
Silviculture

By JOSEF KOSTLER.

Translated by M. L. Anderson.

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THE members of the Society who participated in the annual general excursion to Baden will have savoured the excellence of central European forestry. The magnificent stands of timber, the very attractive mixed forests and the very handsome yields in money, all command attention and respect. In the short time available during the excursion one could make only a superficial acquaintance with the silviculture practised in Southern Germany. The final product looked so inviting, however, that one is really anxious to know more about the recipe. It is opportune, therefore, that this English translation of a book on modern German silviculture should come up for review.

Professor Kostler, in the preface, explains that his book contains a summary of the subject matter of two courses of lectures on silviculture. He stresses, however, that in silviculture no generalising and systematizing is permissible but it is the educational aim to awaken the learner's own critical faculty to such an extent that he is put in a position to reach a decision himself about the individual sites and stands.

Professor Kostler's book is an excellent introduction to scientific silviculture. He says "Forestry as a science has a structure peculiarly its own; it can be classed neither as a pure nor as an applied science but has a foot in both camps." He also stresses the fact "that scientific knowledge in the field of forestry has become so comprehensive that the participation of universities in its diffusion is now essential. In the managed forest it has been proved, moreover, that 'experience' alone

has, with few exceptions led to the ruin and devastation of the forest; on the other hand, it should not be overlooked that for successful handling of the forest in addition to a scientific grounding a wealth of forest experience is necessary."

Again and again in reading through this stimulating book one is struck by the emphasis on basic principles. "The kernel of the business of forestry is silviculture" writes Kostler and again, "the most important part of silvicultural work is the marking of trees for felling—the scribe is the tool proper to the silviculturist."

The book is in two parts. Part 1 deals with the principles of silviculture and with the individual factors of locality. The second part is a treatise on the practice of silviculture with special reference to conditions in Southern Germany. It is in this part of the book that we get a very useful introduction to the practices which have been evolved in Baden and Bavaria. Here indeed is silviculture in its best and most attractive form. The chapter on 'Tending of Stands' is excellent and full of practical guides for the management of natural regeneration and the complex mixtures which are a feature of the silviculture practised by Central European foresters.

There is a full history of thinning from the 'dark' days of Hartig down to the present era of heavy thinning and including a detailed description of a "numerical" system evolved by a forester named Michaelis. That the author does not favour 'rule of thumb' or calculated thinning, however, is apparent from the following: "All these arithmetical manipulations, however, are only another *pons asinorum* for the novice. Remember what Shadelin has said 'Whoever thins according to number of stems and spacing or uses basal area and yield table data and similar crutches, comes under the grave suspicion of being incapable of marking a satisfactory thinning'."

This book should become a standard text book in forestry schools particularly in temperate regions. While the book might be said to speak with a German accent it is nevertheless very readable. One of its novel features comes in the final pages where there is a discussion on what it takes to make a skilled silviculturist. "One takes up Forestry for the love of the thing" seems to sum up the case.

Looking at the future of the profession the author is rather despondent. "There is an ever-increasing danger that the productive professional activity, which is devoted to direct silvicultural handling, may be overwhelmed by bureaucratic functions and that the foresters themselves may come to lose the inclination for their life's work."

The forestry profession should, indeed, be grateful to Dr. Anderson for making Professor Kostler's book available to English speaking members.

T.C.