

Literary Attempts

Trees, Man's Indispensable Companions

by
JULITA GERARDO, B.S.F. '59

"Touch not a single bough. In youth it sheltered me and I'll protect it now."

Trees are natural landmarks and memorials. They are monuments which God had given us to bridge the memory of the dead with the living and the yet to-be born. They are the links which join together the unbroken chain of countless generations. Because God blest them with an almost never-ending life unlike the short life span allotted to man. There are trees that were planted by our great grandfathers which are still grand and towering today. Several, too, have been immortalized by artists as well as poets. And there are those with special religious, esthetic and even sentimental associations. These are the noblest works of Creation. And because of the grandeur each tree offers to mankind voices from afar echoes and each time says: "WOODMAN, SPARE THAT TREE. Touch not a single bough. In youth it sheltered me and I'll protect it now" This echoing distant voice that keeps resounding without end reminds us of how close trees are to our lives. I am told there is a sign in bold letters plastered at the entrance to a public park in Portugal. The tree entreats:

"Ye who would pass by and raise your hand against me, harken ere you harm me. I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights; the friendly shade screening you from the summer sun; and my fruits are refreshing draughts quenching your thirst as you journey on. I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table, the bed on which you lie, and the timber that builds your boats. I am the handle of your hoe, the

door of your homestead, the wood of your cradle, and the shell of your coffin. I am the gift of God and friend of man".

Such is a glaring manifestation that trees are indispensable companions to man. Yet, in his ungratefulness or in his instinctive quest to slake his thirst for food, shelter and clothing he has taken the trees for granted. He has taken the forest as something to get rid of, and not as something great to preserve. He has ignored the manifold and multifarious amenities of life that he derives from trees. Lamentably then, the woodman has not spared the tree.

Forestry expert Tom Gill emphatically points in one of his papers that the Philippine forest is among the finest in the world. He continues without reservation that indeed our forest is not only outstanding in extent but also impressive, in the amount of valuable timber, commercially well-known in the world's market, that it contains. Such being the case he is quite confident and optimistic that if our forests are harvested with considerable care and protection there shall be a perpetual supply of timber and other forest products for our national wealth and economy. That certainly for wealth largely depends on the woodman. Will he spare the trees that crown our mountains grand? Or, in his burning desire and passion for "timber" will he let us live in houses built of mud and use cow dung for fuel like the millions of people in India? What a truly dismal picture the indiscriminate woodman would give us. It sounds strange, incredible and even unreal to us who see trees standing before our eyes. But what about the coming generations? Our

children's children? Our loved ones that are yet to come? Will they be victims of the woodman's reckless system of cutting trees? Or the kaiñgineros pernicious method of shifting agriculture? Or the undiagnosed causes of death of trees? Undiagnosed because more often than not the cause of death is rather obscure. Sometimes without our knowledge lack of water may cause death and, at other times, trees weakened by drought may fall prey to an insect or fungus attack. Or fire which is an arch enemy of trees? Obviously, fire totally kills the tree. But also the heat may injure patches of succulent inner bark of other trees. Fermentation then may easily start in these places and attract insects. While some of these causes are beyond our control others can be prevented. A tree is a living thing. To prolong its life it should be provided with sufficient light and water and not deprived of nutritive substances. A healthy tree will resist insect attacks and other diseases; it will develop a large crown and a strong root system; and it will withstand the action of gusty winds and torrential rains. If a tree is treated as a living organism, with an understanding of its vital functions, it will be a constant source of profit and pleasure to men. That job is everybody's main concern. We are left with a herculean task to conserve our existing forests by wise use and utilization. Because a forest conserved is a nation preserved. Ex-President of the United States or America Theodore Roosevelt and one of the world's foremost advocate of forest conservation, said over a half a century ago that a forest which contributes greatly to the wealth, progress and safety of the country is of interest to the Forester. So we cry to the woodman to spare the tree and to help the forester conserve the forest by being more discreet in his cutting system and by trying to feel less "timber-happy and addict". While it is true that every single bough means a centavo that is not all. All we have to do is to think of the long list of minor products that we all derive from the forest. Trees are

our closest link to Mother Nature. As Joyce Kilmer says, "Poems are made by fools like me but only God can make a tree". By pondering and reflecting on the grandeur and mystery of stately trees, man obtained inspiration, solace and even a renewal of spirit. On weary days one has only to stand among the trees within the silent wood and find again all the things that has gone out of hand. Truly, these sanctuaries still yield to sincere seekers the deepest and most spiritual of satisfactions. Because the forest can yield most of the things that man needs, it has attracted the woodman who is quickly tempted to exploitation and monstrous destruction.

Much has been said on forest conservation but so little has been done. And there is still much more left unsaid. A bulwark behind the Philippine forest is scientific research. Results of research studies have contributed fruitfully to combat fires, insects and diseases; to guide the woodman implement the modern techniques of managing the timber as a crop and in utilizing it most effectively; to conserve the use and renewal of forest ranges; to safeguard watersheds etc. Therefore, with such results and many more findings to come the lack of scientific know-how that will prevent wanton forest destruction is no longer the problem. It is only a matter of deadly seriousness by loggers especially in the strict implementation of these scientific techniques. Much remains to be done before we can feel that the Philippine forests — this "everyman's empire" — are handled most frugally and most fruitfully. One basic problem in the scientific management of the forest is the fact that forests are established for a dual purpose. This includes service to the Nation and to the local economy and welfare. While it is a task requiring Sisyphean labor to preserve, protect, conserve and develop this forest property that all Filipinos own, we are confident that with full cooperation and support we will push up through the hard crust of accustomed systems and ideas in order to reach out into the light of greater wisdom — a sunlight in which even

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University of the Philippines for possible publication in its journal the "Forestry Leaves".

I shall look forward to hear from you again. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) APOLONIO F. RIVERA
Acting Director of Forestry

Dagupan City
Jan. 22, 1965

Dean Gregorio Zamuco
College of Forestry
College, Laguna

Dear Dean Zamuco:

Thank you very much for the radio news materials we received through the mails last week. They were educational and very easy to understand.

I am very glad to learn that you have launched a forestry information campaign, to which we hereby pledge our wholehearted support. I look forward to receiving more interesting and informative articles from your Office. I hope you will send us materials not only twice a month but as often as you can. We can use these materials in our numerous farm and public service programs.

For your information, our station DZTD, 940 kc. (Dagupan) reaches seven provinces of Central and Northern Luzon namely, Pangasinan, La Union, Tarlac, Mountain Province, Abra, Nueva Ecija and Zambales. We are operating on 5,000 watts from 5 a.m. to 12 midnight daily.

I hope your campaign will be a great success and a year-long one.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) GERRY GALIAN
Station Manager

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BACDAYAN . . .
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On the other hand, Florentino Tesoro is also assigned to supervise the personnel of the Motor Pool in order to achieve effective and efficient service. Both Tesoro and Bacdayan will serve for one year unless earlier terminated by the Dean.

**JLG IS PFP OUTSTANDING
CONTRIBUTORS FOR 1964**

Jose L. Guerrero of the department of forestry

extension emerged as No. 8 top contributor of the Philippines Free Press for 1964.

Joe started sending articles to the Free Press a year ago. He has devoted most of his office hours to writing forestry articles and his duties on radio program officer.

Joe is not a forester, but he proves to all and sundry that he can write good forestry articles.

Our warmest congratulation to Joe! May his tribe increase.

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the aged may flourish verdantly to the end. The power that makes earth green and children fair with promise lies in us. The forest ranger shall guard the patrimony of the Nation because he has to. The woodman shall

spare the tree. And, the lumberman too, shall keep the logs rolling without end but at the same time he, too, shall keep the young trees growing because then and only then can our forests render to our people the greatest good to the greatest number not only for the present but for all the generations to come.