ARMY ENGINEERS.

Not long ago Colonel Roosevelt publicly condemned what he called the "special privileges given to certain young men between eighteen and twenty-one" in providing for them to be trained as officers. Now comes a reply from Palmer C. Ricketts, president of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, one of the institutions where such provision is made.

Dr. Ricketts does not begin too gently when he says at the outset: "I am inclined to think that it was the training of the politician and not complete ignorance of our educational systems which induced this utterance. The blinding desire to court the favor of the masses is the block over which political leaders—even sterling patriots like Roosevelt—from force of habit, so often stumble."

He goes on to remind all concerned that engine officers cannot be made in camps, the government knows this and that the authorities responsible for the preparation of young men for certain work in the army must be trained for it as for any other professional work. Speaking more in detail he makes an explanation which can be understood by any careful reader in its general course at least. Here we quote: 

Every intelligent citizen must know that in almost all parts of our country a high school education is possible, even for the children of the poorest, if they have the ambition to secure one. And those who have not had this ambition would very probably not be chosen as officers even in a camp. This government has said to those wishing to become engineers in our army who have had a high school education or its equivalent and who are within the draft age, rich or poor: We will induct you into the army as private soldiers, with the subsistence and pay of a private, and pay your tuition for two years intensive technical training if you show yourself worthy, so that the supply of needed engineers may not fail.

That is fair to both sides. It can be understood by anyone who is not too strenuously in advance. He illustrates it, although this hardly necessary, when he adds:

In one day there came to my office in Troy the son of one of the wealthy men of the city who wished to enter our school. I told him his preparation was insufficient. The same day there came the son of a poor laborer for the same purpose. He was now a student who will be inducted into the Army Tuesday, and if he does his work well and the war lasts long enough he will be an officer in the corps of engineers in our Army. Such is the law. Such is the law. It is a good law. PALMER C. RICKETTS. Troy, October 5. 1918.