

FOREST TYPES IN SCOTLAND

BY

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A complete history of forestry in Scotland has yet to be written, and anyone who makes the attempt will find that he has to deal with a curious patchwork of materials. Some of the reasons for this are, the extraordinary complexity of the geology and topography, the variety of the climate, the great range of altitude and the varying degree of exposure. A further complication has been introduced by the sub-division of the country into two separate parts, Lowlands and Highlands, which up to the end of the eighteenth century at least, have developed socially and politically along somewhat different lines.

In the Lowlands, destruction of the primeval forests had practically been completed by the end of the fifteenth century, at which period and later the Scots Parliament were actually constrained to pass several acts of parliament, enforcing the planting and replanting of woods.

Inaccessibility and a less advanced culture in the Highlands preserved the natural forests of Pine, Oak and Birch for a somewhat longer period, but the eighteenth century saw most of the best stands exploited and practically destroyed.

The eighteenth century, however, witnessed a remarkable outburst of afforestation activity amongst private landowners all over the country. With probably one solitary exception, the practice was, of necessity, to afforest by means of artificial, as opposed to natural regeneration. In the matter of nursery work, use of exotics and the establishment of woodlands by artificial means, many of these isolated estates, during and since that time, developed high standards of technique and were very successful. Scottish foresters were in high demand all over the British Isles.

The present century, with its high level of taxation, and from the forestry point-of-view, pernicious taxation, has seen, with a few

exceptions, the activities of private owners considerably curtailed. This has been recently balanced to some extent by the work of the Forestry Commission, which has benefited very greatly from the pre-existing experience in the artificial regeneration of plantations, accumulated in the past.

This experience would be infinitely more useful, were it not often so contradictory. The contradictions are in nearly every instance merely the result of different locality conditions. A practical, easy and reliable method of site-classification would be of inestimable utility at the present time in coordinating the silvicultural experience which exists all over the country. Several spasmodic attempts have been made in the past to use the soil vegetation as an aid in the choice of species etc., but nothing of general application has yet been produced.

Nothing so complete and satisfactory as Prof. CAJANDER'S 'Theory of Forest Types' has so far made its appearance. The English publication of CAJANDER'S work undoubtedly stimulated the interest of foresters here and aroused in them a sense of the value of such a system of site-classification as Prof. CAJANDER has evolved. It is true that, owing to our lack of mature natural stands, the fixation of forest types presents greater difficulties. Nevertheless, we look to the ultimate establishment of forest-types, which will include types similar to some occurring in Suomi, with possibly additional types, especially of the Grass-herb series. The main part of our work must be the correlation of moor-types to climax forest-types, for silviculture in Scotland must for long be the artificial establishment of plantations, or the re-afforestation of waste lands. The collection of data is proceeding and, when the time comes to set up our system of forest-types, there can be no doubt that we shall profit extensively from the excellent lead which Prof. CAJANDER has given us. Long may Prof. CAJANDER live to continue the work which he has initiated with such extraordinary energy, vision and success.

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