

**THE TREES OF  
GREAT BRITAIN &  
IRELAND. VOLUME I**

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The trees of Great Britain & Ireland. Volume I by Henry John Elwes & Augustine Henry

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**HENRY JOHN ELWES & AUGUSTINE HENRY**

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QUEEN BEECH AT ASHRIDGE

*From a Drawing sent by the Earl of Bessborough.*

Elwes

Don't get you to the ground 1897.



*The Trees*  
 of  
*Great Britain*  
 & *Ireland*

BY  
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 AND  
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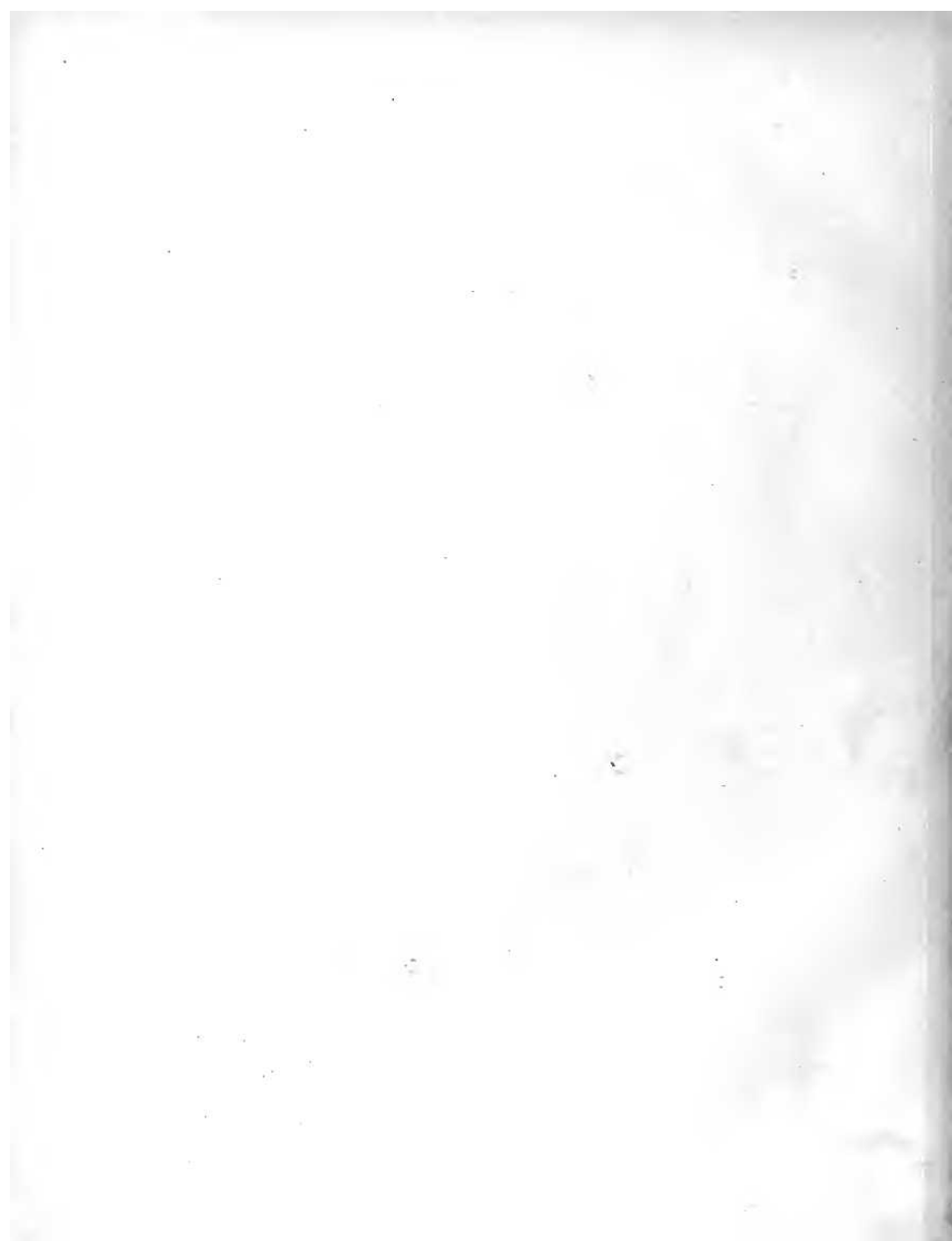
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BY SPECIAL PERMISSION  
TO  
**This Majesty King Edward VII**  
BY  
HIS OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANTS  
THE AUTHORS





## PREFACE

THE United Kingdom offers a hospitality to exotic vegetation which finds no parallel in the Northern Temperate region of the globe. Never parched by the heat of a continental summer, the rigour of winter is no less tempered by its insular position. The possession of land still ensures the residence on their properties of a large number of persons of at least moderate affluence. The most modest country house possesses a garden, and not rarely some sort of pleasure ground; and this usually reaches the dimensions of a park in the case of the larger mansions. While forests for the commercial production of timber such as are found in foreign countries hardly exist, and the methods of their scientific management are little recognised, arboriculture of some sort may be almost said to be a national passion. In all but purely agricultural districts the free and unrestrained growth of trees enhances, if it does not create, the natural beauty of the landscape. The Roman occupation brought to our shores our fruit-trees and others whose names of Latin derivation bear witness to their foreign origin. One of these, the so-called "English Elm," dominates the landscape of Southern England. Yet, while it perfects its seed on the Continent, it rarely does so in this country, and it holds its own by root suckers, the tenacity of which is all but ineradicable.

Down to the reign of Henry the Eighth the native forests supplied the timber necessary for construction. It was not till their area became restricted that planting was commenced to maintain the supply. And if this has never developed into a scientific system as it has done abroad, the reason may be found in the abandonment of wood as fuel for coal, and the facilities for external supply of over-sea water-carriage which attach to a maritime country.

From an early time with the growth of continental intercourse, the contents of foreign gardens had gradually been transferred to those of the wealthy at home. The taste, however, for cultivating foreign trees and shrubs simply for their interest, and apart from any useful purpose they might serve, is not more recent than the seventeenth century. The pioneer in this branch of English arboriculture was Henry Compton, Bishop of London, who planted in the garden of Fulham Palace "a greater variety of curious exotic plants and trees than had at that time been collected in any garden in England." Hitherto the European continent had

## viii The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland

been the only hunting ground. To this was now added in striking contrast the resources of the North American forests.

In the eighteenth century the practice of planting foreign trees became in some degree a fashion amongst wealthy landowners, though still mainly for ornament. This was due in large measure to the example of Archibald, third Duke of Argyll, who formed a large collection at Whitton. After his death in 1762 all that were removable were transferred to Kew, where an Arboretum had been commenced by the Princess Dowager of Wales.

An intelligent taste for arboriculture was at any rate for a time firmly established. Those who care to trace its further history more in detail will find abundant information in Loudon's *Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum*, a work which, though published more than half a century ago, must always remain indispensable to any student of the subject. Parks and pleasure grounds throughout the country were stocked with specimens of new and interesting trees. And though often neglected and even forgotten, we now possess a wealth of examples which have attained adult development. Loudon catalogued with indefatigable industry every tree or shrub known to be tolerant of the climate of the British Isles. It might have been thought that this laborious undertaking would have excited a new interest in planting. But it began to languish with the beginning of the last century, and Loudon's labours from their very completeness, perhaps, deterred many from engaging in an occupation where more than moderate success would seem costly and laborious, and anything beyond almost unattainable. In 1845 a National Arboretum was projected at Kew, and commenced the following year on a plan prepared by W. A. Nesfield.

The latter half of the last century saw a remarkable development of open-air horticulture. In so far as this included woody plants, it was limited to shrubs. Broad-leaved trees were little cared for. The rarer kinds were little in request, and those that were planted were too often drawn from the ill-named stock of some convenient nursery. The neglect was increased when conifers became a fashion. This led, no doubt, to many fine Pinetums being planted, the interest and importance of which will increase with age. But it led also to much unconsidered and scattered planting of trees which, attractive enough in a juvenile state, are often less sightly as they grow older, and can never blend with their broad-leaved neighbours into stately umbrageous masses.

If the planting of broad-leaved trees as distinguished from conifers has for the moment fallen into neglect, we still inherit the results of the labours of our predecessors. The British Isles for the last two centuries have, in fact, been the seat of an experiment in arboriculture without parallel elsewhere. And the very neglect into which tree-planting has fallen, paradoxical as it may seem, adds to the interest and value of the experiment. For the trees that have come down to us from the