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PRINCIPLES OF SILVICULTURE

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FOREWORD

The old practice of philosophizing in technical publications is no longer in fashion. But a hundred years and more ago a German forester, Heinrich Cotta, succeeded so well in expressing some basic truths about silviculture that the student of today can profitably take to heart many of his wise words. The preface to his book "Anweisung zum Walbau" ("Advice on Silviculture," 1816), translated by Dr. B. E. Fernow, was used to introduce the *Forestry Quarterly* in 1902. It runs as follows:

"If the inhabitants of Germany should leave their country it would be all grown up with woods within a century. Since there would be nobody to use them, the soil would be enriched and the woods would not only increase in size, but in productive power. If, however, the people returned again and made just as large drafts as before for wood, litter and pasturage, the woodlands, even with the best forest management, would again not only be reduced in size, but also become less fertile.

"Forests form and thrive best where there are no people—and hence no forestry, and those are perfectly justified who say: Formerly we had no forestry science and enough wood; now we have that science, but no wood.

"One could say with the same justice: Those people are healthier who do not need a physician than those who do. But it would not follow that the physicians are to be blamed for the diseases. There would be no physicians if there were no diseases, and no forestry science without deficiency in wood supplies. This science is only a child of necessity or need, and need is therefore its natural concomitant; hence the phrase should be: We have now a forestry science because we have a dearth of wood.

"Forestry, however, does not offer any nostrums and can do nothing against the course of nature. The celebrated physician Verdey said: 'The good physician lets people die; the poor one kills them.' With the same right one can say the good forester allows the most perfect forests to become less so; the poor one spoils them. That is to say, just as the good physician cannot hinder that men die because that is the course of nature, so the best forester cannot hinder that the forests, which came to us from past times, become less now they are being utilized.

"Germany formerly contained immense, perfect, most fertile forests. But the large forests have become small, the fertile have become sterile.

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