

John Muir Writings

A Rival of the Yosemite

The Cañon of the South Fork of Kings River, California.

By John Muir.

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[See also by the same writer "The Treasures of the Yosemite" and "Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park," in *The Century* for August and September, 1890. A national park on the lines proposed by Mr. Muir was established by Act of Congress, dated October 1, 1890.—*Editor.*]

ITS GENERAL CHARACTER.

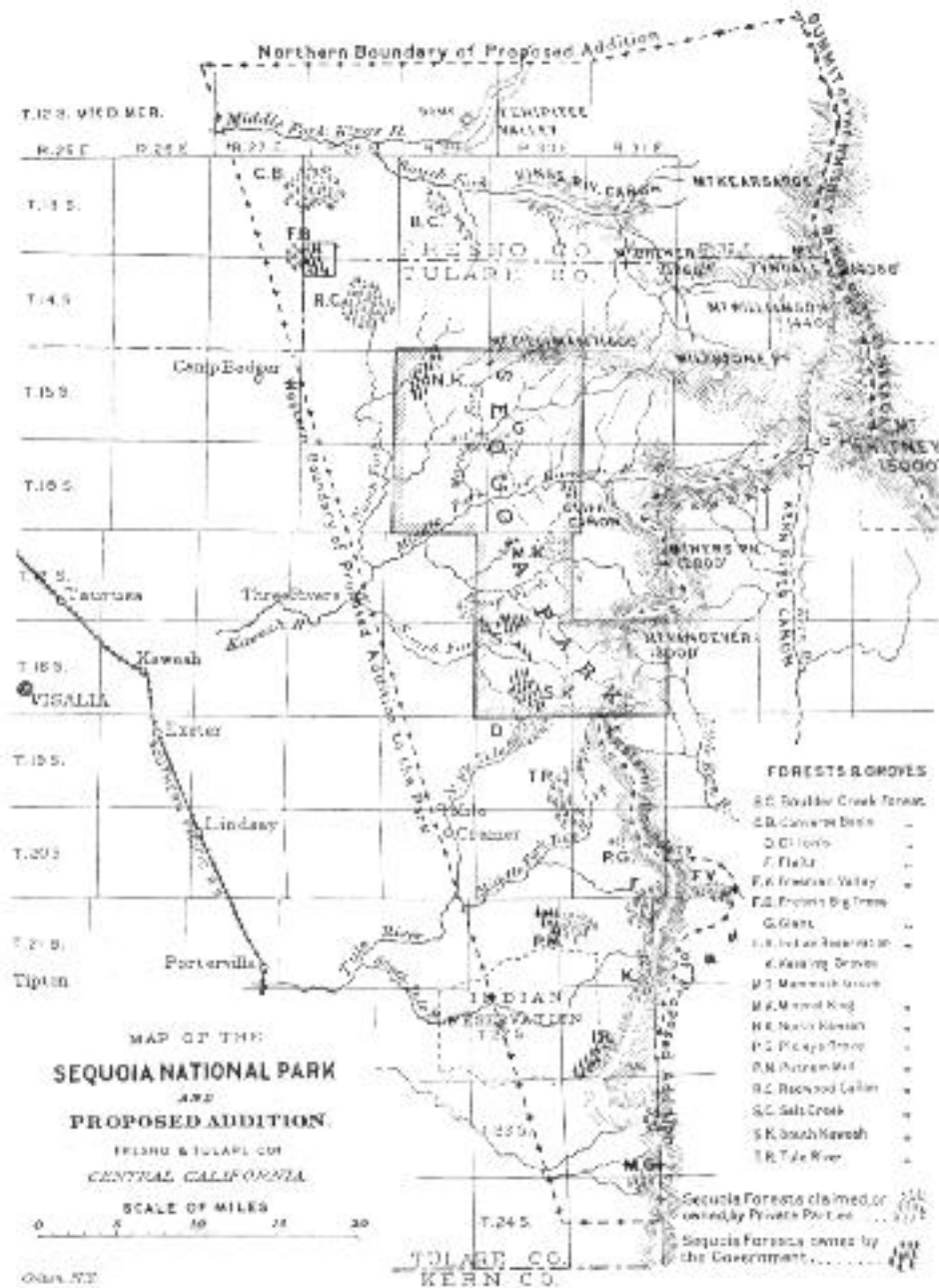
In the vast Sierra wilderness far to the southward of the famous Yosemite Valley, there is a yet grander valley of the same kind. It is situated on the south fork of King's River, above the most extensive groves and forests of the giant sequoia, and beneath the shadows the highest mountains in the range, where the cañons are deepest and the snow-laden Pus are crowded most closely together It is called the Big King's River Cañon, or King's River Yosemite, and is reached by way of Visalia, the nearest point on the Southern Pacific Railroad, from which the distance is about forty-five miles, or by the Kearsarge Pass from the east side of the range. It is about ten miles long, half a mile wide, and the stupendous rocks of purplish gray granite that form the walls are from 2500 to 5000 feet in height, while the depth of the valley beloveld the general surface of the mountain mass from which it has been carved is considerably more than a mile. Thus it appears that this new Yosemite is longer and deeper, and lies embedded in grander mountains, than the well-known Yosemite of the Merced. Their general characters, however are wonderfully alike, and they bear the same relationship to the fountains of the ancient glaciers above them.

As to waterfalls, those of the new valley are far less striking in general views, although the volume of falling water is nearly twice as great and comes from higher sources. The descent of the King's River streams is mostly made in the form of cascades, which are outspread in flat plume-like sheets on smooth slopes, or are squeezed in narrow-throated gorges, boiling, seething, in deep swirling pools, pouring from lin to lin, and breaking into ragged, tossing masses of spray and foam in boulder-choked cañons,—making marvelous mixtures with the downpouring sunbeams, displaying a thousand and colors, and giving forth a great variety of wild mountain melody, which, rolling from side to side against the echoing cliffs, is at length all combined into one smooth, massy sea-like roar.

The bottom of the valley is about 5000 feet above the sea, and its level or gently sloping surface is diversified with flowery meadows and groves and open sunny flats, through the midst of which the crystal river, ever changing, ever beautiful, makes it way; now gliding softly with scarce a ripple over beds of brown pebbles, now rustling and leaping in wild exultation across avalanche rock-dams or terminal moraines, swaying from side to side, beaten with sunshine, or embowered with leaning pines and firs, alders, willows, and tall balsam poplars, which with the bushes and grass at their feet make charming banks. Gnarled snags and stumps here and there reach out from the banks making cover for trout which seem to have caught their colors from rainbow spray, though hiding mostly in shadows, where the current swirls slowly and protecting sedges and willows dip their leaves.

From this long, flowery, forested, well-watered park the walls rise abruptly in plain precipices or richly sculptured masses partly separated by side cañons baring wonderful wealth and variety of architectural forms, which are as wonderful in beauty of color and fineness of finish as in colossal height and mass The So-called war of the elements has done them no harm. There is no unsightly defacement as yet; deep in the sky, inviting the onset of storms through unnumbered centuries, they still stand firm and seemingly as fresh and unworn as new-born flowers.

From the brink of the walls on either side the ground still rises in a series of ice-carved ridges and basins, superbly forested and adorned with many small lakes and meadows where deer and bear find grateful homes; while from the head of the valley mountains other mountains rise beyond in glorious array, every one of them shining with rock crystals and snow, and with a network of streams that sing their way down from lake to lake through a labyrinth of ice-burnished cañons. The area of the basins drained by the streams entering the valley is about 450 square miles, and the elevation of the rim of the general basin is from 9000 to upward of 14,000 feet above the sea; while the general basin of the Merced Yosemite has an area of 250 square miles, and its elevation is much lower.



When from some commanding summit we view the mighty wilderness about this central valley, and, after tracing its tributary streams, note how every converging cañon shows in its sculpture, moraines, and shining surfaces that it was once the channel of a glacier, contemplating this dark period of grinding ice, it would seem that here was a center of storm and stress to which no life would come. But it is just where the ancient glaciers bore down on the mountain flank with crushing and destructive and most concentrated energy that the most impressive displays of divine beauty are offered to our admiration. Even now the snow falls every winter about the valley to a depth of ten to twenty feet, and the booming of avalanches is a common sound. Nevertheless the frailest flowers, blue and gold and purple, bloom on the brows of the great cañon rocks, and on the frosty peaks, up to a height of 13,000 feet, as well as in sheltered hollows and on level, meadows and lake borders and banks of streams.

At the head of the valley in the river forks, the heavier branch turning northward and on this branch there is another Yosemite, called from its flowery beauty Paradise Valley; and his name might well be applied to the main cañon, for notwithstanding its tremendous If rockiness, it is an Eden of plant-beauty from end to end.

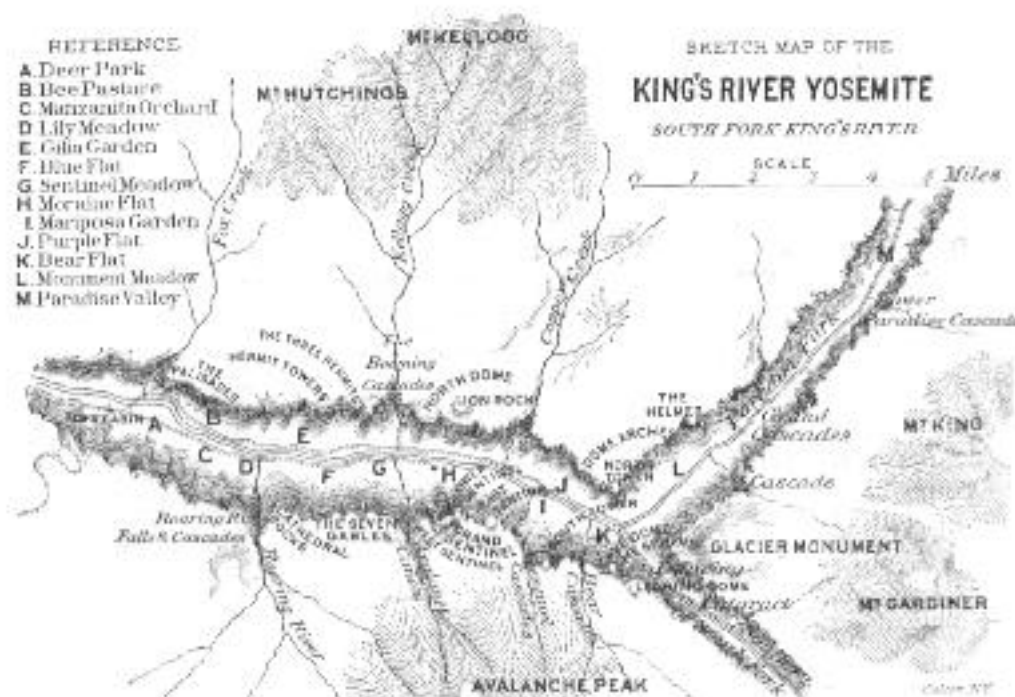
THE TRIP TO THE VALLEY.

Setting out from Visalia we ride through miles and miles of wheat-fields, and grassy levels brown and dry and curiously dappled with low oval hillocks with miniature hollows between them called "hog-wallows"; then through tawny sun-beaten foot-hills, with here and there a bush or oak. Here once roamed countless droves of antelope, now utterly exterminated. By the end of May most of the watercourses are dry. Feeble bits of cultivation occur at long intervals, but the entire foot-hill region is singularly silent and desolate-looking, and the traveler fondly turns his eyes to the icy mountains looming through the hot and wavering air.

From the base of the first grand mountain plateau we can see the outstanding pines and sequoias 4000 feet above us, and we now ascend rapidly, sweeping from ravine to ravine around the brows of subordinate ridges. The vegetation shows signs of a cooler climate; the golden-flowered Fremontia, manzanita, ceanothus, and other bushes show miles of bloom; while great beds of blue and purple bells brighten the open spaces, made up chiefly of brodiaea, calochortus, gilia of many species, etc., the whole forming a floral apron of fine texture pattern, let down from the verge of the forest in graceful, flowing folds. At a height of 3000 feet we find here and there a pine standing among the bushes by the wayside, lonely and far apart, as if it had come down from the woods to welcome us. As we continued

to ascend the flower-mantle thickens, wafts of balsam come from the evergreens, fragrant tassels and plumes are shaken above us, cool brooks cross the road, till at length we enter the glorious forest, passing suddenly out of the sun glare into cooling shadows as if we had entered some grand inclosed hall.

We have now reached an elevation of 6000 feet, and are on the margin of the main forest belt of the Sierra. Looking down we behold the central plain of California outspread like an arm of the sea, bounded in the hazy distance the mountains of the coast, and bathed in evening purple. Orange groves and vineyards, fields, towns, and dusty pastures are all submerged and made glorious in the divine light. Finer still is the light streaming past us through the aisles of the forest.



Down through the shadows we now make our way for a mile or two in lone of the upper ravines of Mill Creek. Stumps, logs, and the smashed ruins of the trees cumber the ground; the scream of saws is heard; a lumber village comes in sight, and are arrive at the Moore and Smith Mills, the end of the stage line. From here the distance to the valley in a direct line is online about eighteen miles, and two trails lead to it, one of which traces the divide between the waters of the Kahweah and King's rivers, while the other holds a more direct course across the basins of Big and Little Boulder creeks, tributaries of King's River. Both ways are fairly good as mountain-trails go, inasmuch as you are seldom compelled to travel more than two miles to make an advance of one, and less than half of the miles are perpendicular. A stout walker may make the trip to the valley in a day. But if instead of crossing every ridge-wave of these broad boulder basins a good carriage-road were built around the brows and headlands of the main river cañon, the valley could be reached in less than half a day, and with the advantage of still grander scenery. The lower trail is the one commonly traveled, and upon the whole it is the more interesting, for it leads all the way through glorious forests, amid which the stately shafts and domes of sequoia are frequently seen. Climbing a steep mile from the mill we enter the General Grant National Park of Big Trees, a square mile in extent, where a few of the giants are now being pre- served amid the industrious destruction by ax, saw, and blasting-powder going on around them. Still ascending we pass the little flowering Round Meadow, set in a superb growth of silver firs, and gain the summit of the ridge that forms the west boundary of Little Boulder Creek Basin, from which a grand view of the forest is obtained,—cedar, sugar-pine, yellow pine, silver fir, and sequoia filling every hollow, and sweeping up the sides and over the top of every ridge in measureless exuberance and beauty, only a few gray rock brows on the southern rim of the basin appearing in all the sylvan sea.

We now descend to Bearskin Meadow, a sheet of purple-topped grasses enameled with violets, gilians, larkspurs, potentillas, ivesias, columbine, etc.; parnassia and sedges in the wet places, and majestic trees crowding forward in proud array to form a curving border, while Little Boulder Creek, a stream twenty feet wide, goes humming and swirling merrily through the middle of it. Here we begin to climb again; ever up or down we go, not a fairly level mile in the lot. But despite the quick, harsh curves, vertical or horizontal, and the crossings of bogs and boulder-choked gullies, the sustained grandeur of the scenery keeps weariness away. The air is exhilarating. Crisp and clear comes the bold ringing call of the mountain quail, contrasting with the deep blunt bumping of the grouse, while many a small singer sweetens the air along the leafy fringes of the streams.

The next place with a name in the wilderness is Tornado Meadow. Here the sequoia giants stand close about us, towering above the firs and sugar-pines. Then follows another climb of a thousand feet, after which we descend into the magnificent forest basin of Big Boulder Creek. Crossing this boisterous stream as best we may, up again we go 1200 feet through glorious woods, and on a few miles to the emerald Horse Corral and Summit Meadows, a short distance beyond which the highest point on the trail is reached at Grand Lookout, 8300 feet above the sea. Here at length we gain a general view of the great cañon of King's River lying far below, and of the vast mountain-region in the sky on either side of it, and along the summit of the range. [See p. 81.] Here too we see the forest in broad dark swaths still sweeping onward undaunted, climbing the farther mountain-slopes to a height of 11,000 feet. But King Sequoia comes not thus far. The grove nearest the valley is on one of the eastern branches of Boulder Creek, five miles from the lower end.

CHIEF FEATURES OF THE CAÑON.

Going down into the valley we make a descent of 3500 feet, over the south shoulder, by a careless crinkled trail which seems well-nigh endless. It offers, however, many fine points of view of the huge granite trough, and the river, and the sublime rocks of the walls plunging down and planting their feet on the shady level floor. [See p. 83.]

At the foot of the valley we find ourselves in a smooth spacious park, planted with stately groves of sugar-pine, yellow pine, silver fir, incense-cedar, and Kellogg oak. The floor is scarcely ruffled with underbrush, but myriads of small flowers spread a thin purple and yellow veil over the brown needles and burrs beneath the groves, and the gray ground of the open sunny spaces. The walls lean well back and support a fine growth of trees, especially on the south side, interrupted here and there by sheer masses 1000 to 1500 feet high, which are thrust forward out of the long slopes like dormer windows. [See p. 85.] Three miles ups the valley on the south side we come to the Roaring Falls and Cascades. They are on a large stream called Roaring River, whose tributaries radiate far and wide and high through a magnificent basin back into the recesses of a long curving sweep of snow-laden mountains. But though the waters of Roaring River from their fountains to the valley have an average descent

of nearly five hundred feet per mile, the fall they make in getting down into the valley is insignificant in height as compared with the similarly situated Bridal Veil of the old Yosemite. The height of the fall does not greatly exceed its width. There is one thundering plunge into a dark pool beneath a glorious mass of rainbow spray, then a boisterous rush with divided current down a boulder delta to the main river in the middle of the valley. But it is the series of wild cascades above the fall which most deserves attention. For miles back from the brow of the fall the strong, glad stream, five times as large as the Bridal Veil Creek, comes down a narrow cañon or gorge, speeding from form to form with most admirable exuberance of beauty and power, a multitude of small sweet voices blending with its thunder tones as if eager to assist in telling the glory of its fountains. On the east side of the fall the Cathedral Rocks spring aloft with imposing majesty. They are remarkably like this group of the same name in the Merced Yosemite and similarly situated though somewhat higher.

Next to Cathedral Rocks is the group called the Seven Gables, massive and solid at the base, but elaborately sculptured along the top and a considerable distance down the front into pointed gothic arches, the highest of which is about three thousand feet above the valley. Beyond the Gable Group, and separated slight from it lily the beautiful Avalanche Cañon and Cascades, stands the bold and majestic mass of the Grand Sentinel, 3300 feet high, with a split vertical front presented to the valley, as sheer, and nearly as extensive, as the front of the Yosemite Half Dome.

Projecting out into the valley from the base of this sheer front is the Lower Sentinel, 2400 feet high; and on either side, the West and East Sentinels, about the same height, forming altogether the boldest and most massively sculptured group in the valley. Then follow in close succession the Sentinel Cascade, a lace-like strip of water 2000 feet long; the South Tower, 2500 feet high; the Bear Cascade, longer and broader than that of the Sentinel; Cave Dome, 3200 feet high; the Sphinx, 4000 feet, and the Leaning Dome, 3500. The Sphinx, terminating in a curious sphinx-like figure, is the highest rock on the south wall, and one of the most remarkable in the Sierra; while the whole series from Cathedral Rocks to the Leaning Dome at the head of the valley is the highest, most elaborately sculptured, and the most beautiful series of rocks of the same extent that I have yet seen in any Yosemite in the range.

Turning our attention now to the north wall, near the foot of the valley a grand and impressive rock presents itself, which with others a like structure and style of architecture is called the Palisades. Measured from the immediate brink of the vertical portion of the front, it is about two thousand feet high, and is gashed from top to base by vertical planes, making



General view of King's River Cañon, from Grand Lookout.

it look like a mass of huge slabs set on edge. Its position here is relatively the same as that of El Capitan in Yosemite, but neither in bulk nor in sublime boldness of attitude can it be regarded as a rival of that great rock.

The next notable group that catches the eye in going up the valley is the Hermit Towers, and next to these the Three Hermits, forming together an exceedingly picturesque series of complicated structure, slightly separated by the steep and narrow Hermit Cañon. The Hermits stand out beyond the general line of the wall, and in form and position remind one of the Three Brothers of the Yosemite Valley.

East of the Hermits a stream about the size of Yosemite Creek enters the valley, forming the Booming Cascades. It draws its sources from the southern slopes of Mount Hutchings and Mount Kellogg, 11,000 and 12,000 feet high, on the divide between the middle and south forks of the King's River. In Avalanche Cañon, directly opposite the Booming Cascades, there is another brave bouncing chain of cascades, and these two sing and roar to each other across the valley in hearty accord. But though on both sides of the valley, and

up the head cañons, water is ever falling in glorious abundance and from immense heights, we look in vain for a stream shaken loose and free in the air to complete the glory of this grandest of yosemites. Nevertheless when we trace these cascading streams through their picturesque cañons, and behold the beauty they show forth as they go plunging in short round-browed falls from pool to pool, laving and plashing their sun-beaten foam-bells; gliding outspread in smooth shining plumes, or rich ruffled lace-work fold over fold; dashing down rough places in wild ragged aprons, dancing in upbulging bosses of spray, the sweet brave ouzel helping them to sing, and ferns, lilies, and tough-rooted bushes shading and brightening their gray rocky banks,—when we thus draw near and learn to know these cascade falls, which thus keep in touch with the rocks, and plants, and birds, then we admire them even more than those which leave their channels and fly down through the air.

Above the Booming Cascades, and opposite the Grand Sentinel, stands the North Dome 3450 feet high. [See p. 87.] It is set on a long bare granite ridge, with a vertical front like the Washington Column in Yosemite. Above the Dome the ridge still rises in a finely drawn curve, until it reaches its culminating pointing the pyramid, a lofty symmetrical rock nearly 6000 feet above the floor of the valley.

A short distance east of the Dome is Lion Rock, a very striking mass as seen from a favorable standpoint, but lower than the main rocks of the wall, being only about 2000 feet high. Beyond the Lion, and opposite the East Sentinel, a stream called Copper Creek comes chanting down into the valley. It takes its rise in a cluster of beautiful lakes that lie on top of the divide between the South and Middle Forks of King's River, to the east of Mount Kellogg. The broad, spacious basin it drains abounds in beautiful groves of spruce and silver fir, and small meadows and gardens, where the bear and deer love to feed, but it has been sadly trampled by flocks of sheep.

From Copper Creek to the head of the valley the precipitous portion of the north wall is comparatively low. The most notable features are the North Tower, a square, boldly sculptured outstanding mass two thousand feet in height, and the Dome arches, heavily glaciated, and offering telling sections of domes and folded structure. [See p 91.] At the head of the valley, in a position corresponding to that of the Half Dome in Yosemite, looms the great Glacier Monument, the broadest, loftiest, and most sublimely beautiful of all these wonderful rocks. It is upward of a mile in height, and has five ornamental summits, and an indescribable variety of sculptured forms projecting or countersunk on its majestic front, all balanced and combined into one symmetrical mountain mass. [See p. 89.]

THE VALLEY FLOOR.

The bottom of the valley is covered by heavy deposits of moraine material, mostly outspread in comparatively smooth and level beds, though four well-characterized terminal moraines may still be traced stretching across from wall to wall, dividing the valley into sections. These sections, however, are not apparent in general views. Compared with the old Yosemite this is a somewhat narrower valley, the meadows are smaller, and fewer acres if cultivated would yield good crops of fruit or grain. But on the other hand the tree-growth of the new valley is much finer, the sugar-pine in particular attains perfect development, and is a hundred times more abundant, growing on the rough taluses against the walls, as well as on the level flats, and occupying here the place that the Douglass spruce occupies in the old valley. Earthquake taluses, characteristic features of all yosemites, are here developed on a grand scale, and some of the boulders are the largest I have ever seen—more than a hundred feet long, and scarcely less in width and depth.

With the exception of a small meadow on the river bank, a mile or more of the lower ends of the valley is occupied by delightful groves and is called Deer Park. Between Deer Park and the Roaring Fall lies the Manzanita Orchard,



General View of the Cañon, looking east.

consisting of a remarkably even and extensive growth of manzanita bushes scarcely interrupted by other bushes or by trees. Beyond the Roaring Fall the soil-beds are rather rocky but smooth sheets occur here and there, the most notable of which is Blue Flat, covered with blue and fragrant lupines; while all the boulder-beds are forested with noble pines and firs.

The largest meadow in the valley lies at the foot of the Grand Sentinel. It is noted for its fine growth of sweet-brier rose, the foliage of which as well as the However is deliciously fragrant, especially in the morning when the sun warms the dew. At the foot of the South Tower, near the Bear Cascades, there is a notable garden of Mariposa tulips, and above this garden lies Bear Flat, extending to the head of the valley. It is a rather rough, bouldery space, but well planted, and commands glorious views of all the upper end of the valley.

On the north side of the valley the spaces that bear names are the Bee Pasture, Gilia Garden, and Purple Flat, all lavishly flowery, each with its own characteristic plants, though mostly they are the same as those of the south side of the river, variously developed and combined; while aloft on a thousand niches, benches, and recesses of the walls are charming rock-ferns, such as adiantum, pellaea,

cheilanthes, allosorus, etc., and brilliant rugs and fringes of the alpine phlox, Menzies pentstemon, bryanthus, Cassiope, alpine primula, and many other small floral mountaineers.

In passing through the valley the river makes an average descent of about fifty feet per mile. Down the cañon below the valley the descent is 125 feet per mile for the first five miles, and of course the river is here one continuous chain of rapids. And here too are several beautiful falls on streams entering the cañon on both sides, the most attractive of which is on Boulder Creek, below a fine grove.

TYNDALL CAÑON.

At the head of the valley in front of the monument the river divides into two main branches, the larger branch trending northward through Paradise Cañon, the other eastward through Tyndall Cañon, and both extend back with their wide-reaching tributaries into the High Sierra among the loftiest snow-mountains of the range, and display scenery along their entire courses harmoniously related to the grand gorge. Tracing the Tyndall Cañon we find that its stream enters the valley in a most beautiful and enthusiastic cascade, which comes sweeping around the base of the Monument, and down through a bower of maple, dogwood, and tall leaning evergreens, making a fall of nearly eight hundred feet. A few miles above the valley the declivity of the cañon is moderate, and nowhere does it expand into meadows of considerable width, or levels of any kind, with the exception of a few small lake-basins. But the walls are maintained in yosemitic style, and are striped with cascades and small sheer falls from 1000 to 2500 feet in height. In many places the cañon is choked with the boulders of earthquake avalanches, and these, being overgrown with tangled bushes, make tedious work for the mountaineer, though they greatly enhance the general wildness. Pursuing the upper south fork of the cañon past Mount Brewer, the scene becomes more and more severely rocky, and the source of the young river is found in small streams that rise in the spacious snow-fountains of Mount Tyndall and the neighboring peaks.

PARADISE CAÑON.

Returning now to the main valley and ascending the Paradise Cañon we find still grander scenery, at least for the first ten miles. Beneath the shadow of the Glacier Monument, situated like Mirror Lake beneath the Half Dome of Yosemite, is a charming meadow with magnificent trees about it, and huge avalanche taluses tangled with ceanothus and manzanita and wild cherry, a favorite pasture and hiding-place for bears; while the river with broad, stately current sweeps down through the solemn solitude. Pursuing our savage way through the stubborn underbrush, and over or beneath boulders as large as hills, we find the noble stream beating its way for five or six miles in one continuous chain of roaring, tossing, surging cascades and falls. The walls of the cañon on either hand rise to a height of from 3000 to 5000 feet in majestic forms, hardly inferior in any respect to those of the main valley. The most striking of these on the west wall is the Helmet, four thousand feet in height and on the east side, after the Monument, Paradise Peak. [See p. 68.] Of all the grand array only these have yet been named. About eight miles up the cañon we come to Paradise Valley, where the walls, still maintaining their lofty yosemitic characters, especially on the east side, stand back and make space for charming meadows and gravelly flats, while one grand fall not yet measured, and several smaller ones pouring over the walls, give voice and animation to the glorious mountain solitude.

A SUMMER SCENE.

How memorable are these Sierra experiences! Descending one day from the depths of the upper forest we rambled enchanted through the sugar-pine groves of Deer Park. Never did



Looking up the valley from the manzanita orchard.

pinus seem more noble and devout in all their gestures and tones. The sun, pouring down floods of mellow light, seemed to be thinking only of them, and the wind gave them voice; but the gestures of their outstretched arms seemed independent of the wind, and impressed us with solemn awe as if we were strangers in a new world. Near the Roaring Fall we came to a little circular meadow which was one of the most perfect gardens I ever saw. It was planted with lilies and orchids, larkspurs and columbines, daisies and asters, and sun-loving goldenrods, violets, brier-roses, and purple geranium, and a hundred others whose names no one would care to read, though everybody would surely love them at first sight. One of the lilies (*L. Columbianum*) was six feet high and had eleven open flowers, five of them in their prime. The wind sifting through the trees rocked this splendid panicle above the rosebushes and geraniums in exquisite poise. It was as if nature had fingered every leaf and petal that very day, readjusting every curving line and touching the colors of every corolla. Not a leaf, as far as I could see, was misbent, and every plant about it was so placed with reference to every other that the whole meadow-garden seemed to have been thoughtfully arranged like a tasteful bouquet. Bees and humming-birds made a pleasant stir, and

the little speckle-breasted song-sparrow sang in the bushes near by, working dainty lines of embroidery on the deep, bossy tones of the fall, while the great rocks looked down as if they, too, were considering the lilies and listening to the music of their bells. That memorable day died in purple and gold, and just as the last traces of the sunset faded in the west and the star-lilies filled the sky, the full moon looked down over the rim of the valley, and the great rocks, catching the silvery glow, came forth out of the dusky shadows like very spirits.

FROM YOSEMITE TO KING'S RIVER ALONG THE SIERRA.

One of my visits to the great cañon was undertaken from the old Yosemite along the Sierra, and I was so fortunate as to get into the valley when it was arrayed in the gay colors of autumn. I was eager also to see as much as possible of the High Sierra at the head of it, and of the wild mountain region between the two great yosemites. Had I gone afoot and alone as usual, I should have had a glorious time, with nothing to do but climb and enjoy. But I took a party, and mules, and horses, which caused much trail-making and miserable carnal care. We followed the old trail to Wawona and the Mariposa sequoias, then plunged into the trackless wilderness. We traced the Chiquita Joaquin to its head, then crossed the cañon of the North Fork of the San Joaquin below the yosemite of this branch, and made our way southward across the Middle and South Forks of the San Joaquin, to a point on the divide between the South Fork of the San Joaquin and the North Fork of King's River, 10,000 feet above the sea. Here I left the weary party and the battered animals in camp to rest, while I made a three days' excursion to Mount Humphrey, on the summit of the range, from the top of which, at an elevation of about 14,000 feet, I obtained, to the southward, grand general views of the thick crowd of peaks gathered about the headwaters of the three forks of King's River, and northward over those of the San Joaquin. Returning to camp after my fine ramble, rich in glaciers, glacier-lakes, glacier-meadows, etc., I climbed the divide above the camp with the other mountaineer of our party to gain another view of the King's River country with reference to our farther advance. The view was truly glorious—peaks, domes, huge ridges, and a maze of cañons in bewildering combinations—but terribly forbidding as to way-making. My companion gazed over the stupendous landscape in silence, then sighed and said he must go home, and accordingly he left us next morning. I had still two companions and four animals to make a way for. Pushing on with difficulty over the divide, we entered the upper valley of the North Fork of King's River, and traced its course through many smooth glacier-meadows, and past many a beautiful cluster of granite domes, developed and burnished by the ancient glaciers. Below this dome region the cañon closed, and we were compelled to grope our way along its forest-clad brink until we discovered a promising side-cañon, which led us down into the North Fork yosemite, past a massive projecting rock like El Capitan. This valley is only about two thousand feet in depth, and of no great extent, but exceedingly picturesque and wild. The level floor was planted with beautiful groves of live oak, pine, libocedrus, etc., and a profusion of Yosemite flowers, of which the large tiger-lily (*L. pardalinum*) is the most showy. The river enters the valley in a chain of short falls and cascades through a narrow gorge at the head, where there is a mirror lake with beautiful shores.

After resting and sketching awhile we at length made a way out of this little yosemite by a rude trail that we built up a gorge of the south wall, and on to the crest of the divide between the North and Middle Forks of the river. Here we gained telling views of the region about the head of the Middle Fork of King's River,—vast mountains along the axis of the range, seemingly unapproachable, a broad map



View from talus at foot of North Dome, looking up the valley.

of domes and huge ridge-waves and cañons extending from the summits far to the west of us in glorious harmony. Tracing the divide through magnificent forests we at length forded the main King's River, passed through the sequoia groves, and entered the great Yosemite on the 9th of October, after a light storm had freshened the colors. With the exception of a few late-blooming goldenrods, gentians, and erigerons, the plants had gone to seed; but the ripened leaves, frost-nipped, wrinkled and ready to fall, made gorgeous clouds of color, which burned in the mellow sunshine like the bloom of a richer summer. The Kellogg oak, willows, aspen, balm-of-Gilead, and the large-leafed maple were yellow; the mountain maple and dogwood red, and the meadow ferns and general mass of the small plants purple and brown. The river gently gliding amid so much colored foliage was surpassingly beautiful, every reach a picture; while the hazy Indian Summer light streaming over the walls softened the harsh angles of the rocks, and greatly enhanced their solemn grandeur and impressiveness. Rambling through the valley we found the squirrels busy gathering their winter stores of pine-nuts. All the nests in the groves were empty, and the young birds were as big as the old ones, and ready to fly to warmer climates. The deer were coming down from the upper thickets on their way to the chaparral of the foot-hills, while the bears were eating acorns and getting themselves fat enough to "hole up." everything seemed to know that before long the storm trumpets would sound, announcing the end of summer and the beginning of winter.

At the Sentinel Meadow we found a mountaineer who had come across the range by the Kearsarge Pass to catch trout for the purpose of stocking a number of small streams that pour down the east flank of the range into Owens Valley. He said the settlers there had raised five

hundred dollars for this purpose. By turning the courses of the smaller streams of the valley he caught large numbers in the shallows and put them into tin cans to be transported on mules. He had already carried a train-load over the pass, and said that by frequently changing the water at the many streams and lakes on the way, nearly all the trout were kept alive to the end of their long and novel excursion.

Leaving the lively mountaineer with his mules and fishes, we pushed on up the Tyndall cañon by the Kearsarge trail to the first tributary that enters from the north. Here I again left the party in camp to climb Mount Tyndall. Returning in two days, I found that they had gone up the trail, taking everything With them, So that, weary as I was, without food or blankets, I was compelled to go on in pursuit. I overtook them in the pass at sundown, and when I asked why they had left me, they said they feared I would never return and that they too would be lost. They had simply lost their wits as soon as they were left alone. At the foot of the pass I again left the party, directing them to follow the trail to Fort Independence, and wait there in civilized safety while I turned southward along the base of the range to climb Mount Whitney.

From Independence we skirted the eastern flank of the range northward to Mono, passing many a flood of lava and cluster of volcanic cones, and gaining long, sweeping views of the High Sierra from the sage plains. From Mono I still held on northward through Faith, Hope, and Charity Valleys to Tahoe, walked around that queen of Sierra lakes, returned to Mono, climbed Bloody Cañon, went down through the delightful Tuolumne Meadows, down through the junipers of Clouds' Rest, down through the firs, and into Yosemite again, thus completing one of the wildest and most interesting trips conceivable.

DESTRUCTIVE TENDENCIES.

At first sight it would seem that the mighty granite temples could be injured b little by anything that man may do. But it surprising to find how much our impression in such cases depend upon the delicate bloom of the scenery, which in all the more accessible places is so easily rubbed off. I saw the King's River valley in its midsummer glory Sixteen years ago, when it was wild, and when the divine balanced beauty of the trees and flowers seemed to be reflected and doubled by a the onlooking rocks and streams as though the were mirrors, while they in turn were mirrored in every garden and grove. In that year (1875) I saw the following ominous notice on a tree in the King's River yosemite:

We, the undersigned, claim this valley for the purpose of raising stock.

Mr. Thomas,
Mr. Richards,
Harvey & Co.

and I feared that the vegetation would soon perish. This spring (1891) I made my fourth visit to the valley, to see what damage had been done, and to inspect the forests. Besides I had not yet seen the valley in flood, and this was a good flood year, for the weather was cool, and the snow on the mountains had been held back ready to be launched. I left San Francisco on the 28th of May, accompanied by Mr. Robinson, the artist. At the new King's River Mills we found that the sequoia giants, as well as the pines and firs, were being ruthlessly



Glacier Monument.

turned into lumber. Sixteen years ago I saw five mills on or near the sequoia belt, all of which were cutting more or less of "big-tree" lumber. Now, as I am told, the number of mills along the belt in the basins of the King's, Kaweah, and Tule rivers is doubled, and the capacity more than doubled. As if fearing restriction of some kind, particular attention is being devoted to the destruction of the sequoia groves owned by the mill companies, with the view to get them made into lumber and money before steps can be taken to save them. Trees which compared with mature specimens are mere saplings are being cut down, as well as the giants, up to at least twelve to fifteen feet in diameter. Scaffolds are built around the great brown shafts above the swell of the base, and several men armed with long saws and axes gnaw and wedge them down with damnable industry. The logs found to be too large are blasted to manageable dimensions with powder. It seems incredible that Government should have abandoned so much of the forest cover of the mountains to destruction. As well sell the rain-clouds, and the snow, and the rivers, to be cut up and carried away if that were possible. Surely it is high time that something be done to stop the extension of the present barbarous, indiscriminating method of harvesting the lumber crop.

At the mills we had found Mr. J. Fox, bear-killer and guide, who owns a pack train, and keeps a small store of provisions in the valley for the convenience of visitors. This sturdy mountaineer we engaged to manage our packs, and under his guidance after a very rough trip we reached our destination late at night.

Arrived in the valley, we found that the small grove (now under Government protection) has been sadly hacked and scarred by campers and sheep-owners, and it will be long before it re-covers anything like the beauty of its wildness.

Several flocks of sheep are driven across the river at the foot of the valley every spring to pasture in the basins of Kellogg and Copper creeks. On the south side of the valley, in the basin of Roaring River, more than 20,000 sheep are pastured, but none have ever been allowed to range in the valley.

GAME AND SPORT.

After breakfast two anglers with whom we had fallen in on the way set forth to a big jam of flood timber on the south side of the river, and amid its shady swirls and ripples bagged the glittering beauties as fast as sham flies could be switched to them, a hundred trout of a morning being considered no uncommon catch under favorable conditions of water and sky. This surely is the most romantic fishing-ground in the world. Nearly all the visitors to the valley are hunters or anglers, they number about four hundred a year, and nearly all come from Owens Valley on the eastern slope of the Sierra, or from the Visalia Plains. By means of ropes and log footbridges we got across the three streams of Roaring River, and, passing through the fragrant lupine garden of Blue Flat, which Fox calls the Garden of Eden, we made our permanent camp in a small log cabin on to edge of the meadow at the foot of the Grand Sentinel.

The fauna of the valley is diverse and interesting. The first morning after our arrival saw the black-headed grosbeak, the Louisiana tanager, and Bullock's oriole, whose bills must still have been stained by the cherries of the lowland orchards. I also noticed many species of woodpeckers, including the large log-cock (*Hylotomus pileatus*) and innumerable finches and fly-catchers. The mountain quail and grouse also dwell in the valley, as well as in all the silver-fir woods on the surrounding heights. The large California gray squirrel, as well as the Douglass, is seldom out of sight as one saunters through the groves, and in the cabin we were favored with the company of wood-rats. These amusing animals made free with our provisions, bathed in our water-bucket, and ran across our faces in the night.

Besides our party there were two other pet sons in the valley, who had arrived a few days before us: a young student whose ambition was to kill a bear, and his uncle, a tough, well-seasoned mountaineer who had roamed over the greater part of the western wilderness. The boy did kill a bear a few days after our arrival, not so big and ferocious a specimen as he could have wished, but formidable enough for a boy to fight single-handed. It was jet-black, sleek, and becomingly shaggy; with teeth, claws, and muscles admirably fitted for the rocky wilderness. After selecting certain steaks, roasts, and boiling-pieces, the remainder of the lean meat was cut into ribbons and strung about the camp to dry, while the precious oil was put into cans and bottles. Bread at that camp was now made of flour and bear oil, instead of flour and water, and bear muffins, bear flapjacks, and bear shortbread were the order of the day.

The black bear is seldom found to the north of King's River. Of the other two species,—the cinnamon and grizzly,—the former is more common. But all the species are being rapidly reduced in numbers. From city hunters bears have little to fear, but many fall before the rifles of the mountaineer and prospector. Shepherds poison, and even shoot, many in the aggregate every year. Pity that animals so good-natured and so much a part of these shaggy wilds should be exterminated. If all the King's River bears



*North Tower, from Talus Slope
at foot of Glacier Monument.*



Paradise Peak, looking east from

great and small were gathered into this favorite yosemite home of theirs, they would still make a brave show, but they would probably number fewer than five hundred.

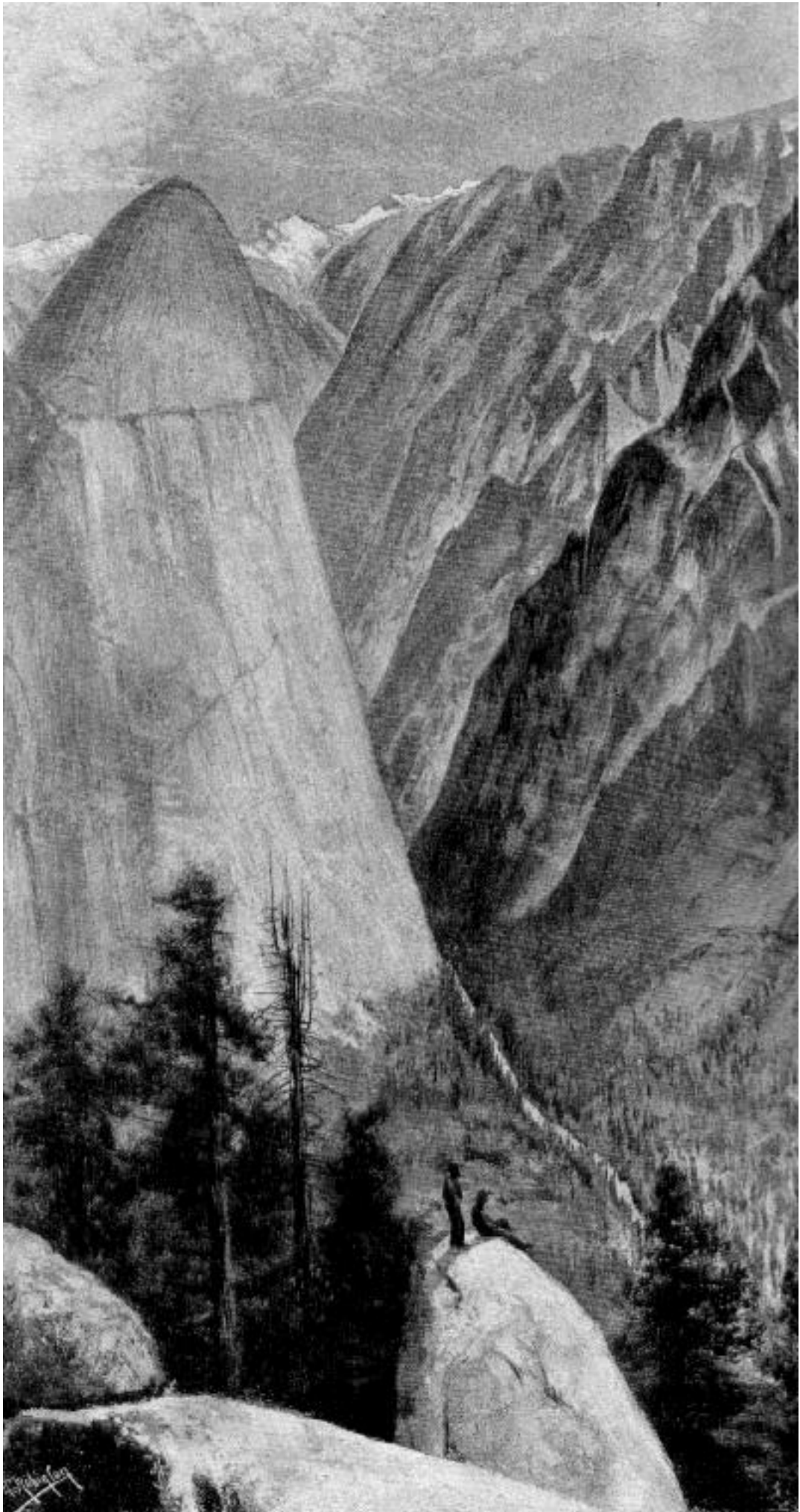
EXCURSIONS FROM THE VALLEY.

The side and head cañons of the valley offer gloriously rugged and interesting back into the High Sierra. The shorter excursions to points about the rim of the valley, such as Mt. Kellogg, Mt. Brewer, the North Dome, the Helmet, Avalanche Peak, and the Grand Sentinel, may be made in one day. Bear-trails will be found in all the cañons leading up to these points, and may be safely followed, and throughout them all and on them all glorious views will be obtained.

The excursion to Avalanche Peak by way of Avalanche Cañon and the Grand Sentinel is one of the most telling of the short trips about the valley, and one that every visitor should make, however limited as to time. From the top of the Sentinel the bottom of the valley with all its groves and meadows and nearly all of the walls on both sides, is seen, while Avalanche Peak commands a view of nearly all the magnificent basin of Roaring River, and of the region tributary to the valley on the north and east. A good bear-trail guides you through the cherry brush and boulders along the cascades. A thousand feet above the valley you come to the beautiful Diamond Fall, 200 feet high and 40 feet wide. About a thousand feet higher a small stream comes in from the east, where you turn to the left and scale the side of the cañon to the top of the Grand Sentinel. After gazing up and down into the tremendous scenery displayed here, you follow the Sentinel ridge around the head of the beautiful forested basin, into which the cañon expands, to the summit of the peak. In spring the Avalanche basin and cañon are filled with compact avalanche snow, which lies long after the other cañons are clear. In June last I slid comfortably on the surface of this snow from the peak down nearly to the foot of the Diamond Fall, a distance of about two miles. Of course this can only be done when the surface is in a melting condition or is covered with fresh snow. In April one might slide from the summit to the bottom of the valley, making a fall of a mile in one swift swish above the rocks, logs, and brush that roughen the way in summer.

MTS. TYNDALL, KEARSARGE, AND WHITNEY.

The excursion to Mt. Tyndall from the valley and return requires about three days. You trace the east branch of the river from the head of the valley until it forks, then trace the South Fork past the east side of Mt. Brewer until it divides into small streams, then push up eastward as best you can to the summit. The way is rather rough, but the views obtained of the loftiest and broadest portion of the High Sierra are the most comprehensive and awe-inspiring that I know of. It is here that the great western spur on Greenhorn Range strikes off from the main axis to the southwest and south, bearing a noble array of snowy mountains, and forming the divide between the Upper Kern on the east and the Kaweah and Tule rivers on the west, while the main chain forms the eastern boundary of the basin of the Kern. Northward the streams fall into King's River, eastward into Owens Valley and the dead salt Owens Lake, lying in the glare of the desert 9000 feet below you. To the north and south far as the eye can reach you behold a vast crowded wilderness of peaks, only a few of which are named as yet. Mt. Kearsarge to the northward, a broad round-shouldered mountain on the main axis at the head of the pass of that name; Mt. Brewer, noted for the beauty of its fluted slopes; Mt. King, an exceedingly sharp and slender peak a few miles to the eastward of the Glacier monument, and Mt. Gardiner, a companion of King. Within two miles of where you stand rises the jagged mass of Mt. Williamson, a little higher than Tyndall, or 14,300 feet, and seven miles to the south rises Mt. Whitney, 14,700 feet high, the culminating point of the range, and easily recognized by its helmet-shaped peak facing eastward. Though Mt. Whitney is a few hundred feet higher than Tyndall, the views obtained from its summit are not more interesting. Still, because it is the highest of all every climber will long to stand on its topmost crag. Some eighteen years ago I spent a November night on the top of Whitney. The first winter snow had fallen and the cold was intense. Therefore I had to keep in motion to avoid freezing. But the view of the stars and of the dawn on the desert was abundant compensation for all that. This was a hard trip, but in summer no extraordinary danger need be encountered. Almost any one able to cross a cobblestoned street in a crowd may climb Mt. Whitney. I climbed it once in the night, lighted only by the stars. From the summit of Mt. Tyndall you may descend into Kern Valley and make direct for Mt. Whitney, thus including both of these lordly mountains in one excursion, but only mountaineers should attempt to go this gait. A much easier way is to cross the range of the Kearsarge Pass, which, though perhaps the highest traveled pass on the continent, being upward of 12,000 feet above the sea, is not at all dangerous. The trail from the valley



*Tehipitee Dome, upper end
of Tehipitee Valley
(Middle Fork of King's River).*

leads up to it along extensive meadows and past many small lakes over a broad plateau, and the views from there are glorious. But on the east side the descent to the base of the range is made in one tremendous swoop through a narrow cañon. Escaping from the shadowy jaws of the cañon you turn southward to Lone Pine. Then by taking the Hackett trail up Cottonwood Cañon you pass over into Kern Valley approach the mountain from the west, where the slopes are easy, and up which you may ride a mule to a height of 12,000 feet, leaving only a short pull to the summit. But for climbers there is a cañon which comes down from the north shoulder of the Whitney peak. Well-seasoned limbs will enjoy the climb of 9000 feet required by this direct route. But soft, succulent people should go the mule way.

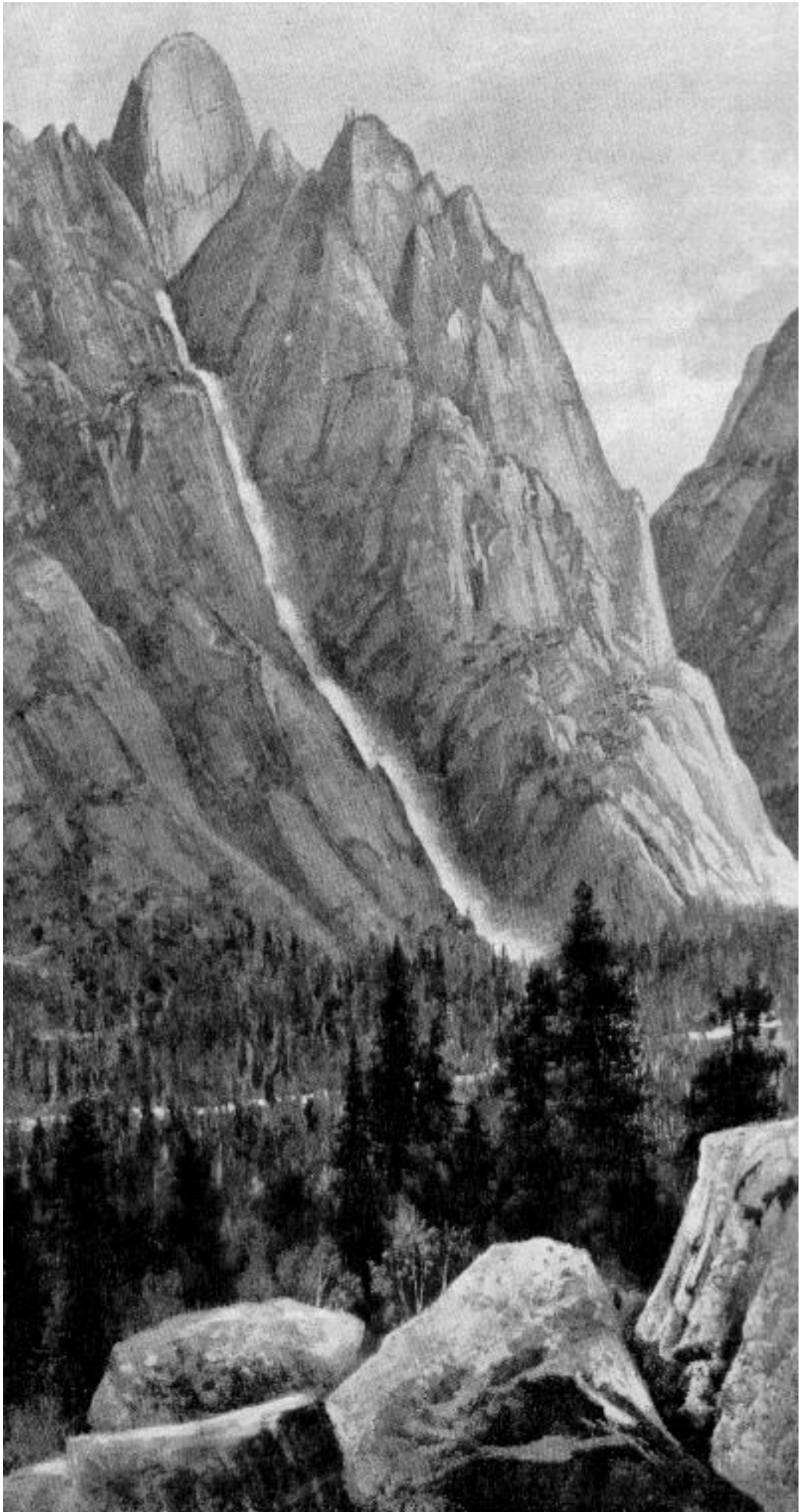
THE TEHIPITEE VALLEY.

The King's River Cañon is also a good starting point for an excursion into the beautiful and interesting Tehipitee Valley, which is the Yosemite of the Middle Fork of King's River. By ascending the valley of Copper Creek, and crossing the divide, you will find Middle Fork tributary that conducts by an easy grade down into the head of the grand Middle Fork Cañon, through which you may in time of low water, crossing the river from time to time, where sheer headlands are brushed by the current, leaving no space for a passage. After a long rough scramble you will be delighted when you emerge from the narrow bounds of the great cañon into the spacious and enchantingly beautiful Tehipitee. It is about three miles long, half a mile wide, and the walls are from 2500 to nearly 4000 feet in height. The floor of the valley is remarkably level, and the river flows with a gentle and stately current. Nearly half of the floor is meadow-land, the rest sandy flat planted with the same kind of trees and flowers as the same kind of soil bears in the great cañon, forming groves and gardens, the whole inclosed by majestic granite walls which in height, and beauty, and variety of architecture are not surpassed in any Yosemite of the range. Several small cascades coming from a great height sing and shine among the intricate architecture of the south wall, one of which when seen in front seems to be a clearly continuous fall about two thousand feet high. [See p. 96.] But the grand fall of the valley is on the north side, made by a stream about the size of Yosemite Creek. This is the Tehipitee Fall, about 1800 feet high. The upper portion is broken up into short falls and Magnificent cascade dashes, but the last plunge made over a sheer precipice about four hundred feet in height into a beautiful pool.

To the eastward of the Tehipitee Fall stands Tehipitee Dome, 2500 feet high, a gigantic round-topped tower, slender as compared with its height, and sublimely simple and massive in structure. It is not set upon, but against, the general masonry of the wall, standing well forward, and rising free from the open sunny floor of the valley, attached to the general mass of the wall rocks only at the back. This is one of the most striking and wonderful rocks in the Sierra. [See p. 94.]

I first saw this valley in 1875 when I was exploring the sequoia belt, and again two years later when I succeeded in tracing the Middle Fork cañon all the way down from its head. I pushed up the cañon of the South Fork in November when the streams were low, through the great cañon, and crossed the divide by way of Copper Creek. The weather was threatening, and at midnight while I lay under a tree on the summit I was awakened by the terribly significant touch of snow on my face. I arose immediately, and while the storm-wind made wild music I pushed on over the divide in the dark, feeling the way with my feet. At day-break I found myself on the brink of the main Middle Fork Cañon, and in an hour or two gained the bottom of it, and pushed down along the river-bank below the edge of the storm-cloud. After crossing and recrossing the river again and again, and breaking a way through chaparral and boulders, with here and there an open spot gloriously painted with the colors of autumn, I at length reached Tehipitee. I was safe; for all the ground was now familiar. The storm was behind me. The sun was shining clear, shedding floods of gold over the tinted meadows, and fern-flats, and groves. The valley was purely wild. Not a trace, however faint, could I see of man or any of his animals, but of nature's animals many. I had been out of provisions for two days, and at least one more hunger-day was before me, but still I lingered sketching and gazing enchanted. As I sauntered up to the foot of Tehipitee Fall a fat buck with wide branching antlers bounded past me from the edge of the pool within a stone's-throw, and in the middle of the valley he was joined by three others, making fine romantic Pictures as they crossed the sunny meadow.

A mile below the fall I met a grizzly bear eating acorns under one of the large Kellogg oaks. He either heard my crunching steps on the gravel or caught scent of me, for a few minutes after I saw him he stopped eating and came slowly lumbering toward me, stopping every few yards to listen. I was a little afraid, and stole slowly off to one side, and crouched back of a large libocedrus tree. He came on within a dozen yards of me, and I had a good



*Part of South wall of
Tehipitee Valley.*

quiet look into his eyes—the first grizzly I had ever seen at home. Turning his head he chanced to catch sight of me; after a long studious stare, he good-naturedly turned away and wallowed off into the chaparral. So perfectly wild and romantic was Tehipitee in those days. Whether it remains unchanged I cannot tell, for I have not seen it since.

THE NEED OF ANOTHER GREAT NATIONAL PARK.

I fancy the time is not distant when this wonderful region will be opened to the world—when a road will be built up the South Fork of King's River through the sequoia groves, into the great cañon, and thence across the divide and down the Middle Fork Cañon to Tehipitee; thence through the valley and down the cañon to the confluence of the Middle and South Forks, and up to the sequoia groves to the point of beginning. Some of the sequoia groves were last year included in the national reservations of Sequoia and General Grant Parks. But all of this wonderful King's River region, together with the Kaweah and Tule sequoias, should be comprehended in one grand national park. This region contains no mines of consequence, it is too high and too rocky for agriculture, and even the lumber industry need suffer no unreasonable restriction. Let our law-givers then make haste before it is too late to set apart this surpassingly glorious region for the recreation and well-being of humanity, and all the world will rise up and call them blessed.

John Muir.

[The illustrations of this article were drawn by Charles D. Robinson from nature or from sketches from nature made by himself or, in three instances, by Mr. Muir.—*Editor.*]

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