

**BARTLETT
WILLIAM
CHAUNCEY**

A BREEZE FROM THE
WOODS, 2ND ED.

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William Chauncey Bartlett

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NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The greater number of the papers comprised in this volume were originally contributed to the *Overland Monthly*, and nearly in the order in which they now appear. Two essays, written at later dates, were printed in the *Californian*. The final paper of the series only, has been slightly abridged. It was originally prepared as a platform address, and still retains that distinctive character.

If these pages disclose more of the freedom of outdoor life than the philosophy born of private meditation, it is because the author loves the woods better than the town; the garden better than the low diet and high thinking of any philosopher (who goes above the clouds); and the friendships which have ripened under genial skies, better than all.

The House on the Hill.

January, 1883.

A BREEZE FROM THE WOODS

"Shall we go to the Springs this year?" asked a demure woman as she handed the tea and toast across the table.

Now there are more than five thousand springs in the Coast Range which have never been defiled. It isn't necessary for the preservation of one's mortal system that it should be daily saturated with a strong solution of potash or sulphur. As a pickle, I much prefer a few gallons dipped up from the ocean, or a spring bath from a little mountain stream. Do you think it is evidence of insanity in a hungry man to expect a wholesome dinner in a country hotel kept expressly for city boarders? We will have a vacation nevertheless. If our homes were in Paradise, I think we should need it. One might get tired even of looking at sapphire walls and golden pavements. Did you observe how promptly that artisan dropped his tools when he heard the mid-day warning? Many a man gets more than one significant warning to drop his tools – all his instruments of handicraft and brain work – at midsummer and be off. If he does not heed this protest of nature, there will come a day when the right hand will lose its cunning and the brain its best fibre. It is better to sit down wearily under the shadow of a great rock and take a new baptism from the ooze and drip, than to trudge on as a money-making pilgrim up the bald mountain, because forsooth some men have reached it at mid-day – and found nothing. What we need is not so much to

seek something better in the long run than we have found. There may be a sweet, even throb to all the pulsations of domestic life, and no small comfort in gown and slippers, and the unfolding of the damp evening newspaper. But the heaven, of what sort it is, may seem a little fresher by leaving it for a month's airing. It is a point gained to break away from these old conditions and to go forth somewhat from one's self. The lobster breaks his shell and next time takes on a larger one. He is a better lobster for that one habit of his. The trouble with many men is that they never have but one shell, and have never expanded enough to fill that. They do not need a vacation, when the beginning and end of them is vacuity. It is possible that the horizon may shut down too closely about one and be too brazen withal; and that as we go the weary round the cycle of our own thoughts will be finished with every revolution of the earth. There is no great difference after all in a desert of sand and a desert of houses, when both by a law of association suggest eternal sameness and barrenness. There is a wearisome sameness in this human current which is shot through the narrow grooves of the great city. What inspiration does one get from this human concussion? Are there any sparks of divine fire struck off, or struck into a man by it? In all this jostling crowd is there any prophet who knows certainly what his dinner shall be on the morrow? The struggle is mainly one for beef and pudding, with some show of fine raiment, and possibly a clapboard house in which there is no end to stucco. The smallest fraction may yet be used to express the value of that element of civilization

which teaches society how much it needs rather than how little will suffice.

Argenti, the banker, fared sumptuously every day. But you notice that he had the gout cruelly. You didn't find him at any fashionable watering-place last summer. His pavilion was under an oak tree, with the padding of a pair of blankets. His meat and drink for six weeks were broiled venison and spring water. What his rifle did not procure and the spring supply, he utterly refused to swallow. He went up the mountain-side with muffled feet and a vexed spirit. He came down *per saltem* singing something about the soul of one Brown, which he said was marching on. It is not necessary that our modern pulpiteers should go back to the diet of locusts and wild honey. But there is comfortable assurance that there is no gout in that fare. And if more of naturalness and fiery earnestness would come of that way of living, it might be worth the trial. There is fullness of meat and drink, and much leanness of soul. It only needs some manifestation of individuality, with an honest simplicity, to suggest a commission of lunacy.

"This," said the divinity who served the toast and tea, "is your vacation philosophy. How much of it are you going to reduce to practice?"

As much as we can crowd into three weeks, or more of rational living. There might be a charm in savage life if it were not for the fearfully white teeth of the wolf and the cannibal. There is nothing in Blot's book which teaches how a missionary should be cooked; and a roast pig, that pleasant adjunct, is only

well done by the Fiji Islanders. And so, after some further discussion, oracular and otherwise, it was agreed that precedents should go for nothing; and that the vacation of three weeks should be spent with a rational regard for health, economy and pleasure. Ourselves, including a half-grown boy, would count three, and our neighbors – husband and wife – would make up the convenient number of five. It was agreed, moreover, that we should not enter a hotel, nor accept any private hospitality which included indoor lodging. No journey for the benefit of baggage smashers. No more notable incident will happen on this part of the planet, for some time to come, than the fact that two females, not averse to a fresh ribbon in spring-time, consented to a journey of three weeks without taking along a trunk of the size of a Swiss cottage, or so much as a single bandbox. Railroads, steamboats and stages were to be given over, as things wholly reprobate. There happened to be on the farm of one of the party three half-breed horses, well broken to harness and saddle. These, with a light, covered spring wagon, should suffice for all purposes of locomotion – a single span before the wagon, and the third horse with a saddle, to admit of an occasional change. The half-breed horses, which would not sell in the market for fifty dollars each, are the best in the world for such a campaign. They never stumble, are not frightened at a bit of bad road; under the saddle they will pick their own way, jumping over a log or a small stream with the nimbleness of a deer. A tether on the grass at night keeps them in good trim. Bred in the country, they

are the proper equine companions with which to plunge into the forest and to go over unfrequented roads. They have an instinct which is marvelously acute. They will take the scent of a grizzly in the night sooner than the best trained dog, and are quite as courageous; for both dog and horse will break for camp at the first sniff of one of these monsters. When stage horses start on a tearing run over a mountain road at midnight, look for bear tracks in the morning. It is but fair to say that Bruin does not generally meddle with people who are not of a meddlesome turn of mind. When put upon his mettle, he goes in for a square fight; and as far as my scanty data may be relied upon, he whips in a majority of instances. A Henry rifle, two shot-guns, a small military tent, some heavy blankets, and a good supply of fishing-tackle, with two or three cooking utensils and some small stores, made up the equipment. No wonder-mongering was to be done. It was not in order, therefore, to go to the Big Trees, Yosemite or the Geysers. There are more wonders on a square mile of the Coast Range than most of us know anything about.

No vacation is worth having which does not, abruptly if need be, turn one away from all familiar sights and sounds – all the jarring, creaking and abrasion of city life. The opening vista in the redwood forest, where the path is flecked with tremulous shadows and gleams of sunlight, will lead near enough to Paradise, provided one does not take a book or a newspaper along, and never blasphemes against nature by inquiring the price of stocks. The young lady who undertook to read Byron at the

Geysers last summer, was greeted with an angry hiss of steam which made her sitting place very uncomfortable. There was but one snatch of Norma sung during this excursion. Something was said about its being sung "divinely;" but the fact that every gray squirrel barked, and every magpie chattered within the space of forty furlongs, left a lingering doubt about the heavenliness of that particular strain of music. It is useless to mock at nature, for in the end she will make all true souls ashamed. An excursion into the woods calls for some faith in Providence, and some also in rifles and fishing gear; and when dinner depends upon some sort of game which is flying over head, or running in the bushes, one must walk circumspectly withal, and remember to keep the eye of faith wide open. It is of no use to cite the instance of the prophet who was fed by ravens. He had a fit of the blues, and could not have drawn a bead upon a rifle. Besides, if he knew that game was coming to him, what was the use of going after it?

Here and there a pair of doves were flitting about, and now and then a cotton-tail rabbit made an awkward jump from one clump of bushes to another. It was a handsome beginning for the youngster, who sent a stone into the hazel-bush and took bunny on the keen jump as he came out. It was a sign that there would be no famine in the wilderness. Another brace of rabbits and half a dozen wild doves settled the dinner question. Wild game needs to be hung up for a season to mellow; the quail does not improve in this way, but pigeons and wild ducks and venison are vastly better for it. A trout affords an excellent mountain lunch, and the

sooner he is eaten after coming out of the water the better. And so of all the best game fish.

Did it ever occur to you that while women may be skillful fishers of men, and will even make them bite at the bare hook, they make the poorest trout fishers in the world? There is an awkward fling of the line, as if the first purpose was to scare every fish out of the water. There is a great doubt if any trout of the old school ever takes a bait thrown in by feminine hands; if indeed he is tempted into taking it, he makes off with it, and that is the last sign of him for that day. That last remark is uttered at some peril, if the most vehement feminine protest means anything serious. Two speckled fellows were taken from a little pool under a bridge, the most unlikely place in the world, according to common observation, and yet chosen by the trout because some sort of food is shaken down through the bridge at every crossing of a vehicle. Two more from a pool above, and there were enough for lunch. There may be sport in taking life thus. But who ever puts the smallest life out in mere wantonness, and for the sport of slaying, without reference to a human want, is a barbarian. These carnivorous teeth show that we are creatures of prey. But conscience ought to be the Lord's game-keeper, and give an unmistakable warning when we have slain enough. Had there been a mission to shed innocent blood for the love of it, a couple of wild cats which were traveling along a narrow trail, with the ugliest faces ever put upon any of the feline tribe, would have come to grief. Their short, stumpy tails and bad

countenances came near drawing the fire of one of the pieces. But although wild game is better than tame meat, there is no evidence on record that a wild cat is any better than a tame one. They only needed handsome tails to have been taken for half-grown tigers. If every creature with an unlovely countenance is to be put to death on that account, what would become of some men and women who are not particularly angelic? The pussies are out for their dinner, and so are we. We cannot eat them, and they must not eat us. Each of them may feast on a brace of song-birds before night. But it may be assumed that each of the females who make up the party are competent to make way with a brace of innocent doves for dinner.

If it were not for the fox, the wild-cat and the hawk, the quail is so wonderfully prolific here that it would overrun the country, destroying vineyards and grain fields without limit. I suspect, also, that the great hooded owl drops down from his perch at night, and regales himself on young quails, whose nightly covert he knows as well as any bird in the woods. It is easy enough to find out what the owl eats, but does anybody know who eats the owl? You may criticise him as a singing bird, and he is rather monotonous along in the small hours of the morning. But worse music than that may be heard in-doors, and not half so impressive, withal. There is no harm in noting that the two or three attempts to sing "Sweet Home" by the camp-fire on the first night were failures. At the time when the tears should have started, there was a break and a laugh which echoed far up

in the ravine. Nobody had lost a home, but five happy mortals had found one, the roof of which was of emerald, supported by great pillars of redwood, which cast their shadow far out in the wilderness, as the flames shot up from the camp-fire. The game supper was no failure. One only needs to throw overboard two-thirds of the modern appliances of the kitchen, including the cast-iron stove – that diabolical invention of modern times – to insure perfect success in the simple business of cooking a dinner. Do not, good friends, forget the currant jelly, or you may weary of doves and cotton-tails, as the Israelites did of quails and manna. And if you want the elixir of life, make the tea of soft spring water, which you will never find issuing out of any limestone or chalk rock, or where flints much abound.

The little white tent had a weird aspect, as though it might have been a ghost in the forest. It was absurdly intrusive, and harmonized with nothing in the woods or foreground save the white wall of mist that every night trended landward from the ocean, but never touched the shore. After a little time the novelty of the camp wears off, and a blessed peace comes down on weary eyes and souls. There is no use in keeping one eye open because a dry stick cracks now and then, or the night-hawk sputters as he goes by. Daylight comes at four o'clock, and the woods are thronged with animal life. The song-sparrow begins to twitter, finches and linnets hop about; and down in the oaks the robins sing, and the woodpeckers are tapping the dry limbs overhead. The gray squirrel arches his handsome tail and runs along in

merry glee; and there is such a wealth and joy of abounding life – such a sweet concord of sounds and brimming over of gladness – that Heaven seems a little nearer for the morning anthem. But a heavenly state is not inconsistent with a reasonable appetite.

Never did trout bite more ravenously than at sunrise that morning. The shadows were on the pools, and the gamey fellows more than once jumped clear out of the water for an early breakfast. In losing theirs, we got our own. In the long run, the losses and gains may be nicely balanced. *Mem.*: It is far better that the trout should be losers at present. The philosophy may be fishy, but it points towards a good humanizing breakfast. And it cannot have escaped notice, that the greater part of that philosophy which the world is in no hurry to crucify points towards the dinner-table.

Did it ever strike you that the asceticism of the middle ages, which retreated to the cloister content with water-cresses as a bill of fare, was never very fruitful of high and profound discourse? The philosopher who goes up into the clouds to talk, and prefers gruel to trout before going, makes an epigastric mistake. He has taken in the wrong ballast; and has omitted some good phosphorescent material, which might have created a nimbus around his head as he entered the clouds. A mistake in the gastric region leads to errors of the head and heart. I do not know whether there is any ground of hope for a people who have not only invented cast-iron stoves, but have invented "help" in the form of the she-Titans who have made a wholesome dinner well-

high impossible. Death on a pale horse is poetical enough. But death in the black stove of many a kitchen is terribly realistic. If these trout were to be cooked by "hireling hands," the very woods would be desecrated, and the smoke of the sacrifice would be an abomination.

Does a brook trout ever become a salmon trout? But the former goes down to the sea, and comes back the next year a larger fish. He ascends the same stream, and may be a foot or more in length, according to the size of the stream. I refer, of course, to those Coast Range streams which communicate with the ocean. If a bar or lagoon is formed at the mouth of a stream, so that it is closed for a few months, and nearly all the fish are taken out by the hook, on the opening of the lagoon or creek a fresh supply of trout will come in from the ocean, differing in no conceivable way from brook trout, except that they are larger. They take the grasshopper and the worm like honest fish bred up to a country diet. Some ichthyologist may show a distinction without a difference. The camp-fire reveals none.

The ocean slope of the Coast Range is much the best for a summer excursion. The woods and the waters are full of life. There is a stretch of sixty miles or more from the San Gregorio Creek in San Mateo County, to the Aptos Creek on Monterey Bay, in Santa Cruz County, where there is an average of one good trout stream for every five miles of coast line. There are wooded slopes, dense redwood forests, and mountains in the background where the lion still has a weakness for sucking colts, and the

grizzly will sometimes make a breakfast on a cow, in default of tender pigs. But neither lion nor bear is lord of the forest. Both are sneaking cowards, the lion not even fighting for her whelps. It is better, however, on meeting either, not to prolong the scrutiny, until you have surveyed a tree every way suitable for climbing. The "shinning" having been done, you can make up faces and fling back defiance with some show of coolness. Then all along there is a fore-ground of yellow harvest fields, farm-houses and orchards; the cattle cluster under the evergreen oaks at mid-day. Wide off is the great sounding sea with its fretting shore line and its eternal reach of waters – so near and yet so remote. Low down on the horizon are the white specks of ships drawing near from the other side of the globe – coming perhaps from the dear old home to lay treasures at your feet in the new one – linking the new and the old together by this swift and silent journey, begun as of yesterday, and ended to-day. There is no place afar off. The palms lift up their "fronded" heads just over there; and the cocoanut drops down as from an opening heaven – more is the shame that those frowsy, low-browed cannibals are not content therewith, but so affect the rib roast of a white man, and that too in a tropical climate! If men would always look up for their food they might become angels. But looking down, they may yet become tadpoles or demons. It needs but a little Buddhism grafted on to the development theory to turn some of the human species back into devil-fish. For when one is wholly given up to seek his prey by virtue of suction and tentacula, he might as well

live under water as out of it. It might be hard to go back and begin as a crocodile; but if some of our species have once been there and show no improvement worthy of mention since, why the sooner these voracious, jaw-snapping creatures are turned back perhaps the better. Ketchum has made a hundred thousand dollars this year in buying up doubtful titles and turning widows and orphans out of their homes. Tell me, oh Brahmin, if this man was not a crocodile a thousand years ago? And if he slips any where a link in his chain of development, where will he be a thousand years hence?

It is a good thing to pitch the tent hard by the seashore once in a while. Salt is preservative; and there is a tonic in the smell of sea weed. Your best preserved men and women have been duly salted. The deer sometimes come down to get a sip of saline water, and are partial to mineral springs, which one can find every few miles along the mountain slopes. The sea weeds, or mosses, are in their glory. Such hues of carnation and purple, and such delicate tracery as you shall never see in any royal garden. A hook was thrown in for the fish, perchance, with the dyes of Tyrian purple. But there came out a great wide-mouthed, slimy eel, which was kicked down the beach into the water, with a hint never to reveal so much ugliness again on any shore of the round world. Your sea-lion has no beauty to speak of; but he is an expert fisher and knows how to dry himself upon the rocks. When a hundred of them take to the water, with their black heads bobbing about, they might be taken for so many

shipwrecked contrabands. How many ages were required for the ocean to quarry these grains of sand, which under a glass, become cubes and pentagons as goodly as the stones of Venice? No more under this head, for "quahaugs" and mussels are terribly anti-suggestive.

The young quails are only half-grown; but they run about in very wantonness in all directions. How keen is the instinct of danger in every tenant of the woods; and yet birds hop about in all directions with a consciousness that no evil will befall them. A couple of wood-peckers on a trunk of a tree just overhead, have curiously ribbed and beaded it up with acorns fitted into holes for winter use. So nicely is the work done, and so exact the fit, that the squirrels cannot get them out. And yet the wild doves which we want for our breakfast, flit away upon the first sign of approach. The era of shot-guns is not a millennium era, and the screech of a bursting shell is not exactly a psalm of life. The tenderness of the Hindoo in the matter of taking life, for food, I suspect, is because of his philosophy. Soul transmigration holds him in check, otherwise he might be found eating his grandmother. But a school-girl riots on tender lambs, and is not a whit afraid of eating her ancestors. There is a curious linking of innocence with blood-shedding in our times, enough to suggest an unconscious cannibalism, one remove from that of the happy islanders.

An old farmer came up to see us, attracted by the white tent, and having a lurking suspicion that we might be squatters. He

confirmed the theory that the flow of water from springs in this region was permanently increased by the great earthquake. "You see," said he, "it gave natur' a powerful jog." After the shock, a column of dust arose from the chalk cliffs and falling banks on the shore line, which could have been seen for twenty miles. There was a noise as of the rumbling of chariots in the mountain tops, and the smoke went up as from the shock of armies in battle. The great sea was silent for a moment, and then broke along the shore with a deep sigh as though some mighty relief had come at last. All the trees of the mountain sides bowed their heads, as if adoring that Omnipotence which made the mountains tremble at its touch. If one could have been just here, he might have seen the grandest sight of ages; for this was the very focus of the earthquake. As it was, we got no impression of that event above a suspicion that a mad bull was butting away at the northwest corner of a little country church, with some alarming signs that he was getting the best of the encounter.

One learns to distinguish the sounds of this multitudinous life in the woods, after a few days, with great facility. The bark of the coyote becomes as familiar as that of a house dog. But there is the solitary chirp of a bird at midnight, never heard after daylight, of which beyond this we know nothing. We know better from whence come the cries, as of a lost child at night, far up the mountain. The magpies and the jays hop round the tent for crumbs; and a coon helped himself from the sugar box one day in our absence. He was welcome, though a question more nice

than wise was raised as to whether, on that occasion, his hands and nose were clean. There is danger of knowing too much. It is better not to know a multitude of small things which are like nettles to the soul. What strangely morbid people are those who can suggest more unpleasant things in half an hour than one ought to hear in a life-time! Did I care before the question was raised, whether the coon's nose were clean or otherwise? Now there is a lurking suspicion that it was not. If you offer your friend wine, is it necessary to tell him that barefooted peasants trampled out the grapes? Is honeycomb any the sweeter for a confession that a bee was also ground to pulp between the teeth? We covet retentive memories. But more trash is laid up than most people know what to do with. There is great peace and blessedness in the art of forgetfulness. The memory of one sweet, patient soul is better than a record of a thousand selfish lives.

It was a fine conceit, and womanly withal, which wove a basket out of plantain rods and clover, and brought it into camp filled with wild strawberries. Thanks, too, that the faintest tints of carnation are beginning to touch cheeks that were so pallid a fortnight ago. Every spring bursting from the hill-side is a fountain of youth, although none have yet smoothed out certain crow tracks. The madrono, the most brilliant of the forest trees, sheds its outer bark every season; when the outer rind curls up and falls off, the renewed tree has a shaft polished like jasper or emerald. When humanity begins to wilt, what a pity that the cuticle does not peel as a sign of rejuvenation! There is also a

hint of a sanitary law requiring people averse to bathing to peel every spring.

There is a sense of relief in getting lost now and then in the impenetrable fastnesses of the woods; and a shade of novelty in the thought that no foot-fall has been heard in some of these dells and jungles for a thousand years. It is not so easy a matter to get lost after all. The bark of every forest tree will show which is the north side, and a bright cambric needle dropped gently upon a dipper of water is a compass of unerring accuracy. A scrap of old newspaper serves as a connecting link with the world beyond. The pyramids were probably the first newspapers – a clumsy but rather permanent edition. Stereotyping in granite was the pioneer process. Then came the pictured rocks – the illustrated newspaper of the aborigines, free, so far as I know, from the diabolism which pollutes the pictorial papers of our time. There are some heights of civilization which are the fruitful subject of gabble and mild contemplation. But who fathoms the slums so deep and bottomless, out of whose depths springs the inspiration of some of the illustrated prints of our time? Photography is the herald of pictorial illustrations which are yet to flood the world. The mentotype has not yet been discovered – a little machine to take the impression of the secret thoughts of a friend, as now his features are transfixed in the twinkling of an eye. The world is not yet sober and circumspect enough for this last invention. And these interior lives might lose something of imaginary symmetry by turning inside out.

But let us hope that the musician is born who will yet come to the woods and take down all the bird songs. What a splendid baritone the horned owl has! Who has written the music of the orioles and thrushes? Who goes to these bird operas at four o'clock in the morning? There is room for one fresh, original music book, the whole of which can be written at a few sittings upon a log just where the forests are shaded off into copses and islands of verdure beyond.

It is something to have lived three weeks without a sight of the sheriff, the doctor or the undertaker. Something of a victory to have passed out from under the burden of intense anxiety into a condition of serene indifference as to how this boisterous old world was getting on. If so much as a fugitive letter had reached us, it would have been construed into a mild case of assault and battery. The business of rejuvenation commences with lying down on the ground at night with the head due north, that the polar current may strike the weary brain first and gently charge the whole mortal system. The days of renewal may end by circumventing a two-pound trout, or with a long range rifle shooting at a running deer. But as no pilgrim ever reached the gates of Paradise with a pack on his back, so it is reasonably certain that heaven never came down to one who carried his burden into the wilderness in vacation.

What a great repose there is in these mountains draped in purple and camping like giants hard by the sea! And yet what an infinite shifting of light and shadow there is on sea and shore! Is

the artist yet to be born on this soil who will paint the mountains in the glory of an evening transfiguration; or who will catch the inspiration of these grand defiles, opening vistas, and landscapes ripened and subdued under the harvest sun? We will leave him our bill of fare, that he may take heart on finding that while fame follows translation, a good dinner may safely precede that event. And as for you, oh friend, with the sallow face and sunken eyes – you had better get to the woods and read it for very life.

LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY.¹

It matters little how one betakes himself to the wilderness, so that he gets there in some fitting mood to enjoy its great hospitality. If a bruised and battered guest, so much the more need of the profound peace and restfulness of the woods. There is a fine contrast in the autumn tints of yellow stubble fields set with the unfading green of oaks, like emeralds in settings of gold. The mysteries of the uplifted mountains are veiled in with a dreamy haze, as if all harsh and jerky outlines were the unfinished places yet to be rounded into fullness and beauty before the day of unveiling comes. These mighty throes of nature may be in accordance with some law of adjustment working towards an eternal perfection of finish, of which we have not yet attained so much as a dim conception. If our playhouses are toppled over, so much the better for some of the shams which now and then need the wholesome revision of fires and earthquakes. You see that ambitious wooden palace down the valley. What does it symbolize more than pretence, weakness and barrenness of all æsthetic culture? Some day nature will feel the affront, and this blot in the foreground of a noble picture will be gone. Is it because this type of civilization is but for a day, that

¹ As the title of this paper was adopted more than *eleven* years ago, it has not been deemed expedient to change it because Mr. John Burroughs has recently chosen it as the title of his book.

the habitations of men are built for a day also? Where do our architects get their inspiration, that they cut such fantastic capers in wood? It might be well to put a new padlock on the tomb of Cicero before any further imitations of the villa at Tusculum are perpetrated. The savage leaves behind some show of broken pottery, or at least, here and there, an arrowhead of flint. We do not build well enough to secure any respectable ruins. What other antiquities, besides debts, are we likely to bequeath to posterity?

The trailing dust of the beaten thoroughfare comes to an end at last. The ox-teams have crawled down into the valley, more patient than the driver, who causes a perpetual series of undulations to run along their backs by an inhuman prodding. There are some vocations which seem to develop all the hatefulness and cruelty of human nature, and this is evidently one of them. In five minutes more there will be no visible sign of civilization in all the horizon. If one is piqued at the silence of a reception in the wilderness, let him consider how gracious it is, withal. It will grow upon him from day to day, until he may come to think that these very solitudes have been waiting for his coming a thousand years. It is not to go apart from ourselves, but to recover a more intense self-consciousness, that we need this seclusion. The ceaseless jar and uproar of life set in a hard materialism at last, because there has been an absence of all softening influences and all seasons of communion. It is a small thing that the dead are sometimes turned to stone by some chemistry of nature. But what of the living who are every

day turning to stone by an increasing deadness to all human sympathies?

The host is at home in the wilderness, but you may not see his face for many a day. In the meantime there is the guest chamber; enter and make no ado about it. The trees overarch you gently, and bend with graceful salutations; the rocks are most generous hearth-stones, and the pools under the cliffs are large enough for a morning splash. You have only to climb the precipice yonder to count more towns and villages than you have fingers. But the sight is not worth the effort, since one needs to pray earnestly for deliverance from both. If most country villages on this coast are not so many blots upon otherwise fine landscapes, how much do they fall short of them? The authorities of the most favored town in the State, so far as climate and physical characteristics go, could think of nothing better than to destroy a line of Mission willows, extending through the main street for nearly a mile – every tree a monument of historic interest – and then, with innocent boorishness, looked up to the faces of men who were ashamed of them, for some token of approval. Tree-murder has culminated, let us hope, since Time has been busy swinging his scythe close upon the heels of the culprits. There may be hope for the next generation. The children born upon the soil may get a better inspiration, and draw a more generous life from the earth which nourishes them. How, otherwise, shall these dreary highways and barren villages be translated from ugliness to beauty? What a divine challenge do

these encompassing mountains and grandest of forests send out to men to cease defiling the earth!

It is not so much a question whether the "coming man" will be a wine-bibber, as whether the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for him. Will he plant trees? Will he train rivulets adown the mountains into stone fountains by dusty roadsides? Will he refuse to cut down trees because they are old, with as sturdy a decision as he would refrain from cutting a man's legs off because he chanced to be old and venerable? Will he recognize the great truth that the earth is the garden of the Lord, and that he is sent forth to dress it, and make it, if possible, still more beautiful? If he will not, by all that is good, let a message be sent to the "coming man" not to come.

What a large freedom there is in the wilderness! You come and go with a consciousness that you will be fed and lodged in a manner both befitting you and your host. There are no pressing attentions, and no snobbery to offend. Mr. Bullion said at his feast that he had made more than a quarter of a million of dollars by some lucky ventures this year; and that he is interested in several horses of a remarkably fast gait. Did he propose to make some grateful return for so much good fortune? Would he found a library? endow a school? encourage some scientific expedition? become a generous patron of the struggling literature of the new commonwealth? He had thought of none of these things. Nor did it occur to him how much emptiness there was at the feast. It is saddest of all that so many of our rich men neither recognize

times nor opportunities. They have not yet learned to make a feast an occasion of noble deeds. Of grosser hospitality there is no lack; but the lame, the halt, and the blind, are none the better for it.

There is something ignoble in reducing the problem of life to a mere game of "keeps." The world is probably mortgaged or put in pawn for more than it is worth, considering how much rubbish goes with it. The wrappers of Egyptian mummies of high lineage, which were wound up four thousand years ago, have been sold in our times for paper-stock. But will the men of these times, who boast that they have got the world in pawn, contribute so much as one nether garment to posterity four thousand years hence? The world changes hands every thirty years, and a new set of pawn-keepers appears; but it is the same old grip. There will be confusion yet, when the secret is found out that the world is worth only a moiety of the sum for which it is pledged, and there is a general call for collaterals.

It is not safe to despise this tonic of the wilderness. Most men do not know how small they are until they go forth into some larger place. It is good to have illusions dispelled in a healthy way. A man is great in the counting-room, pulpit or forum, because no one has thought it worth the while to dispute the assumption. The position held at first by sufferance may ripen into a possessory title, provided he sticks to his claim.

The *pholas* wears a round hole by much scouring and attrition in the rock, and is stronger and greater in that hole than any

other occupant can be. The "sphere is filled," and what more would you have? There is an excess of little great men, who have managed by much grinding and abrasion to wear a hole in the rock, into which they fit with surprising accuracy. They are great within their own dominion; but how small the moment they are pushed beyond it! No violence can be too harsh which breaks off the petty limitations of one's life. The valley through which men are called to walk ought to widen every day, until some grand outlook is gained. It is not the gentle south-wind, but the blast of the hurricane, which makes them move on. And when one is violently wrenched out of his place, let him accept it as a Divine interposition to save him from eternal littleness.

There is that spring yonder under the shelving rock, having a trace of sulphur and iron, and possibly, some other qualities for physical regeneration. For two hours at mid-day there has been a succession of birds and beasts to its waters. Curiously enough, there has been no collision; but every kind in its own order. The roe, with a half-grown fawn, comes down early in the morning; and as the heat of mid-day increases, coveys of quails, led by the parent-birds, emerge from the thickets, and trail along to the spring. Later still, orioles, thrushes, robins, linnets, and a wild mockingbird without any name, go down not only to drink, but to lave in the waters. You may watch for days and months, but you will never see the hawk or the crow, or any unclean bird do this thing. But birds of song, which have neither hooked beaks nor talons, sprinkle themselves with purifying waters, and

are innocent of all violence and blood. The spring is not only a tonic, but it serves to take the conceit out of a ponderous man who has been putting on the airs of Wisdom in the woods. He, too, went down on "all-fours" to drink; and such an ungraceful figure did this counting-house prince make, and blew so like a hippopotamus backing out of the ooze and mire, that all the woods rang with wildest mirth. But a lad, bending the visor of his cap, lifted the water to his mouth, and drank erect like one to the manor born. For the space of half an hour the great man was as humble as a child, and there was no more wisdom in him. But the spirit of divination overtook him at last; with a tape line he set about measuring the girth of the noblest redwood tree of the forest; and with pencil in hand was calculating the number of thousand feet of inch-boards it would make, if cut up at the mills! If the gentle hamadryad which, for aught I know, still dwelleth in every living tree, saw this gross affront, there were utterances which were nigh unto cursing. Were the forests made for no better ends than this sordid wood-craft which hews down and saws them into deals for dry-good boxes and the counters of shop-keepers? There is not one tree too many on this round globe; and the whole herd of wood craftsmen ought to be served with notices to set out a new tree for every one destroyed, or quit at once.

It is worth the inquiry, at what point that tendency in modern civilization is to be arrested, which is hastening the world on to barrenness and desolation. The sites of ruined cities are deserts

often; but rarely is one overgrown with forest trees; as though nature were still in revolt, and had no heart for renewal, where for ages she has been ravaged and impoverished by multitudinous populations. Observe, too, how nature shifts her burdens. The sand drifts to-day over the foundations of the vastest cities of antiquity. But when the great cycle of rest is filled out, if so be that the old verdure is restored, what wastes may there not be, and what drifting sands over buried cities in the heart of this continent? What ravages, too, are these new demons yet to commit upon the forests, as they go up and down the mountain sides with wheels of thunder and eyes of flame? Are all the trees of the woods to be offered up to these new idols of civilization?

All sounds are musical in the woods, and the far-off tinkling of a cow-bell is wondrously grateful to the ear. There is nothing marvelous in the sharpened senses of an Indian. This half-grown lad is already a match for the best of them. There is not a sound in the woods, however obscure, that he does not rightly interpret; and I have more than once been misled by his counterfeit imitations of game birds and wild animals. No Indian can reason from observation so accurately as he whose intellect has had the schooling of nature grafted upon the discipline of books. The sharpest insight into nature is never given to the savage, but to him whose grosser senses have been purged, and whose vision is clarified by some wisdom which is let down from above.

All healthy souls love the society of trees; and the mold which

feeds them is a better fertilizer of thought than the mold of many books. You see the marks of fires which have swept along these mountain sides; here and there the trunk of a redwood has been streaked by a tongue of flame. But the tree wears its crown of eternal green. It is only the dry sticks and rubbish which are burned up to make more room for the giants; while many noxious reptiles have been driven back to their holes. Possibly, the wood-ticks number some millions less. But very little that is worth saving is consumed.

We shall need a regenerating fire some day, to do for books what is done for the forests. May it be a hot one when it comes. Let no dry sticks nor vermin escape. Ninety in every hundred books which have got into our libraries within the last half century, will fail to enlighten the world until there is one good, honest conflagration. Something might be gained from the ashes of these barren books; therefore, pile on the rubbish, and use the poker freely. Let not the fire go out until some cords of pious doggerel, concocted in the name of poetry, have been added thereto. The giants will survive the flames; but punk-wood, moths, and wood-ticks will all be gone.

By a noteworthy coincidence, when the smell of autumn fruits comes up from the valley, and the grapes hang in clusters on the hillsides, and wine-presses overflow, the last sign of dearth is obliterated by the swelling of all hidden fountains. The earth is not jubilant without water. The springs which had been lost, gurgle in the crevices of the rocks, and streaks of dampness are

seen along the trails, where, in the early morning, little rivulets ran and interlaced and retired before the sun. There will be no rain for weeks. There has been none for months. The trees by the wayside faint and droop under the burden of heat and dust. But they know this signal of the coming rain. The fountains below seem to know, also, at what time the fountains above are to be unsealed; and these pulsing streams are the answering signal. Shorter days and diminished solar evaporation will answer as a partial clearing up of the mystery. But if the profoundest truth has not yet been touched, suppose, oh philosopher of many books and many doubts, that you let your grapnel into the depths for it? Only be sure that your line is long enough, and that you bring no more rubbish to the surface. There is more truth above ground than most of us will master. And we stumble over it in field and forest, like luckless treasure-hunters; when a ringing blow upon the dull rock would reveal filaments of gold, or the glancing light of crystals. There are some truths, also, whose insufferable light we cannot bear. They must be shaded off, like half tints at set of sun. And if any prophet coming out of the wilderness shall dare to tell more, let him eat his locusts and wild honey first, for he cannot tell whether he will be crowned or stoned.

A WEEK IN MENDOCINO

If one is in robust health and a vigorous trencher-man, who is there on the earth, in these degenerate times, to congratulate him on such good fortune? But no sooner is there a gastric revolt at the diabolical inventions of some high-priestess of the kitchen, with a growing cadaverousness, than every friend is ready with an ominous warning. When we publish a list of the patent medicines recommended, the world will know how many disinterested friends we have. Just now, the earth cure is all-potent. Try it in any shape you like – as a mud bath, a powder, a poultice, or an honest bed at mid-day – and this chemistry of earth and sun will work wonders. Are we not getting back to first principles? You talk of the shaking up which religious dogmas have suffered within the last half century: what is there of all the medical theories of the last fifteen hundred years which now goes unchallenged?

Yosemite has been a little overdone of late. The seashore and the springs are dreadfully haunted by the young lady in rustic hat, garnished with pea-green ribbon, and who either writes poetry, or reads the latest love story. There is comfort in the fact that the territory of this State is not more than half explored, and is not likely to be for some time to come. There are reaches equal to a degree of latitude untrodden, as yet, by the foot of the tourist, and where the clanking of the surveyor's chain and rods

has never been heard; and some of these you may find within two hundred miles of San Francisco. Going still farther, there are vales where a white man was, till recently, something of a curiosity. It is interesting to find a country where morganatic marriages are in high repute. The red-headed lumberman's cross-cut saw would not, by this arrangement, descend to his children; nor would an old hunter's powder-horn and ancient rifle, by the same prudential forethought, be handed down to some little vagabond half-breeds.

In twenty-four hours one may be set down in the wildest part of Mendocino County. We selected Anderson Valley, on the headwaters of the Novarro River, not so much for its wildness as because it was the most accessible spot unfrequented by the tourist. It will be hard to miss the Russian River Valley in getting there, and harder still not to linger for a day or two to look at such pictures as no artist has quite succeeded in putting on to his canvas.

There was the mid-day repose of St. Helena, taking on a royal purple as the day advanced; the droning sound of the reapers in the valley, as the rippling wheat bowed to a sort of rural song of Old Hundred! and the very cattle, which, for aught I know, have figured in a dozen pictures, standing under the trees, with their identical tails over their backs. Even the great fields of corn, which rustled and snapped under a midsummer sun, were toned a little by the long column of mellow dust which spun from the stage-wheels and trailed for a mile in the rear. The artists caution

against too much green in a picture, and so this brown pigment was needed to give the best effect; and there was no lack of material to "lay it on" liberally, anywhere in that region. With the dropping down of the sun behind the low hills on the west, the shadows fell aslant the valley, and light and shade melted together into the soft twilight. It might have been a favorable time for sentiment. But just then the stage-coach rounded a low hillock, and a farm-house was brought suddenly into the foreground. A cosset, a flock of geese, a windmill moving its fans indolently to the breath of the west wind, a dozen ruminating cows – what more of pastoral simplicity would you have for the fringe of such a landscape? But you see it was slightly overdone. The stout young woman milking the roan cow rather heightened the effect, to be sure; she really ought to have been there. But did any feminine mortal ever administer such a kick to the broad sides of a cow before? There was a dull thud, a quadrupedal humping, an undulation along the spine of that cow – and the stage-coach was out of sight. O, for the brawn and muscle to administer such a kick! It was more gymnastic than esthetic, more realistic than poetical. You will never find Arcadia where such a powerful feminine battery is set in motion on so slight a provocation. A cow might survive; but you need not describe the fate of any man on whom such a force were expended. And seeing that so large a part of this world needs a healthy kicking, more is the pity that there should have been such a needless expenditure of force. By what mental law are grand and ridiculous scenes

associated together? I cannot summon the towering majesty of St. Helena, the golden ripple of the harvest fields, the receding valley, softened by the twilight, but ever in the foreground is this kicking milkmaid and that unfortunate cow. If a house-painter had dabbed his brush of green paint on your Van Dyke, you might be stunned by this very audacity, and turn your pet picture to the wall. But the house-painter and Van Dyke would from that time forth be associated together. So I turn this picture to the wall, only wishing that the kicking milkmaid and St. Helena had been a thousand miles apart.

The Russian River Valley "pinches out" at Cloverdale, a pretty little town, set down in a bowl with a very large rim – so large, that unless new life should be infused into the town, it will not be likely to slop over. Thence, you reach the head of Anderson Valley, by a jaunt of thirty-two miles, in a northwesterly direction, over a series of low mountain ridges, and through canyons, sometimes widening out into "potreros" large enough for a cattle ranch, and handsome enough for a gentlemen's country-seat. Here the affluents of the Novarro River are drawn together like threads of lace; and the first trout stream leaps and eddies in the deep defiles on its way to the ocean. There is no use of fumbling in an outside pocket for fish-hooks. The stream has a fishy look; but that band of rancheria Indians, who have gone into summer camp on a sand-bar, will settle the trout question for the next ten miles. They pop their heads out of a round hole in one of the wigwams like prairie dogs,

and seem to stand on their hind legs, with the others pendent, as if just going to bark. These are the aboriginal Gypsies, fortunate rascals, who pay no house-rent, who want nothing but what they can steal, or what can be got from the brawling stream, or the wooded slopes of the adjacent hills.

These funnel-shaped willow baskets, lodged here and there along the banks, are the salmon traps of the Indians, which have done duty until the spring run was over. When the salmon has once set his head up stream, he never turns it down again until he has reached the extreme limits of his journey and accomplished his destiny. The Indians understand this; and these long willow funnels, with a bell-shaped mouth, are laid down in the spring – a clumsy contrivance to be sure; but the salmon enters and pushes his way on, while this willow cylinder contracts until it closes to a small nozzle. There is daylight ahead; the stubborn fish will not back down, and he cannot "move on." When an Indian gets hungry, he pulls up this willow trap, runs a spit through his fish, holds him over the fire a little while, and his dinner is ready.

There is no fish story which one may not believe when in a gentle mood. And thus, when farther down the stream, a settler showed us a wooden fork such as is used to load gavels of grain, with which, in less than an hour, he pitched out of this same stream a wagon-load of salmon – why should we doubt his veracity? No lover of the gentle art is ever skeptical about the truth of a fish story. Faith and good luck go together. How was our faith rewarded soon afterward, when, taking a "cut-off,"

at the first cast under a shelving rock, a half-pound trout was landed! It was a grasshopper bait, and another grasshopper had to be run down before another cast. It is wonderful what jumps this insect will make when he is wanted for bait, and the run is up the hill. Another trout snapped illusively, and we had him – larger by a quarter of a pound than the first. It was getting interesting! No doubt the settler pitched out a load of salmon with a wooden fork. A kingdom for a grasshopper! There they go in all directions – and the rascals have wings! The clumsy stage-wagon is creeping far up the hill. A beetle is tried; it won't do – no decent trout ever swallowed a beetle. A dozen splendid game fish were left in that swirl under the rock. Was there too much faith in that wooden fork story, or not enough? There was a hitch somewhere. But it was all right when the passengers dined that day on fried bacon, and we on mountain trout. If the grasshoppers had not been too lively, there would have been trout for all.

Anderson Valley is about eighteen miles long, and half to three-fourths of a mile wide. The hills on the left are belted with a heavy growth of redwood, in fine contrast with the treeless hills on the right, covered with a heavy crop of wild oats, all golden-hued in the August sun. The farms extend across the valley, taking a portion of the hills on either side. There has not been a Government survey made in the valley, but every man was in possession of his own, and did not covet his neighbor's. Land-stealing requires a degree of energetic rascality and enterprise wholly wanting here. So near, and yet so remote! It is as if

one had gone a two-days' journey, and had somehow managed to get three thousand miles away. I heard of a man in the valley who took a newspaper, and was disposed to sympathize with him in his misfortune. Why should the spray of one of the dirty surges of the outside world break over into Arcadia? Everybody had enough, and nobody had anything in particular to do. The dwellings had mud-and-stick chimneys on the outside, and an occasional bake-oven garnished the back yard. At the little tavern, such vegetables as strangers "hankered for" were procured at the coast – a distance of twenty-six miles. An old man – he might have been seventy, with a margin of twenty years – had heard of the rebellion, and lamented the abolition of slavery – a mischief which he attributed to a few fanatics. The world would never get on smoothly until the institution of the patriarchs had been restored.

Oh, venerable friend, dwelling in Arcadia! there is much broken pottery in this world which is past all mending; and more which is awaiting its turn to go into the rubbish heap. All that was discovered in the interior of a Western mound was a few fragments of earthenware; for the rest, Time had beaten it all back to the dust. The images, whether of brass, wood, or stone, could not be put together by any of the cohesive arts of our time. It is appointed for some men to go through the world, club in hand, and to break much of the world's crockery as they go. We may not altogether like them. But observe that the men who are stoned by one generation are canonized by

the next. There was the great ebony image set up and so long worshipped by the people of this country. How many sleek, fat doctors climbed into their pulpits of a Sunday, to expatiate on the scriptural beauties of this image, and the duty of reverencing it as something set up and continued by Divine authority! It took some whacking blows to bring that ebony idol down; but what a world of hypocrisy, cruelty and lies went into the dust with it! Was there ever a reformer – a genuine image-breaker – who did not, at one time or another, make the world howl with rage and pain? Now, truth is on eternal foundations, and does not suffer, in the long run, by the world's questionings or buffetings. But a consecrated falsehood – whether sacerdotal, political, or social – is some day smitten, as the giant of old, in the forehead, and falls headlong. After all, it is by revolution, that the world makes most of its progress. It is a violent and often disorderly going out of an old and dead condition by the regenerating power, not of a new truth, but of an old one dug out of the rubbish, and freshly applied to the conscience of the world. How many truths to-day lie buried, which, if dug up, would set the world in an uproar! The image-breaker often heralds a revolution. He overturns the idol, of whatever sort it is, letting the light into some consecrated falsehood – not gently, but very rudely, and with a shocking disregard of good manners, as many affirm. This rough-shod evangel, with the rasping voice, and angular features, and pungent words – we neither like him nor his new gospel at first. But he improves on acquaintance, and some day we begin

to doubt whether he really does deserve eternal burning.

The world is full of cant; it infects our common speech. The odor of sanctity and the form of sound words are no nearer the living spirit than are those petrifications which present an outline of men, but never again pulsate with life. Once in every half a century it is needful that the image-breaker should come along and knock on the head the brainless images of cant. The sturdy man of truthful and resolute speech! How irreverent and impious he is! He makes the timid hold their breath, lest he should break something that he ought not to touch. What has he done, after all, but to teach men and women to be more truthful, more courageous, and less in love with shams.

At the close of a little "exhortation," something like this, the old man said – rather dogmatically, I thought – "Stranger, them sentiments of yours won't do for this settlement." No doubt he was right. They won't do for any settlement where they build mud-and-stick chimneys on the outside of houses, and fry meat within.

It is good to get into a forest where there is not a mark of the woodman's axe. The redwood is, after all, one of the handsomest coniferous trees in the world. It grows only in a good soil and a moist climate. There may be larger trees of the *sequoia* family in the Calaveras group, but that presumption will bear questioning. A guide offered to take us to a group of trees, distant about a day's ride, the largest of which he affirmed was seventy-five feet in circumference, and not less than two hundred and sixty feet

high. Larger trees than this are reported in the Coast Range; but we have never yet *seen* a redwood which measured over fifty feet in circumference, nor can any considerable tree of this species be found beyond the region of sandstone and the belt of coast fogs.

It is curious to note tree and tribal limitations. The oak and the redwood do not associate together, but the madrono is the friend of both. The line of redwood limits the habitation of the ground squirrel, and within that line his half-brother, the wood squirrel, arches his tail in the overhanging boughs, and barks just when the charge is out of your gun, with surprising impudence. There is the dominion of trees and animals older and better defined than any law of boundaries which has yet got into our statute-books. Who knows but races of men have overleaped boundaries of Divine ordination, and so must struggle with adverse fate towards nothing more hopeful than extinction. The black man of the tropics, planted near the North Pole, has all the grin taken out of him, and there is nothing but a frigid chatter left. There is the Indian of the great central plains. Have we got into his country, or has he got into ours? There is some confusion of boundaries; and the locomotive, that demon of modern civilization, is tracing new boundaries with a trail of fire. It is possible to put one's finger upon the weak link in the logic that what is bad for the Indian is good for the white man.

That gopher snake just passed on the trail, with a young rabbit half swallowed, illustrates near enough how one-half of the world is trying to swallow the other. Observe, too, that provision of

nature, by which game is swallowed larger than the throat. It is the smallest half of the world, it seems, that is trying to swallow the largest half, with good prospect of success. Half a dozen men have located all the redwood timber upon the accessible streams of this county. Looking coastward along the Novarro, there is a chain of townships spanning this stream for fifteen miles in length, owned by two men. You may write down the names of twenty men who are at this moment planning to swallow all the leading business interests of this State. They will elect Governors and Legislators. It don't matter that the game is larger than the throat. In fact, deglutition is already pretty well advanced – as far, at least, as with the rabbit; but with this difference, that our victims will be made to grease themselves.

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