

**TWENTY-FOUR VIEWS OF
THE VEGETATION
OF THE COASTS AND
ISLAND OF THE PACIFIC**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649726196

Twenty-Four Views of the Vegetation of the Coasts and Island of the Pacific by F. H. von Kittlitz

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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OF THE
VEGETATION
OF THE
COASTS AND ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC

WITH EXPLANATORY DESCRIPTIONS

TAKEN DURING THE EXPLORING VOYAGE OF THE RUSSIAN CORVETTE "BENJAMIN,"
UNDER THE COMMAND OF CAPT. LÜTKE, IN THE YEARS 1827, 1828, & 1829

BY F. H. VON KITTLITZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN AND EDITED BY

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"NARRATIVE OF THE VOYAGE OF H.M.S. HERALD," ETC.

LONDON
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS
1861

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LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-CHELSEA SQUARE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN in 1859 Mr. Church exhibited his "Heart of the Andes," men of science began to hope that the time had arrived when their endeavours to spread a correct knowledge of the physical features of our globe would be aided from a side from which they have long anticipated assistance; that artists, encouraged by the success which Mr. Church's well-known painting achieved, and taking advantage of the great facilities of reaching the remotest portions of the world in an incredibly short space of time, would have suspended for a while the studies of the shady lanes and babbling brooks of Northern Europe, or the purple skies of beautiful Italy, in order to devote themselves to the rich field that the unknown regions of the tropics or little known countries of the temperate or frigid zones offer. These sanguine hopes have been disappointed. Our exhibitions of paintings are annually overflowing with landscapes, but they are of the old stamp.

When every branch of science, enlarging its horizon, is seized with a laudable desire to take a comprehensive grasp of the matter appertaining to its respective department; when no historian, who values his repute, now writes the history of a country without ascertaining its bearing and

relationship to that of the whole earth; when no geologist dares to advance conclusions without knowing what his brethren have brought forth; when no zoologist can publish the fauna, no botanist the flora, of a district without examining the surrounding regions; when philologists no longer attempt explanations without having examined the whole range of human speech, — artists have, in contradistinction to this general tendency towards universality, remained essentially "local." The fact that North America may now be reached within a week, at less expense than Italy, and the antipodes in forty days, seems to be quite lost upon them, and the treasures there to be found are doomed to be hidden until laid bare by the wand of some future artistic magician.

Well may we exclaim, Are all the virgin forests destined to perish by the axe before one master hand will attempt to preserve their grandeur on canvas for the instruction of posterity? Are our descendants to possess nothing save the bare descriptions of the gigantic trees of Western America? When every vestige of them shall have disappeared, will it be believed that in our days there existed vegetable monsters, whose ages were not calculated by hundreds but by thousands of years, whose summits overtopped those of our highest cathedrals, and rivalled the pinnacles of the great pyramids? Are we to have nothing save miserable daubs of the dazzling autumnal changes of colour undergone by the flora of Canada and the United States? Is the majestic grandeur of a coral reef under the bright skies of the South Sea no theme of inspiration? Are the beauties of a coral bed, reflected through the crystal waters of the ocean, with all the manifold form, colour, vegetable and animal life, a veritable "*sea-scape*," out of the region of the *land-scape* painter?

There is every reason to suppose that art itself would be as greatly benefited as science is by their votaries extending the sphere of their studies. In order to seize upon the features peculiar to a country, one must be able to compare them with those of others. To appreciate at

one glance the *characteristic beauties* of England or Europe, one must have seen more than England or Europe; and artists would be able to improve even upon their present style of shady lanes, &c. &c., if they had spent a few nights in the desert, made several excursions in a virgin forest, or seen the mighty working of the icy masses in the Arctic and Antarctic circles.

The physiognomy of plants is a subject which can be advanced, perhaps, more by intelligent artists than by botanists. Our morphological learning disqualifies us, in a great measure, for physiognomic studies. With our heads crammed with theoretical prototypes, and fully imbued with the desire to discover, under the unimportant external drapery, the law to which our classifying age attaches so much value, we are apt to overlook physiognomic features altogether; and our sense of the beautiful is so little cultivated, that it would be in danger of becoming totally blunted if it were not brought in daily contact with the grand works of nature. Not so the artist, who, free from this incubus, and looking upon the scenes before him without any preconceived notions, would probably lay hold of their chief physiognomical features, if he were an intelligent man, much more readily than we plant-hunters.

A striking instance of this is given by M. Von Kittlitz. Though little versed in botany, as he candidly admits, he has produced a series of pictures which are unrivalled for their truthfulness, and will ever be a source of deep interest and study, whether we regard them with the eyes of artists or of botanists. On the Continent they have been fully appreciated, and it is stated that the work, from which the plates here given have been reduced, is totally out of print. Indeed, the copy placed at my disposal by the publishers for the purpose of translation, is said to have been the last that could be procured.

It must ever be a matter of regret that the talented author, who first prepared the originals and then spent years in order to perfect himself

in etching before he attempted their reproduction, could not have had the co-operation of the botanist of the expedition, and was reluctantly compelled to prepare the letterpress himself. I have endeavoured to mend the defects of the latter as much as lay in my power, by adding foot-notes where it was most necessary; whilst my personal familiarity with most parts of the globe enabled me to free the text from much of the ambiguity, caused by a laudable desire on the part of the author not to commit himself to statements for the entire accuracy of which he did not deem it prudent to pledge himself.

BERTHOLD SEEMANN.

LONDON: July 20th, 1861.