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THE GAME ASPECT OF REFORESTATION

by
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Once upon a time there was a Forester. To prove that he was a forester there was a diploma, and to back up this diploma there were a whole lot of text books. The Forester had a thick book of regulations which he called his "bible" and to which he constantly referred because the service for which he worked had told him that this book contained all the answers.

This Forester was placed in charge of a large tract of cut over wild land, thousands of acres, and he was instructed to manage this land to the best of his ability. So he built fire lines, and he built truck trails, and he dug water holes and finally he built a tree nursery, just like his bible told him to.

Along came fall, the fire season was over, and the Forester went a hunting. He met an old Indian and they hunted together. They hunted the trails in the old hardwood slashing, they covered the oak hills and then down into the popple, they skirted the swamp edge and sampled the jack pine. They found plenty of game.

A springtime came, and the Forester was out planting the tree seedlings which he had raised in his nursery. There were men with tractors and plows farrowing through the scattered popple, weaving in and out among the old pine stumps. There were other men, dozens of them, with buckets full of tiny pine trees and dibbles in their hands, planting trees with the rhythmic movement that comes from constant practice. The Forester was justly proud for he had raised millions of seedlings and he was reforesting thousands of acres. He was visualizing how these newly planted acres would look fifty years from then. He was somewhat regretful because his father had seen this country covered with sawlog pine and his son would have the same privilege but he

page 2.

himself would not live to see it more than fence-post size. He wondered some about those sawlogs. They would be a long time coming, fifty years or more so his textbooks said, and his bible did not tell him how to make his Forest productive while the sawlogs were growing up. Oh, well, he mused, there is hunting and recreation here for the old Indian and his children and for as many of the city folks as want it. The Forest can serve that purpose until the timber is ripe.

In the fall the Forester and the Old Indian went hunting again. They hunted the trails in the old hardwood slashing, they covered the oak hills and then down into the popple, they skirted the swamp edge and sampled the jack pine and, same as before, they found plenty of game. They also found plenty of pine, the pine which the Forester had planted. Along the way the Old Indian had picked up an acorn. "You plant acorns?" he queried, placing the acorn in the Forester's hand. "No," said the Forester, "this scrub oak doesn't make good timber". "Partridge eat em acorns", said the Indian. Later on the Old Indian pointed to a basswood twig which had been freshly nibbled on. "You plant um basswood?" he queried again. "No," the Forester told him, "That stuff will come back by itself if the fires leave it alone." "Deer eat um basswood," said the Old Indian, "good food in winter time. Basswood make good timber". "Deer eat um cedar too," he further remarked as they skirted the edge of a cedar swamp. "Deer stay in cedar all winter when snow deep. Make good shelter. You plant cedar?" the Old Indian further asked. "No," replied the Forester, "that would be pretty tough planting down in that swamp." "You plant um edge of swamp, planting easier, maybe grow faster." But the Forester was attentive to a rustle in the cedar, sounded like a partridge, and he let the Indian's last remark go unanswered.

They reached the brow of a hill, and spread out before them was a barren valley. Good game cover once, the Forester remembered, young maple and basswood. He and the Indian had hunted it before. But fire had come and burned

page 3.

it heavily. Now it was sassa and briars and heavily sodded. The Old Indian stopped, for he saw furrows, the snaky furrows of the planting crews. "You plant um all pine too?" he queried as he swept his arm out over the valley. In his voice was disappointment; "You make no good country." "What's that", said the Forester, "makes no good country? Why pine makes good country. Pine makes sawlogs. Your children or your grandchildren can work in the woods, they can work in the mills, they can make big money."

"You make no good country," the Old Indian insisted, "you no make game country, you plant em all pine forest, by em by grow up, make big trees, make high up branches, deer no find cover, make plenty shade, too, deer no find basswood, partridge no find acorns, game all leave country. My children leave country too, maybe, my children all hunt, no can hunt pine forest, no find game. You make bad country."

So, reflected the Forester, that was the Old Indian's concern. His hunting ground was being spoiled. Well, that was a new angle on this reforestation business. If the Old Indian's hunting ground was going to be spoiled by all these solid pine plantations, wasn't the hunting going to be spoiled for all of the city folks whom he planned could use his forest while the timber crop was getting ripe? His bible didn't have any answer for this problem. He could find in it formulas for computing the board feet per acre in even aged pine forests, but it showed no way to figure the number of deer per acre. He could find formulas for computing stumpage prices for saw timber but there was nothing to show the value of the game within his forest or the returns that proper game management might bring.

Being a hunter himself, the Forester knew where game was to be found. He knew that deer browsed in the hardwoods and wintered in the cedar swamps. He knew that partridge fed on acorns in the fall and budded on the popple in the winter. He knew that deer liked clearings, that partridge liked cover. That Old Indian is right, he mused, this solid pine mania has got to have its

page 4.

limitations. Not that I would change any of it for it hasn't gotten that far along, but I'm certainly losing a good bet if I don't leave some openings for deer and partridge and if I don't plant something else besides pine. Why not try cedar on the edge of the swamp? Why not plant hardwoods on hardwood soil?

The Forester consulted his text books to find how to raise hardwoods. They hadn't much to offer. So he wrote to the head office and asked them how about it. It seems the head office had also met an Old Indian and had learned about planting for game as well as for sawlogs. There wasn't much dope on hardwoods, landscapers had grown them, but not by the million. They had learned about box elder, the deer seemed to like it and it grew well on light soils. They had learned that red maple would grow in with the white pine, and the deer liked red maple. It wasn't much for sawlogs but if they planted it in with the pine, it would mix food with cover and it would break up the pine stand and help keep out blister rust. They had learned that partridge liked fruits that held on through the winter, so why not plant sumac and hawthorns and swamp holly.

They instructed the Forester to raise game food and cover, as well as pine trees, and they told him also to figure out how much wild life he had on his Forest and to draw up a plan that would keep it all there.

So the Forester and the Old Indian went cruising together. They counted the partridge, and they counted the deer beds, and they counted the deer that hunters killed in the fall. They drew up a plan.

Years later, the Forester's children and the Old Indian's children went hunting together on the Forester's Forest, and there was plenty of game.

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