thumps his friend. Both cowboys got up, slow, an' watchin' of each other. Then the first feller, who had started the play, pulls his gun. He'd hardly flashed it when they all pulls guns, an' it was some noisy an' smoky. In about five seconds there was five dead cowpunchers. Killed themselves, as you might say, just for fun. That's what life was worth in old Dodge." After this story I felt more kindly disposed ward my traveling companion, and would have asked for more romances but the conductor came along and engaged him in conversation. Then my neighbor across the aisle, a young fellow not much older than myself, asked me to talk to him.

"Why, yes, if you like," I replied, in surprise. He was pale; there were red spots in his cheeks, and dark lines under his weary eyes.

"You look so strong and eager that it's done me good to watch you," he explained, with a sad smile. "You see—I'm sick."

I told him I was very sorry, and hoped he would get well soon.

"I ought to have come West sooner," he replied, "but I couldn't get the money."

He looked up at me and then out of the window at the sun setting red across the plains. I tried to make him think of something beside himself, but I made a mess of it. The meeting with him was a shock to me. Long after dark, when I had stretched out for the night, I kept thinking of him and contrasting what I had to look forward to with his dismal future. Somehow it did not seem fair, and I could not get rid of the idea that I was selfish.

Next day I had my first sight of real mountains. And the Pennsylvania hills, that all my life had appeared so high, dwindled to nothing. At Trinidad, where we stopped for breakfast, I walked out on the platform sniffing at the keen thin air. When we crossed the Raton Mountains into New Mexico the sick boy got off at the first sta-

tion, and I waved good-bye to him as the train pulled out. Then the mountains and the funny little adobe huts and the Pueblo Indians along the line made me forget everything else.

The big man with the heavy watch-chain was still on the train, and after he had read his newspaper he began to talk to me.

"This road follows the old trail that the goldseekers took in forty-nine," he said. "We're comin' soon to a place, Apache Pass, where the Apaches used to ambush the wagon-trains, It's somewheres along here."

Presently the train wound into a narrow yellow ravine, the walls of which grew higher and higher.

"Them Apaches was the worst redskins ever in the West. They used to hide on top of this pass an' shoot down on the wagon-trains."

Later in the day he drew my attention to a mountain standing all by itself. It was shaped like a cone, green with trees almost to the summit, and ending in a bare stone peak that had a flat top.

"Starvation Peak," he said. "That name's three hundred years old, dates back to the time the Spaniards owned this land. There's a story about it that's likely true enough. Some Spaniards were attacked by Indians an' climbed to the peak, expectin' to be better able to defend themselves up there. The Indians camped below the peak an' starved the Spaniards. Stuck there till they starved to death! That's where it got its name."

"Those times you tell of must have been great," I said, regretfully. "I'd like to have been here then. But isn't the country all settled now? Aren't the Indians dead? There's no more fighting?"

"It's not like it used to be, but there's still warm places in the West. Not that the Indians break out often any more. But bad men are almost as bad, if not so plentiful, as when Billy the Kid run these parts. I saw two men shot an' another knifed jest before I went East to St. Louis."

"Where?"

"In Arizona. Holston is the station where I get off, an' it happened near there."

"Holston is where I'm going."

"You don't say. Well, I'm glad to meet you, young man. My name's Buell, an' I'm some known in Holston. What's your name?"

He eyed me in a sharp but not unfriendly manner, and seemed pleased to learn of my destination.

"Ward. Kenneth Ward. I'm from Pennsylvania."

"You haven't got the bugs. Any one can see that," he said, and as I looked puzzled he went on with a smile, and a sounding rap on his chest: "Most young fellers as come out here have consumption. They call it bugs. I reckon you're seekin' your fortune."

"Yes, in a way."

"There's opportunities for husky youngsters out here. What're you goin' to rustle for, if I may ask?"

"I'm going in for forestry."

"Forestry? Do you mean lumberin'?"

"No. Forestry is rather the opposite of lumbering. I'm going in for Government forestry – to save the timber, not cut it."

It seemed to me he gave a little start of surprise; he certainly straightened up and looked at me hard.

"What's Government forestry?"

I told him to the best of my ability. He listened attentively enough, but thereafter he had not another word for me, and presently he went into the next car. I took his manner to be the Western abruptness that I had heard of, and presently forgot him in the scenery along the line. At Albuquerque I got off for a trip to a lunch-counter, and happened to take a seat next to him.

"Know anybody in Holston?" he asked.

As I could not speak because of a mouthful of sandwich I shook my head. For the moment I had forgotten about Dick Leslie, and when it did occur to me some Indians offering to sell me beads straightway drove it out of my mind again.

When I awoke the next day, it was to see the sage ridges and red buttes of Arizona. We were due at Holston at eight o'clock, but ow-

ing to a crippled engine the train was hours late. At last I fell asleep to be awakened by a vigorous shake.

"Holston. Your stop. Holston," the conductor was saying.

"All right," I said, sitting up and then making a grab for my grip. "We're pretty late, aren't we?"

"Six hours. It's two o'clock."

"Hope I can get a room," I said, as I followed him out on the platform. He held up his lantern so that the light would shine in my face. "There's a hotel down the street a block or so. Better hurry and look sharp. Holston's not a safe place for a stranger at night."

I stepped off into a windy darkness. A lamp glimmered in the station window. By its light I made out several men, the foremost of whom had a dark, pointed face and glittering eyes. He wore a strange hat, and I knew from pictures I had seen that he was a Mexican. Then the bulky form of Buell loomed up. I called, but evidently he did not hear me. The men took his grips, and they moved away to disappear in the darkness. While I paused, hoping to see some one to direct me, the train puffed out, leaving me alone on the platform.

When I turned the corner I saw two dim lights, one far to the left, the other to the right, and the black outline of buildings under what appeared to be the shadow of a mountain. It was the quietest and darkest town I had ever struck.

I decided to turn toward the right-hand light, for the conductor had said "down the street." I set forth at a brisk pace, but the loneliness and strangeness of the place were rather depressing.

Before I had gone many steps, however, the sound of running water halted me, and just in the nick of time, for I was walking straight into a ditch. By peering hard into the darkness and feeling my way I found a bridge. Then it did not take long to reach the light. But it was a saloon, and not the hotel. One peep into it served to make me face about in double-quick time, and hurry in the opposite direction.

Hearing a soft footfall, I glanced over my shoulder, to see the Mexican that I had noticed at the station. He was coming from