

# Trees, Man's Best Friends\*

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*Mr. Canciller*—Why do you consider the trees as Man's best friends?

*Prof. Cruz*—In the course of man's adaptation to his environment, he has continuously been the recipient of manifold benefits afforded by the forest. It is inconceivable how man could have attained the life and progress he now enjoys were it not for the services which the trees kindly and ungrudgingly gave him.

*Q.*—Will you please elaborate on the services the trees have rendered and are still rendering to mankind for the benefit of our radio audience?

*A.*—With much pleasure. The fundamental needs of man have changed little since pre-historic times. Indirectly, the forest as home and breeding place of wild animals and birds afforded food supply to primitive man and pioneer communities. In addition, direct products from the forest such as berries, fruits, roots, buds, leaves, and saps are easily available at any time.

Besides food, man's need for clothing was easily provided by the simplest fashion of wearing a fig leaf and later wearing a more complicated article of tree barks or beaten bast fibers. He learned, no doubt that out of the skins of wild animals he hunted in the forest, a better and more durable clothing could be made. Today which is a far cry from the fig-leaf era, man uses rayon silk which is made from viscocised wood pulp and wool from wood.

Man's next need is shelter. We were taught that a cave was his first probable dwelling, but to protect himself from enemies he had to live in trees. He finally learned

how to build wooden houses. As a matter of fact, wood has served man's need for shelter through the ages till the present. While it is true that substitutes were developed with the intention of replacing wood, it is beyond any shadow of a doubt that one can hardly find a house or building where wood does not form a major part of the construction.

*Q.*—Truly the trees are the best friends of man. In their humble way they were and still are providing man food, clothing and shelter. Could you tell us some more of the services of these faithful friends, the trees?

*A.*—They are varied and numerous that I am afraid we shall run out of time to attempt to enumerate them here. Take the humblest of all, firewood. One can hardly conceive the degree of benefit it has rendered to man from the time he learned to use fire. We have plenty of cause for rejoicing that our country enjoys the blessing of plenty when it comes to fuel wood. Yet if I were to ask one of you here today what type of forest product forms the greatest consumption of our people, the answer will be invariably lumber. This is far from the truth as it can be easily seen; our people besides quite a number of our local industries largely depend on wood as fuel for cooking.

From the time of the primitive man to the present day wooden articles continue to play an important part in the household. The only difference perhaps is the remarkable increase of these articles and their transformation from the crude and simple designs to more elaborate finish as characterized by the advance in civilization. In place of the twigs used as pot-hook, the twig broom, the crude

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basket, the wooden rice bowl and several roughly designed furniture, we shall find in modern homes luxuriously designed bric-a-bracs, kitchen wooden articles including the authoritative rolling pin, upholstered and carved sets of furniture, matched to a degree in design and color to please the lady of the house, even to the last detail of her toilet articles. There are lots of things we see around the house such as the cellophane on a lampshade the plastic electric fixtures, the linoleum, the pigments in paintings, the fabrics that adorn the beds and windows and a multitude of things which we ordinarily take for granted.

**Q.**—Have the trees served man in other form or capacities?

**A.**—They did a lot to help him advance in civilization. The ease with which wood could be fashioned into various materials sharpened the ingenuity of man and made possible the evolution from the stage of wooden handled stone ax through the period of wooden ships and to the aeroplane era of laminated and sandwiched construction of modern designs.

As a matter of fact it is through the cupidity of man to amass wealth, to expand his industries and promote his agricultural pursuits that trees in almost every clime have been sacrificed, devastated. Unfortunately agriculture was not successful on all cleared lands, and the false notion that removal of forests assured the appearance of a farm eventually brought about abandonment of many poor farms with erosion of soil following disastrously.

The untold hardships which man brought upon himself such as soil erosion, destructive floods, abandoned farms and industries, etc. are grim reminders of the ungrateful treatment he gave his best friends, the trees.

In many parts of the world today efforts are directed to bring back the forest through artificial planting and natural regeneration. Stands of naturally grown trees are now being conserved for science and for posterity. Even in cities and towns where forests were cleared to provide buildings and streets for

the expanding communities there are now developing tree centers or parks as a belated move to show an everlasting gratitude to these great benefactors, the trees. In their cool shade one finds not only refreshing air but spiritual strength brought about by a happy communion with nature.

The Philippines is no exception. We have done our share in the mistreatment of one of our rich natural resources, the forest. Like other countries, we were promoting our individual interests as well as our national economy. We forgot to benefit from the lessons and experiences of other countries.

For several years we have resorted to arbor day celebrations to bring consciousness to our people of the benefits we derive from the trees in our forest. It is hoped that every year, Arbor Day will make more and more of our people aware that trees are our best friends.

In closing let me quote from the fine thoughts of Riley Scott:

"In every science, every art,  
The tree has played a vital part;  
In peace and in war, on land and sea,  
Man's constant help has been a tree."

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*From the song:*

#### THE BLUEBIRD OF HAPPINESS

*The poet with his pen, the peasant with his plow,  
It makes no difference, who you are, they're all the  
same somehow.*

*The king upon his throne, the jester at his feet;  
The shopgirl, the actress, the woman on the street.*

*It's a life of smiles and a life of tears,  
It's a life of hopes and a life of fears.  
A blinding torrent of rain and a brilliant burst of sun,  
A biting tearing pain and sparkling, bubbling fun.  
No matter what you have, don't envy those you meet,  
It's all the same it's in the game, the bitter and  
the sweet.*

*And if things don't look so cheertful, just show a  
little fight.*

*For every bit of darkness, there's a little bit of light;  
For every bit of hatred, there's a little bit of love;  
For every cloudy morning, there's the midnight moon  
above.*

—BCA