

# Our Crowned Friends—The Trees

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Some years ago I wrote the following food-for-thought:

"In what are trees and kings similar?  
In that both have crowns  
In what do they differ?  
The people serve the kings  
The trees serve the people."

Yes, the trees have crowns but not the type of the crown of thorns that the enemies of Our Lord placed on His head to mock Him as king of the Jews; nor the crowns that kings and potentates wear on their heads upon assuming the duties of their high office; nor much less the crowns worn by beautiful young ladies who reign over carnivals, fairs, beauty contests or *santacruzans*. The crown of the tree is one of its three integral parts. It is the part that consists of the branches, the twigs, flowers and fruits, and that gives the shade which weary travelers seek. The millions of crowns of trees in the forest form the verdant green that covers the mountains.

Trees and the community of trees we call forest, and mankind have been very closely associated since the beginning of civilization. We learned of Noah's going up Mt. Sinai, and out of the wood from trees built his ark to save himself and his kin from the Great Deluge, and only when the bird which he released returned with a twig and leaves of a tree did he know that the

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As my life today has been determined by the way I lived yesterday, so my tomorrow is being determined by the way I live my to-day.

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water was receding. We also learned that the early Christians, to save themselves from their enemies, assembled under the trees in the forest to perform their rites and worship, thus the forests have been considered as the "early temples of Christianity." Medieval men followed Noah's use of wood, and built galleons and ships to scour the seven seas in search of the new world and new things. It was in these ships that Columbus discovered America, and it was in these same wooden ships that Magellan in search of spices produced from tree, discovered our own country.

Modern civilization is still dependent on trees and forests of which the principal product is wood. Researchers have found substitutes for wood in some cases, but for many uses wood is still irreplaceable, and significantly, when substitutes for wood are found, new uses for wood are also discovered.

Yes, trees are our friends and more than friends they are our servants. We should, therefore, learn to love them. We need trees to adorn our gardens, plazas, streets, and highways. Have you not noticed the change in the panorama of Manila with the beautiful trees lining its boulevard? We need trees for their edible fruits, flowers or leaves, or as cure for our ailments.

But when we think of trees, let us not confine our thoughts only to trees as individuals. Let us think of the million and millions of trees that make our forest. The forest is the most valuable of our natural resources. The evaluation of such resources recently made by the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources is as follows:

	<i>Actual Value</i>	<i>Potential Value</i>
Forest Resources .....	P27,860,611,000	P49,496,171,000
Land Resources .....	4,387,773,000	13,285,103,000
Mineral Resources .....	1,409,990,000	13,985,500,000
Animal Resources .....	861,108,000	2,220,651,000
Fishery Resources .....	298,092,000	798,451,000
TOTAL .....	P34,862,574,000	P79,785,876,000

The forest resources presently valued at about 28 billion pesos with a potential value of 50 billion pesos, are a big asset in Philippine economy. The utilization of timber and minor forest products and special uses of forest lands among which is grazing, give a direct revenue of over 7 million pesos to the government aside from indirect income in the form of sales tax, income tax, merchant tax, motor vehicle exchange tax and wharfage tax paid by forest and forest-dependent industries, which is estimated to exceed the direct income. In timber alone, 35 million *dollars* are brought into the Philippines every year from the export of logs and sawn lumber. Forest industries have supplied all our local needs for lumber, thus import has been totally eliminated and dollars have been saved.

But the economic values of the forests are not confined to the money it gives to the government and the people. What counts more are the services of the forests in protecting the soil fertility and water supply, so necessary for successful agriculture, which cannot be evaluated in terms of cash. Ours is eminently an agricultural country now. The increase of population would require our economy to include industrial expansion. However, agriculture must be developed to the highest degree to produce what industries would process.

Also, the use of forest for recreation and the conservation of game and wildlife is of paramount importance. National forest parks, game reserves, wildernesses, etc., are being established and maintained in many countries. We have also done these; many of our people now are enjoying their week-

ends in national parks throughout the country.

Arbor Day has been changed to Arbor Week, not only to arouse better appreciation for trees, but to give more time to the planting of trees and taking care of them; and not only trees for our surroundings, but trees for our future forests. Let us, therefore, plant trees and more trees and protect the forests. For certainly, we owe much to Our Crowned Friends—the Trees.

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Lift up your hand to heaven, and thank your stars if they have given you the proper sense to enable you to appreciate the inconceivably droll situations in which we catch our fellow creatures.

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