

MUIR WOODS.

SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN.

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WILLIAM KENT'S GIFT.

By E. T. PARSONS.

The peculiarly enlightened and significant gift of Muir Woods, the Redwood Cañon grove on the flank of Mount Tamalpais, to the National Government by William Kent, of Chicago, is a transaction worthy of record in these pages.

This, the only remaining nearby forest of the kind, easily and cheaply accessible to nearly three quarters of a million people, rich and poor alike, was in imminent danger of destruction. Apparently not a single Californian of sufficient means either perceived or understood this opportunity for the greatest benefaction the bay region can ever receive.

The architraves of these groveland temples were already emplaced when Columbus first sailed the ocean. King Arthur's Round Table might have been made from one of their pillars. Our Druid ancestors might have celebrated their mystic rites beneath these lofty arches. Had the prevailing shortsighted commercialism succeeded in overthrowing these canopied columns centuries could not have replaced their grandeur and beauty. So that the gift of this easterner of fine perception and ideals is beyond compare, inestimable and priceless.

The accompanying photographs give some vistas in this beautiful park; and, that we may better know and understand the giver, I introduce an appreciation of the redwoods by William Kent and his correspondence relative to this gift with our worthy President and the Secretary of the Interior:

REDWOODS.

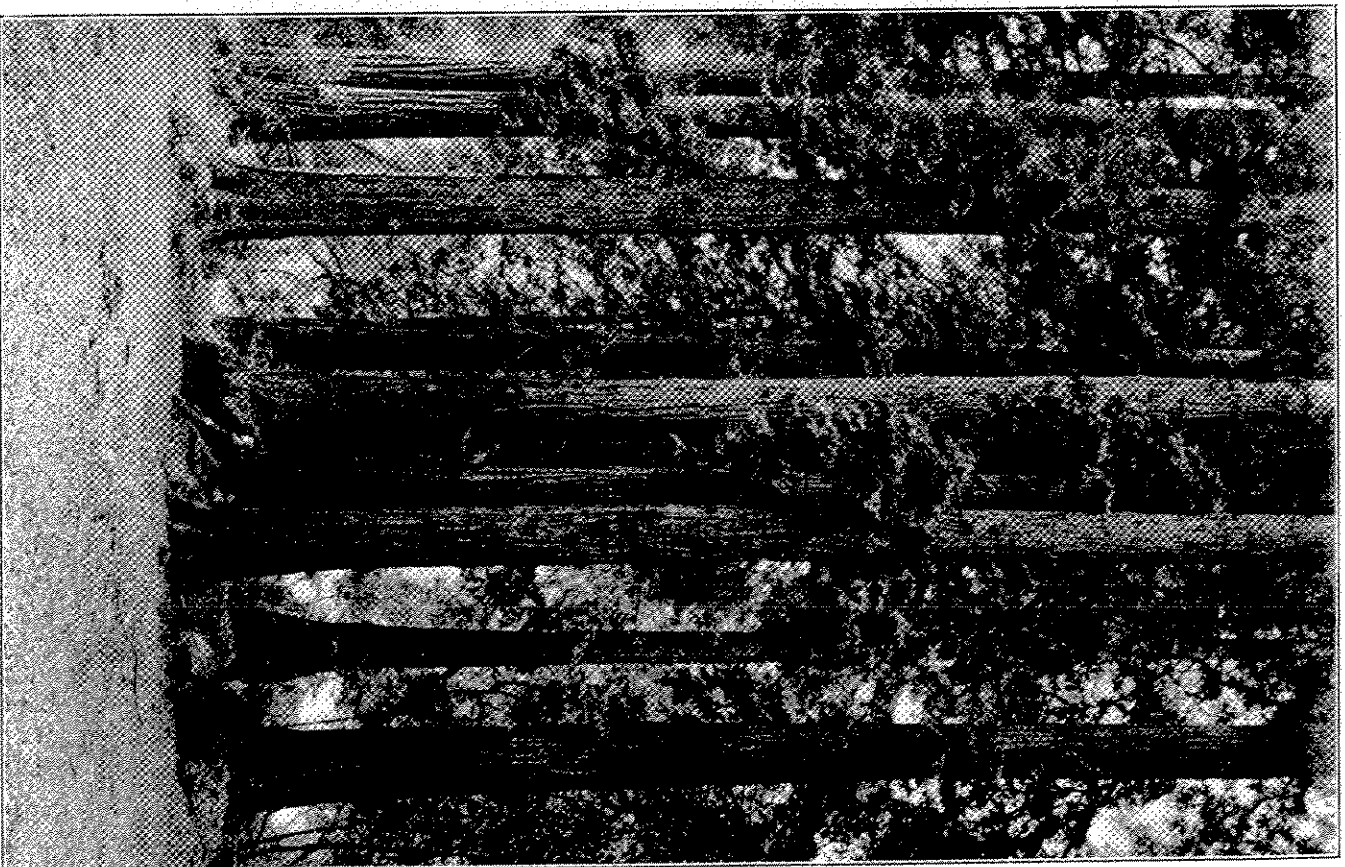
By WILLIAM KENT.

In the hospitable country of the California coast range dwell the redwoods. They cluster in the sheltered valleys and climb part way up the deep-soiled north hill slopes. Through their tops sifts the mild sea fog, and at their roots flow trout streams that they have condensed for the benefit of all living creatures. Salmon visit them from the neighboring ocean, deer trip and bear shuffle down their aisles.

Viewed from without, the forest shows a rich and varied coloring. The ruddy tinge of the redwood foliage makes sharp the brighter green of Douglas fir, while softening all is the silver gray of mountain oak.

There is none of the solid rounded surface of the jungle, nor the ragged gray outlines of the leafless winter woods. Strong and delicate show the individual trees living at peace, each his own life. Beyond the ridge at the back of the forest shines the sunlit sea. The landscape gives scarcely a hint of the size and proportions of the trees.

As we go down the slope the redwoods increase in size until in the flat bed of the valley we reach their perfection. Our ideas of dimension are all at fault. We expect something that will strike and challenge the eye in trees that measure their diameter in terms of fathoms and that climb as straight, clear columns two hundred feet without a limb, with tops reaching yet a hundred feet or more. We must compare these heroic proportions with our own stature before we can realize the symmetrical grandeur of the redwoods. The thick, soft, warm-tinted bark, with its vertical corrugations, suggests the clear, clean wood within. The delicate foliage sifts the sunlight, not precluded, but made gentle.



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PLATE LXIV.



PLATE LXV.

MEADOW WOODS.

"Live and let live," say the redwoods. "Sun, air, water, soil, and shade for all." But they say more than this. Mountain oak and laurel that would share the forest life, these because they are able to grow tall—if they have the will—these, if they would enjoy the common-wealth of the sky, must grow straight-trunked and clean.

For the moment the redwoods seem to us the stoics of the forest, teaching that life is for the strong, the self-reliant. Then beneath our feet we find the most delicate forest carpet of shy wood violets and oxalis. Lifes that need the deep, cool quiet are here and many a rare, small thing that cannot live elsewhere. Ferns and maidenhair bank the slopes.

"Stand straight and strong, who can," say the redwoods; "protect and shelter the weak." This is the chivalry of the forest; it is a chivalry the Christian world has hardly learned, despite the Master.

Brave trees, the redwoods. Burned of all their leaves, they fight for life and bourgeon out again. Around the fallen parent grows up a stately group of children.

Long life, well lived, strength and resultant quietness; modesty, courage, beauty and the kindness of infinite hospitality!

An American Wordsworth will one day come to sing these noble trees as teaching the ideal of the social and individual life of the American.

THE CORRESPONDENCE.

HON. JAMES R. GARFIELD, Secretary Interior, U. S.

Dear Sir: I herewith enclose a deed of gift to a tract of land in Marin County, California, more fully described by accompanying documents, and request that you accept it as provided for by the Act of June 8, 1906. . . .

After having traveled over a large part of the open country in the United States, I consider this tract, with its beautiful trees, ferns, wildflowers, and shrubs, as the most attractive bit of wilderness I have ever seen.

In tendering it I request that it be known as Muir Woods, in honor of John Muir. . . . Yours respectfully,

WILLIAM KENT.

THE WHITE HOUSE, Washington.

My dear Mr. Kent: I thank you most heartily for this singularly generous and public-spirited action on your part. All Americans who prize the natural beauties of the country and wish to see them preserved undamaged, and especially those who realize the literally unique value of the groves of giant trees, must feel that you have conferred a great and lasting benefit upon the whole country.

I have a very great admiration for John Muir; but after all, my dear sir, this is your gift. No other land than that which you give is included in this tract of nearly three hundred acres, and I should greatly like to name the monument the Kent Monument if you will permit it.

Sincerely yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

TO THE PRESIDENT, Washington.

My dear Mr. Roosevelt: I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your message of appreciation, and hope and believe it will strengthen me to go on in an attempt to save more of the precious and vanishing glories of nature for a people too slow of perception.

Your kind suggestion of a change of name is not one that I can accept. So many millions of better people have died forgotten that to stencil one's own name on a benefaction seems to carry with it an implication of mundane immortality, as being something purchasable.

I have five good, husky boys that I am trying to bring up to a knowledge of democracy and to a realizing sense of the rights of the "other fellow," doctrines which you, sir, have taught with more vigor and effect than any man in my time. If these boys cannot keep the name of Kent alive, I am willing it should be forgotten.

I have this day sent you by mail a few photographs of Muir Woods, and trust that you will believe, before you see the real thing (which I hope will be soon), that our nation has acquired something worth while.

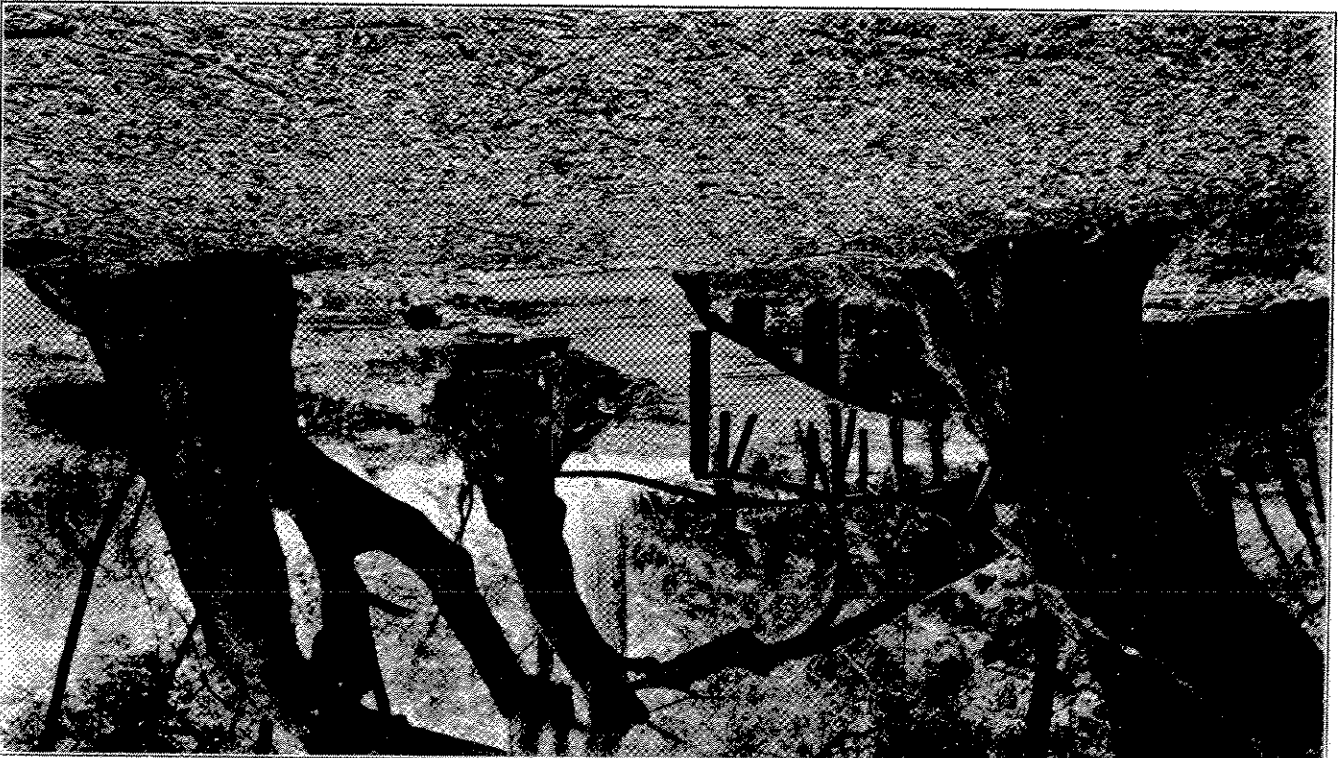
Yours truly,

WILLIAM KENT.

THE WHITE HOUSE, Washington.

My dear Mr. Kent: By George! you are right. It is enough to do the deed and not to desire, as you say, to "stencil one's

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own name on the benefaction." Good for you, and for the five boys who are to keep the name of Kent alive! I have four who I hope will do the same thing by the name of Roosevelt. Those are awfully good photos.

Sincerely yours,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT