

THE BOOK
OF
KNOWLEDGE



DEPARTMENTS

The Earth

Stories and Legends

All Countries

Golden Deeds

Book of Wonder

Literature

Animal Life

Famous Books

Dominion of Canada

The United States

Familiar Things

Our Own Life

The Fine Arts

Men and Women

Poetry and Rhymes

Plant Life

Things to Make

and Things to Do

The
BOOK
of
KNOWLEDGE

The Children's Encyclopedia

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V O L U M E I X

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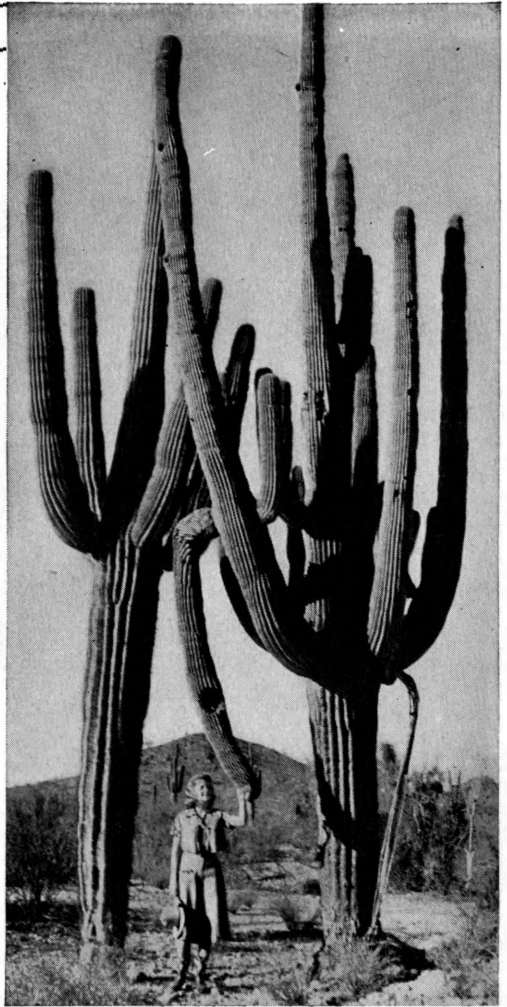
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DESERTS OF ARIZONA

THE southwestern portion of the United States is a land of little rain and parts of it are so dry that they are called deserts. The state of Arizona lies wholly in this arid region, but the state is not all dry because the high mountains and high plateaus catch the rainfall from the Pacific Ocean and so are covered with evergreen trees. Arizona can thus be divided into two main parts. In southern Arizona broad plains, cut by ranges of desert mountains, extend over the border into Mexico. This region, is called the Sonoran Desert from the Mexican state of Sonora. On the mile-high plateau to the north is another region of little rain and, because of its brilliantly colored rocks, it is called the Painted Desert.

The atmosphere of the desert is usually so clear that distant ranges of mountains seem quite close and the cloud effects at sunset are finer than anywhere else in the world. Sometimes the deserts grow restless, and a dust storm sweeps across the land so that for a few hours the visibility is poor; but the deserts of Arizona are friendly deserts and visitors come from far and near to enjoy a climate so different from the rest of the country. The Sonoran Desert, because of its low altitude, enjoys a mild winter and a hot summer. The Painted Desert, because it is higher, has a cold winter climate and a summer that attracts people from all over the world. These two deserts are so different in every way that they have to be treated separately.

The Sonoran Desert is a green desert and, although surface water is very scarce, vegetation is remarkably abundant. Cacti, twenty feet high, prickly mesquite, *palo verde* (green sticks), and the almost ever-present creosote bush cover hundreds of thousands of acres. The plants are all adapted to the conservation of water. The cacti store it in their cells after rain. The mesquite put down their long roots forty or more feet to find moist earth. The creosote bush has varnished leaves to prevent evaporation. All



Courtesy, Santa Fe Railway
The giant sahuaro cactus of the Sonoran Desert is said to grow for fifty years before its arms sprout.

are able to make the best use of the scanty water supplies. In the desert mountains, water holes and springs can be found in the canyons so cattle ranches fringe the mountain ranges.

Although the desert appears to be a wilderness, a region of wide open spaces encircled with rugged purple mountains, it is not so uninhabited as it looks. Hard surfaced highways cross it in many places, graded graveled roads branch out from them and everywhere are crooked desert trails joining the scattered ranches, mining claims and country stores. Except in the mountains, a motor car can go almost everywhere and here everybody travels by car as the distances between points are too great to walk or ride horseback.