

MARGARET BUSH
PRIZE ~~Commented~~
British Empire Competition 1950.

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Trees

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Flowers and Trees of Parts of Our Empire.

(Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, N. India).

Flowers and Trees of Parts of Our Empire.

The phrase, "you can not please everybody" has comforted many people when things have gone wrong. Nature, however, pays no heed to man & there is one part of her that breaks the rule.

The part? A forest. There, every mood is to be found. If you are lonely, who better for companions than the trees; if distressed what is more soothing than the song of a bird combined with the atmosphere of strength created by the trees which have stood there for so long, yet still hold up their heads proud to be alive!

If it is excitement for which you crave, what greater thrill than to stand upon the crest of a wooded hill on a windy day, listening to a young hurricane as it rushes down the hill! If you like history, what better setting than a forest in which to imagine the adventures of long ago! If you are one of those observant people who always use their eyes, where are better secrets to be found than here, where all the woodland folk take delight in eluding men. If it is beauty you seek, which author, poet, composer or painter has not at sometime found such exquisite beauty that it made him want to share it with the world.

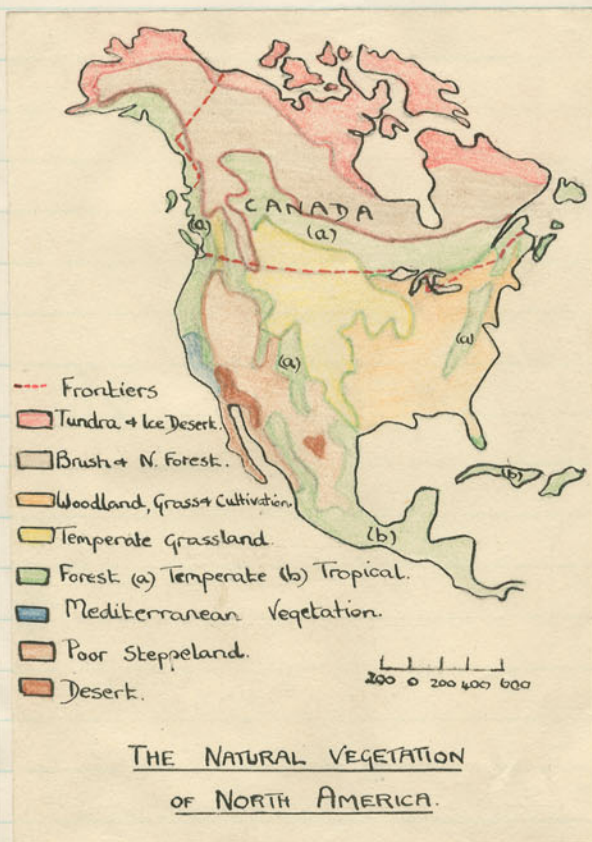
Nearly all the countries of our world possess forestland, yet in each you find so many different things that take your eye. I have a certain dread of travelling I do not know why — yet when I see photographs that fear vanishes & I long to witness the scene with my own eyes.

First I should like to see the dense

forest of Canada. This forest covers many acres despite vast stretches of scrub. In the extreme North along the coast it is too cold for trees to grow to maturity while the Prairies are mostly open spaces. The northern part of the Prairies, however, is included in the Belt of coniferous forest.

Supposing you went to Canada & came to the lumbering area of British Columbia; which boasts of the grandest trees of the country. Here you would be sure to meet a lumberjack, a strong weather-beaten fellow & as cheery as you could wish for. There before the hands of the clock have

moved half-way round its face he would be telling you about his work. How great areas of forest have been cleared & how young trees are planted to yield timber in future years. Of his own personal work & of his aching feet at the end of the day. But how he loves his surroundings



despite the wind & rain & endless roar of saw-mills.

Did you ask with what kinds of trees he deals? He names first the Douglas fir — the king of trees — attaining a height of 100-300 feet. Then the red cedar also of a tremendous

size — 150-200 feet high with a trunk 5-8 feet in diameter. These two trees dwarf all others & man becomes a speck on the landscape.

The lumberjack is lost to the world as he describes the wonder of the scene; the hickory whose nuts, when ripe, he likes to add to his lunch, the catkins of the aspens & the majestic birches swaying in the breeze. The dark pine crowded together, so that they grow upwards to reach the light & thus grow taller, to yield more timber. The hemlock spruces, the white underside of the leaves glinting silver 60 feet above the ground; a plantation of larches, away from their native hillsides, with beautiful upright trunks about 100 feet tall, their young purplish coloured cones swaying on the branches.

He tells too of the dark needle-like leaves of the yew, a mere sapling against the red cedars as they dance while the wind softly waves the branches. Behind stands a black spruce, which is used for the manufacture of paper pulp, with its scale-like leaves that distinguish it from all other trees.

All around the trunks of the trees, ferns & weeds cling & flourish every year & have to be cut down before it is possible to walk, so densely do they grow.

Here in a clearing you may find a cranberry plant climbing round a strong fern, its red flowers hiding the crimson berries which will make your mouth water — unless you have eaten too many.

Nearby an oleaster, a shrub of about 10 feet with white, (or yellow) flowers, nods gaily in the sun, while the white blossoms of

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the wild strawberries hide shyly in the shade. Out in the open, dancing merrily in the breeze are clover heads + vetches, the yellow of the marsh marigolds adding to the brightness of the landscape.

Here in the clearing is a profusion of flowers. Everlastings of several colours + here + there gaillardias with their rough leaves + yellow or purple petals. Indian pinks with their funnel-like flowers red outside + yellow within. Perhaps a clump of lovage, white + pink, "tossing their heads in sprightly dance," + sprinkled everywhere are sleepy daisies dozing in the sun.

Keeping watch over all this is a walnut tree, the spicy aroma of its leaves mingling with the fragrance of the many flowers.

Leaving this + re-entering into the shade of the trees you see old friends again, the chestnuts + beeches that I believe abound in Britain. Advancing still further you see a glimpse of water through the willows, cypresses, alders + yellow flags which surround the stream.

As you go you trample on the trailing partridge berry with its pairs of fragrant white flowers, aquilegia + windflowers of delicate pink. You stumble over the roots of oaks + find it difficult to penetrate the undergrowth.

Nearing the stream a vivid patch of purple attracts your eye, it is a judas tree its blossom so thick that the branches are almost invisible.

You turn back + admire the balsam firs for their slender trunks, the junipers for their sharp pointed leaves + the crabapple blossom for its fragrance. The bearberry plants, their leathery leaves a rough background for the pink of the

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 flowers, & the yellow cone flowers look up for acknowledgement. The white flowers of the may apple nod a shy farewell from under a huge fern, as you reach the outskirts of the forest. Then looking out over the plains where blue grass, fescue grass & timothy grass sway in the wind, you raise your eyes to the distant mountains where the clustering bloom of the mountain ash & the purple rhododendrons have their own kingdom. Here the yellow edelweiss blue gentians & lilies add to the beauty & lessen the awe of the alps.

Here the lumberjack looks up, curses the time, apologises & hurries off to the realm he has just described.

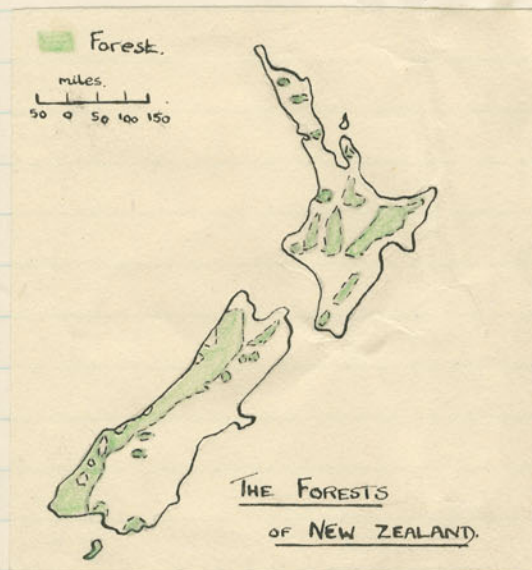
Now you lose all the practical sense you ever had & jump on to a boat to New Zealand, so that before you have recovered your breath you are talking to a cattle rancher who is describing the surrounding countryside in summer, despite the fact that it is mid-winter.

You have to be careful as you go through the forest for some leaves are razor-edged & the briars tear your clothes, & you might easily trip over a root concealed under the dense undergrowth. The forest has been robbed of much of its former glory for the kauri pines have been burnt in fires or felled by man. The State now, however, preserves them in great parks.

The kauri pine is sometimes 180 feet high & 22 feet in diameter & the rimu is nearly



as large. Here in the North, especially along the coasts are the magnificent pohutakawa trees, their vivid red flowers making the day look even hotter, while in the South the rata also with crimson flowers takes its place.



Tokarua, matai, & puriri flourish here & also the evergreen kaishirias, while climbing round the trunks is the kareao mingling with the wild vines & ferns.

The oval leaves of the karamu & plumes of the tree ferns wave in the

breeze & the sun plays on the gorse making the flowers look brighter.

Fan palms shield the daring gypsywort that covers their roots, their small bluish flowers hard to distinguish among the undergrowth.

Looking out to the hills you see beech groves & flower speckled grass. The bell-shaped flowers of the epacris & the tubular shaped red or yellow flowers of the New Zealand flax. With difficulty you see the yellow flowers of the New Zealand spinach & the eyebrights with their yellow eyes & white petals. Forget-me-nots of all colours & celmisias, with their white petals, dagger-like leaves & beautiful scent, that adorn the hillsides all the summer, nod in the sun.

Over the crest of the hill you can see the peaks of the lower mountains where the

exquisite Mt. Cook lilies with their pure white petals, large golden centres + glossy leaves, keep watch over the edelweiss, more beautiful than the Swiss sister, + the snow-groundsel, the daisy-like flowers making the mountain look like a snowfield.

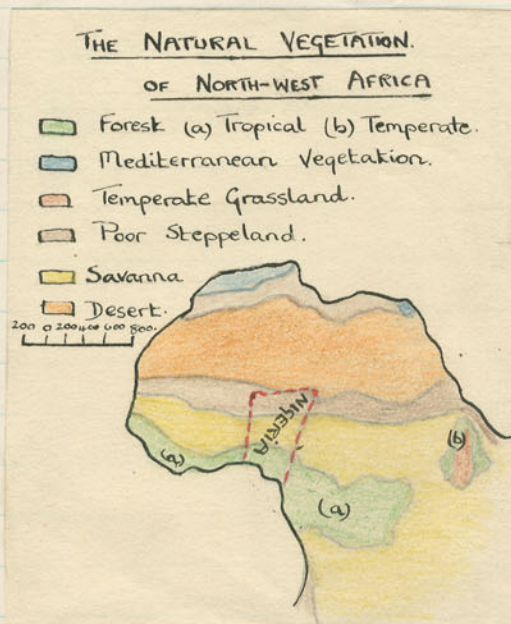
The fowling of cattle ends the rancher's story + he hurries off to superintend the milking.

Now you hurry to repack your clothes + board a ship to Nigeria. Here you meet a boy of about fifteen, + with a cheery smile + a flash of his dazzling teeth he describes his homeland in summer.

"We own much valuable timber, tall dark mahogany trees, satinwoods with yellowish coloured wood, black ebony trees + walnut trees. How I like walnuts! The rosewood which yields timber valuable in the making of cabinets + African

teak, also profitable timber, grows. Cedars — how beautiful they smell in the early morning — with their needle-like leaves too in the wind. In swamps mangroves thrive their roots above the ground making a dense undergrowth.

Oil palms, a great source of national wealth also are to



be found in our forests

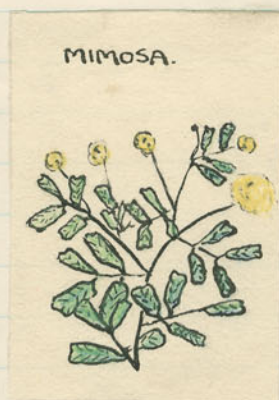
Trees of less commercial importance add to the beauty. African maples + the rapidly growing corkwood whose wood is extremely light.

Cottonwoods, a kind of poplar & shinglewoods also are here.

Up on the plateaux & hillsides are baobabs—yes I suppose you would laugh—with wide trunks. Their fruit is called monkeybread. Sheabutter trees & the long lived locusts, which differ from the American, grow beside gambier shrubs, date palms & tamarinds with fragrant yellow flowers striped with red.

Right out on the really dry ground acacias with leaves in sprays & yellow mimosa thrives & brightens the landscape.

With this the boy jumps up & with another smile sets off for school.



Now you must travel again this time to Northern India to the Garhwal district. Here you meet a mountaineering guide who describes the beauty of the Bhjundar Valley.

Here on the foothills enormous primulas, a deep blue in colour, cover the mountain slopes while lower down are yellow & red potentillas, asters of different colours, saxifrages & gentians.

Even lower are dainty anemones & golden lily-like ranunculus & rich yellow globe flowers, rhododendrons & other flowering shrubs.



Here & there swaying in the breeze are majestic silver birches while underneath a yellow headed tansy hobs. Spruces & firs and tree rhododendrons—sometimes five feet in diameter—keep watch over irises, daisies &

Buttercups.

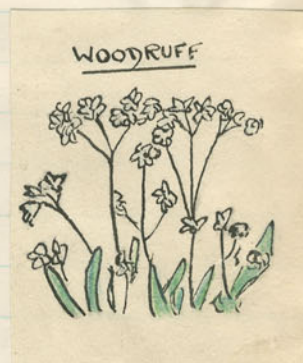


In damper parts are oaks, chestnuts, bamboos + willows joined by a thick undergrowth of shrubs + briars. The arum, not beautiful but attracting attention grows here with pink rock jasmine + monkshood with dark purplish blooms.

On the hillsides are delicate blue fumitories, their flowers narrow + pipe-like tipped with blue + dwarf rhododendrons of a cream colour, while all around dainty woodruff sway in the wind.

Higher, in the colder places knot weed with its rosy flowers, Balsam + pearly everlasting + yellow violets survive. Here the queen of Himalayan flowers, the blue poppy, reigns.

By streams willow herbs, a kind of aaron's beard + purple daisies mingle with marigolds.



AARON'S BEARD.



Here the guide, forgetting where he is, stops talking + lapses into a dream. He suddenly realises + apologises, saying that he has told you of a little, but to appreciate it fully, you must go yourself. He then takes his leave.

I have tried to describe a few places whose beauty I long to see but as each country holds new wonders I should like to visit them all.

Mother Nature tends her children in all parts of the world + is one great link

between one country & another. You can never know too much & besides —

" I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them.
God hath no better praise,
And man, in his hasty days
Is honoured by them."

R. BROWNING.