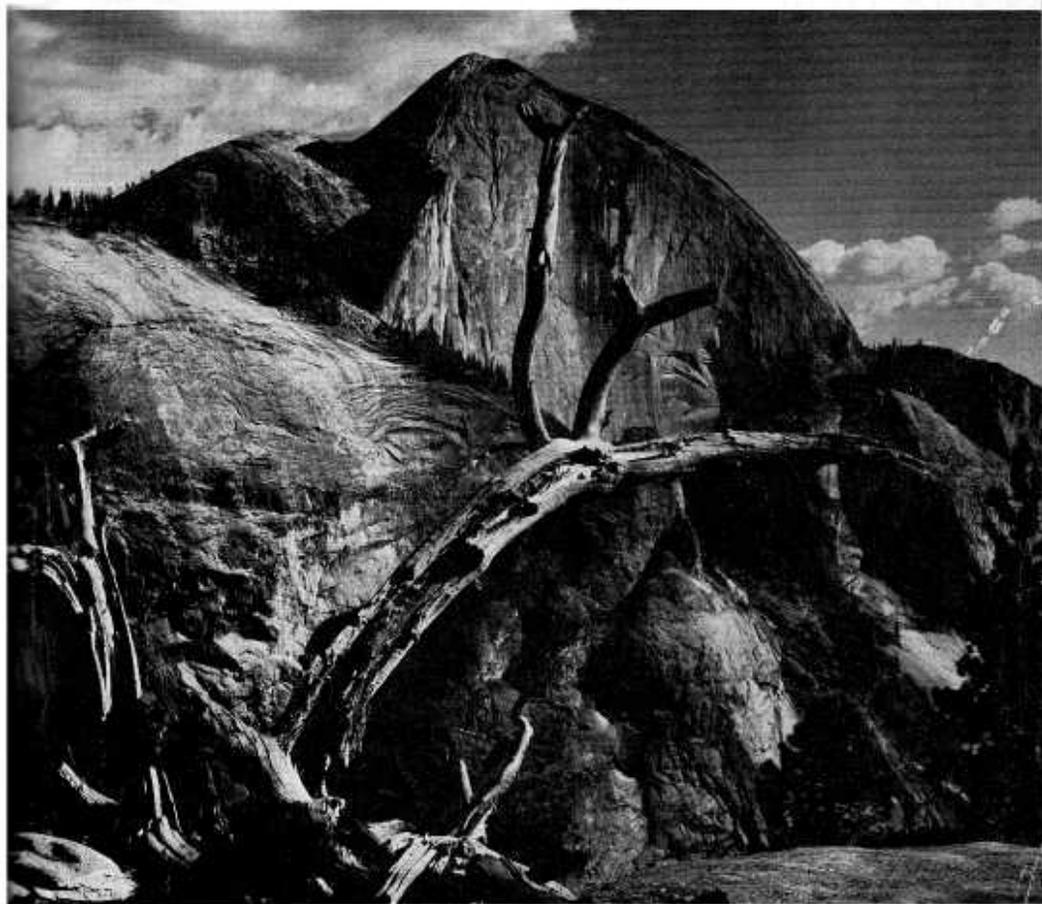


# YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

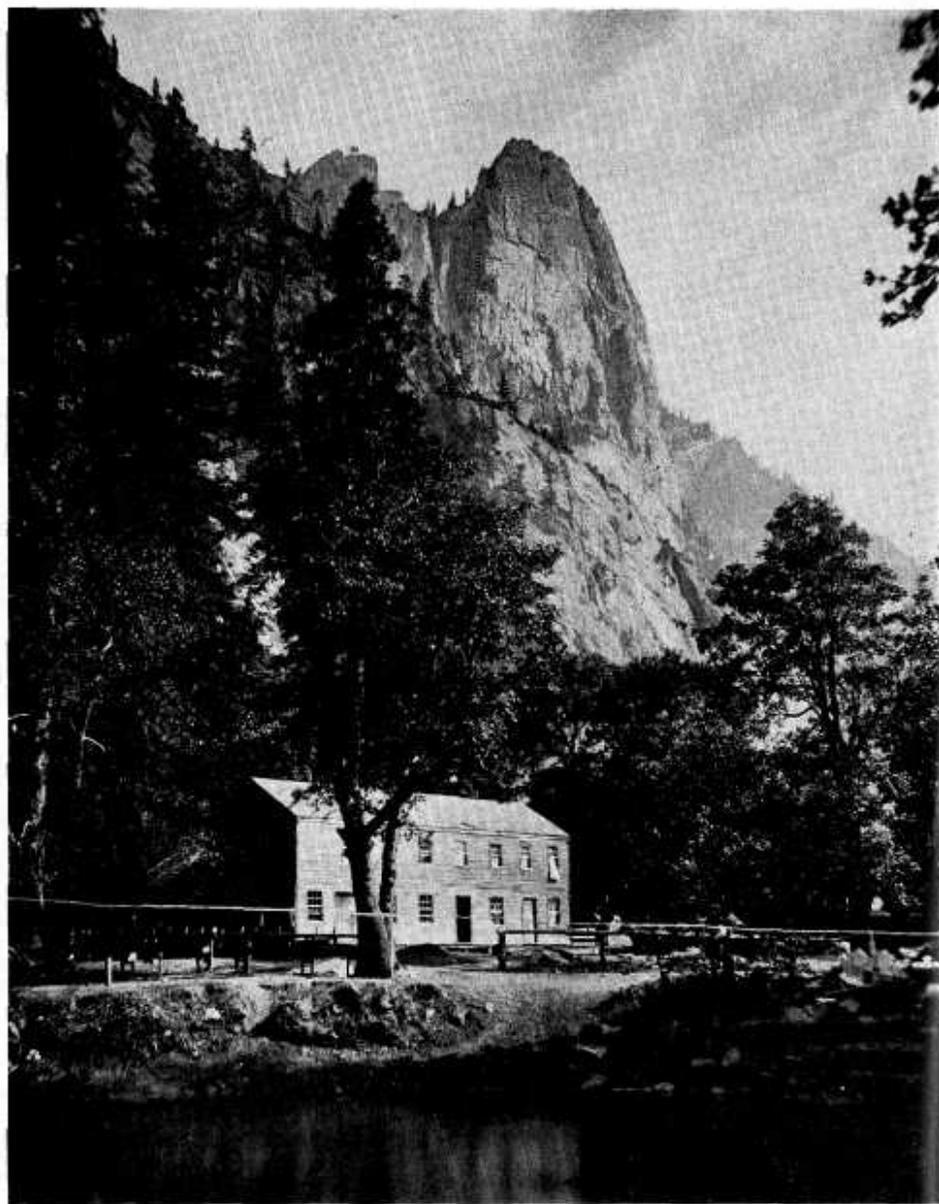
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*Half Dome from top of Snow Creek Trail zigzags  
—Ansel Adams*



Hutchings House (formerly the Upper Hotel) as it appeared at the time of Olive Logan's 1870 visit to "Yo Semite."

*Pillsbury*

# Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF

THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DIVISION AND

THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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## DOES IT PAY TO VISIT YO SEMITE?

By Olive Logan

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the third of three parts of the article that was begun in our March issue. It is a reprint of a remarkable narrative published 84 years ago in the magazine *Galaxy* for October 1870. The title's puzzling sentiment is readily understood by readers of Parts I and II, wherein the New York authoress tells of the perilous rigors that a trip to Yosemite involved in that early day before any roads extended into the valley. Having made her long, punishing journey from San Francisco over primitive roads and trails, first in stagecoaches and then on horseback, she hails her arrival at the valley's brink near Gentry with: "At length we reach the precipice which is to conduct us into the Valley."

### Conclusion

(I have requested the printer to leave a blank space here. I think it will be more eloquent than words.)

Also here, to represent the dreary period of suffering which elapsed after we began the steep descent of the precipice, and until we reached the goal of our hopes—Hutchings's Hotel.

We do get there at last — all things have an end. But the night has fallen again; we should have reached Hutchings's at noon, but

were not able. At any rate, here we are. Our sufferings are at an end now. And to-morrow shall burst upon our enchanted eyes the glorious sight whose beauty is to atone for all. Meantime we are too paralyzed to stir; Hutchings lifts us off our horses—inert masses of what were once tolerably strong-minded and particularly strong-bodied women. Hutchings pours wine down our throats. He tells us we are doing well, as most ladies faint. Mrs. Hutchings rubs us with whiskey; this feels good except in places where the skin is gone; then it makes us moan. We have not strength enough left to squirm.\*

\*It must not be supposed that the women alone suffered. The men were almost as bad. Mr. Greeley visited YoSemite eleven years ago, when he was at the zenith of his physical strength; but read in what a condition he was, as told by Hutchings himself in his palavering "Guide":

The mule he rode was considered the hardest trotting brute in America; and Mr. G. (not the mule) being somewhat corpulent, there was but little unabraded cuticle left him. Arriving at the hotel after midnight, he was lifted from his saddle, and at his own request put supperless to bed. A little after noon the same day, having speaking engagements to fill, he started back without even seeing the lake, or the great sights on the main river."

The dawn breaks in the morning of the next day, and, shining red as fire through the pine knots of the log-cabin where Hutchings dwells, strikes our leaden eyelids and bids us arise. Reluctantly we do so. This is the end of our wanderings. Here is the great prize to obtain a view of which we have come so many weary miles. Now we are to be repaid for all. We make a hurried toilet, and as quickly as our stiffened limbs will permit, we drag out to see the view which "shall awe us, shall make us lose our identity, shall cause us to feel as though we were in the spirit land."<sup>\*</sup>

And what do we see? Tall rocks, a few tall trees, a high and narrow waterfall, a pretty little river! No more. A lovely natural scene, I grant you; but oh! where in this broad and beautiful land of ours are not lovely natural scenes the rule? Words cannot tell the feeling of cold despair which came over me and all our party as we looked about us. Was it for this we had so suffered! O Englishman, Englishman, how painfully correct was your report! In truth and very truth, it does not pay.

We never rallied from that first impression.

"But that stone wall is nearly a mile high."

It may be so, but it does not look it; and if it did, the stars are higher, and, thank God, the stars shine at home!

"That waterfall is eleven times higher than Niagara."

Indeed! it looks like a fireman's hose playing over the top of Stewart's store.

And then we learn to our dismay, that to see anything more than this in the Valley we have got to mount those unhappy brutes again, and,

with Ferguson tagging at our heels at an exorbitant price daily, make trips as dangerous and as perilous, as rocky and as unpleasant in every way as that which with so much difficulty we have just now accomplished! In the house there is neither amusement nor comfort. We are dirty, sick, sore, and miserable, and at night, as we creep heartsick to bed, we can think of nothing but—the Yo Semite Fall, the Bridal Veil, El Capitan, the Cathedral Rocks? No! Of the weary distance which lies between us and civilization.

But we try to make the best of it, once there. "Let's say it *does* pay," says the jolly Tapley of our party. "Yes, let's sit on the banks of this lovely river." We do so. A companionable but not welcome water-snake does so also, and we leave him in possession. Try again. There is an Indian camp beside Hutchings's. It looks romantic from this point. Let us get nearer. A vile stench greets us. These filthy wretches found a dead horse yesterday, and are now eating some of its carcass. There is one of the poor brute's legs with mud-begrimed hoof still hanging to it. Its entrails and other parts are strung out in the sun to dry for future eating; the black blood drips to the ground as a dog gnaws them greedily, until driven off by an Indian woman who is unwilling to share such a luxury. It will not do to approach these people too closely; they are covered with vermin. Their copper skins are black as soot in spots; this is caked dirt, pure and simple. They are clad in the discarded tatters of civilization; and how tattered the discarded garment of the Sierra Nevada mountaineer is, no one can know who has not seen. The consequence is that

<sup>\*</sup>These phrases are quoted from divers authorities; any one who has read about the Yo Semite will recognize these old acquaintances.



An early-day saddle party in Yosemite Valley.

the sight of these people so near a pleasure resort is an offense to decency. Indian men loll under the trees playing cards for silver coin. They glare at us as we approach. It is easy to see that these people (although Ferguson assured us they were "tame") would have no humanitarian scruples about waging a war of extermination against the whites if they had but the power.

While the men play cards and loaf under the shade of trees, the women sit in the broiling sun and grind acorns, beating them between heavy stones into the finest powder. These acorns ground to meal furnish the only food these poor creatures can rely on during the winter; and to gather them and dispute their possession with the hogs is the work of the Indian women. That is, it is one part of their work, for that all work is done by Indian women is an old story. Manhood *oblige!*

By another day some of us are well enough to mount again and begin our search after Beauty. We find an occasional rattlesnake, unlimited fatigue, and the tombstone

of a man who was kicked to death by his horse. The trips are very wearying, the scenery very grand, very beautiful, but we are in no condition to enjoy it. We never get in such condition, and the universal verdict with us is that if every one of the waterfalls in Yo Semite were magnified, every one of its granite domes were an Olympus, if its rivers were the Rhine, and its valley the fairy gardens of Versailles, the sight of it would not repay one for the suffering involved in getting to it. And the plain truth is that nine out of ten who visit Yo Semite think this, but they will not say what they think. Some people, it is true, never have an opinion of their own, but parrot-like repeat the refrain which has been set them to sing. So with the Yo Semite. "I felt awed!—the spirit land—losing your own identity."

O travelled monkey! Dare to tell the truth, why do you not? Because you are afraid some other travelled monkey will say you "can't appreciate" the scenery which it makes your head ache to look at, and your bones ache to get at. Because you

are a coward, or because you know you have made an idiot of yourself and flung away your money by handfuls, and endured the tortures of purgatory; and you are ashamed to confess yourself so easily taken in and done for—man of the world that you are. But I am only a woman, and I confess all.

At the end of three days, home-sick, and above all physically sick, we conclude to go home. Hutchings is deeply chagrined at this. As he helps us mount he says with an injured air, "Oh, that's the way! people come here and then they go right away again. *They never stay long enough!*" And this truth, told by the person whose interest it is to say the reverse, is the very best testimony that people in general who go there are unhappy, and dissatisfied, and disappointed. If it were not so, *they would stay*. But nobody stays longer than he feels he must, in deference to the certain opinions that have influenced him to come here. Artists stay; but they work hard to hasten their day of deliverance. One I met there made one complete sketch in colors for every day he stayed. I hope he will get a good price for his work when he gets back to Boston.

I can truly say that I never in my life saw a more miserable set of people than the poor candle-moth tourists who were gathered this summer in the Yo Semite Valley. The bride from Chicago was stretched in her rough bed alarmingly ill, and no physician nearer than civilization, which seemed so far that we surely must all die before we got back to it. Her husband, who had gone to see Mirror Lake, fell off his horse in a swoon, and lay there for six hours till help came. He was got home with difficulty. The only people who really seemed to enjoy them-

selves were the clergymen, who gather there in force every summer. These blessed men lead such sedentary lives, such hard treadmill lives for the most part, that they do revel in the open air, the grand views, the freedom of the Yo Semite trip. Then, too, they love nature more than we of the work-day world, I think; and therefore all the more eloquent was the confession of a Methodist minister who was one in our returning party in the stage, and who told me that he had made the long trip across the Desert of Sahara, riding six hundred miles on camel-back. He was enthusiastic about the loveliness of the Valley; "but," said he, as we crawled in to breakfast at Knight's Ferry, having been thundered up and started off at two in the morning to oblige the stage-driver, who wanted to get ahead of a rival, "*I forgot all about Yo Semite while I was in that stage!*"

He was apparently a noble and lovely man, and he greatly mitigated the sorrows of our journey by his pleasant words and gentle ways.

There was one lady in the returning stage who scorned the insinuation that the game at Yo Semite was not worth the cost of the candle in bruised limbs, abraded skins, and perhaps more serious ailments. She was from New York, and was a tall and scrawny demoiselle of uncertain age, who varied the monotony of the trip by spouting Shakespeare out of one window and singing "I'm Bound to be a Butcher" out of the other. She was the travelled monkey of her admiring friends in the East. She was going to have her photograph taken in her Bloomer costume and her eye-glasses, and send it home to be worshipped. She scoffed at scoffers. Why, such heretic sentiments as these would detract from the value of her glowing report!

How could she gloat over her meek stay-at-home friends, saying, "I have been awed — thou hast not been awed; I have lost my identity—you have not lost your identity," if reports derogatory to the value of such experience were to be put into circulation in this ruthless manner?

To California women who think nothing of jumping astride an unbroken horse and riding him bareback, the trip to Yo Semite presents few hardships. I refer to women who live in the mountain towns, for California city women are, like most city women, dainty and delicate. Very few of these visit Yo Semite, believe me. For desk-tied students, for pale, cough-racked clergymen, for artists who want to paint pretty pictures which will be sure to find sale, the trip to Yo Semite will be a joy forever; but for women—or even for ordinary men—to run a race for pleasure by mounting a hard-trotting mule and trotting over cloud-topped mountains to this Valley, is to declare themselves, as Bret Harte expresses it, very low down indeed in the depths of imbecility.

The bride from Chicago, I have since been informed, was removed from the Valley with much difficulty, and was obliged to be placed immediately in the hands of a surgeon, who is able to relieve her ailings with the appliances of science; but she will never be *cured* so long as she breathes the breath of this life. Her case is the same as that of many others. Some are not permanently injured, but I have heard of no one who got off quite scot-free. "You'll feel it for a month" cried a San Francisco gentleman to a party of Yo Semite tourists who stood on the deck of the steamer bound for Stockton. But they were people from St. Louis, and felt the awful warning

conveyed in these ponderous words from Hutchings's "Guide":

"Few would go to California and have the *courage* on their return to say they had not been to Yo Semite."

Unwilling to be placed under the ban along with reprehensible Few, they persist in making the trip, and go through the customary suffering in consequence.

The journey across the Plains is one that every traveller should take. The scenery, as viewed from the observation car, is grand, and costs nothing in the way of bruises, sprains, or torn flesh. The prairie dogs, the antelope, the different tribes of Indians who swoop upon every train, and invariably beg for "two bits" (neither more nor less); the first view of Chinese in tremendous number, the Mormon territory, the soldiers' camps, the sage deserts, the towns built of canvas—all these are the freshest of novelties. Then at the end there is San Francisco—most curious and interesting of towns—with its cold summer breezes which compelled me to buy and to *wear* a seal-skin, fur-lined jacket in July! Also there is Sacramento, capital of the State, and the superior of San Francisco in beauty of its private residences. There are numerous other towns with names of mellifluous beauty — Vallejo, San Jose, Oakland, Los Angeles. Go to all these; spend your money freely in California, for they need it, times being hard, and it is better, more fraternal, to give your money to California than to Europe; go to any of the mountain towns where the railroad stops (the railroad, from end to end, is in splendid condition); but *don't* go to the Geysers, *don't* go to Lake Tahoe, *don't* go to Yo Semite—in short, never ride of your own free-will in a California stage.

## AN INDIAN MEDICINE MAN'S GRAVE LOCATED

By Louis R. Caywood, Regional Archeologist,  
Pacific Coast Region, National Park Service

In late autumn about the year 1875 a small group of Indians from the area near Mono Lake had crossed the Sierra to gather acorns in the Yosemite region. When they had finished they started to return to the east side by coming through Yosemite Valley, but were forced to winter in the valley because of a heavy snowfall. Among this group of mixed Yosemite-Paiute people was an old man named Kosano, or the Torchbearer. He was a small Indian, probably not more than 5 feet tall, and was a medicine man of considerable reputation. More than 80 years old and not too well, he succumbed after the strenuous trip into the valley through the snow. His followers set up camp near the site of the present Yosemite Museum building, where they built their *u-ma-cha* with canvas and long slabs of incense-cedar bark.

This was the year that the Wawona Road had been completed into the valley. The Indians were helped in their period of distress by some of the white men, who made a fine coffin for the deceased Kosano. With the coffin placed so that his head was directed toward Yosemite Falls, he was buried just south of the large rock that is seen near the southeast corner of the museum.

The years passed and this incident was almost forgotten. Kosano had a daughter who had reached the age of about 20 at the time of his death. This was Ta-bu-ce (Maggie Howard), who in later years was to become so well known and beloved for her demonstrations of local In-

dian culture in the Yosemite Museum wildflower garden during the summers prior to her death in January 1947, in Bishop, California. One day Ta-bu-ce told her niece—now Mrs. Alice Wilson, living in Yosemite Valley—that she wanted to show where her father was buried. They came to the rock and Ta-bu-ce pointed out to Alice the place which she remembered was Kosano's grave.

More years passed, and developments and changes were planned for this area. At the present time construction of a new information station and restrooms for park visitors is proposed for the site just east of the museum. Before any such installations are made over old Indian campgrounds, it is highly desirable to test the locations for possible salvage of archeological materials



Ta-bu-ce and her acorn-storing *chuck-ab*.  
Harwell

and information on the former inhabitants. In checking the various projected road and building developments in Yosemite Valley, it was thus decided that some testing should be done in this area adjacent to the museum. It was then that Mrs. Alice Wilson told Park Naturalist Donald McHenry, Mrs. Virginia Adams, and myself that her great-uncle was buried here.

On April 19, with two laborers, trial excavations in the entire area were begun, and especially near the large rock. Sure enough, by April 21, beads and human bones were discovered and the grave was located. The wood of Kosano's coffin was found to have rotted away except for a few fragments. All that was left were the old cut coffin nails to which bits of wood were clinging because of the preserving effect of the iron oxide. The skeleton had been badly disturbed by burrowing rodents. Beads and bones were scattered all through the dirt.

Digging deeper we found an old rusty lock with an eagle design impressed on the brass keyhole cover. A pair of scissors and two thimbles were recovered, and four large abalone pendants and a number of smaller ones along with two nearly complete seashells.

The beads which were everywhere were the old glass trade beads so common in early fur-trading days. There were seven different kinds of them and a single bone bead. The glass beads probably originated in Europe and China. It is known that beads from Venice and Canton were used by the traders.

One of the brass thimbles was filled with a blue paint and the other stuffed with the skin and feathers of a bird. Several large pieces of red ochre—from mines in Nevada, according to Mrs. Wilson—were also



McClure

Archeologist Louis Caywood examining grave of Kosano.

found in the grave, as well as two charm stones and numerous obsidian chips.

The most significant find was an 1870 half dollar minted at San Francisco. This was located just to the right of the head. Mrs. Wilson states that the custom in those days was to put a gold or silver coin over each eye of the deceased. Unfortunately the other coin had been moved by rodents. Since the burial was not completely excavated, the coin probably is still in or near the grave.

Both Alice Wilson and her sister Lucy Telles decided it might be better to leave the remains of Kosano in place instead of moving them to the nearby Yosemite Cemetery, since these Indian ladies were assured by Superintendent John Preston that the construction work would not touch the grave. When the new information station is built it is proposed that a plaque be placed on the structure to let the visitor know that the area was formerly an Indian burial ground, and that the remains of Kosano, a Mono Indian medicine man, lie beneath this place.

## A SELDOM-OBSERVED FEEDING HABIT OF THE PILEATED WOODPECKER

By Allen W. Waldo, Ranger Naturalist

During my residence in Camp 19 last summer I observed, as usual, a western pileated woodpecker (*Ceophloeus pileatus picinus*). Whenever these largest of our woodpeckers appear, the camp more or less moves out in a body to see them. This time I happened to be alone. I watched while the bird deliberately banged on a tree or pried off great chunks of bark. This is normal procedure, since they are primarily insect eaters and search for their food in such manner.

Continuing to observe the bird, I was surprised to find that its diet was much more varied than I had suspected. A feeling that possibly many other persons who admire the pileated woodpecker may also know as little about this variability has prompted me to record the observation.

As I watched, the woodpecker suddenly flew out of the tree and up the talus slope behind Camp 19. There I noted that it attempted to alight upon a blue elderberry bush. It made several trials, since the long slender branches bent so far under the weight of the large bird. Finally, however, it succeeded in landing.

From my distant position I saw a great thrashing around in the bush and decided to get a closer view. By keeping a series of large talus boulders between me and the bird I was able to approach, unseen, to within about 15 feet of it. I found that the woodpecker had grasped the end of a branch just at the base of a large clump of ripe elderberries. In

doing so it had caused the branch to bend way over in a great arc, so that the head of berries was now upside down. There, also, hung the bird, completely overturned. It was reaching its long neck out and around the edge of the berry clump and was picking them off, one by one, as rapidly as it could. It had nearly finished the whole large cluster when its feet suddenly slipped loose from the stem. This dropped the bird onto the ground, back down, amid a great flapping of wings. Fortunately, since the tall branch was bent almost to the ground, it caused the woodpecker no damage, though it also accounted for the bird's lighting on its back before it could turn over and start to fly. Apparently this incident made the woodpecker think better of the whole idea, because it immediately took off and flew away, forsaking the many other large heads of ripe berries on the bush.

Upon examination of the literature I find that other writers have recorded the fact that pileated woodpeckers eat plant food. Most of this information has come from analysis of stomach contents and not from observation of birds actually feeding. I find also that Charles Michael, a former resident of Yosemite and a great student of bird life, in 1928 recorded seeing a pileated woodpecker in a somewhat similar bout with the red berries of the Pacific dogwood.\* These berries are also located at the tips of small and supple branches.

\*Charles W. Michael. "The Pileated Woodpecker Feeds on Berries," *The Condor* 30 (2):157 March-April 1928. Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, Calif.

## AN IMPRESSION OF YOSEMITE

By Henryk Sienkiewicz

(Great Polish writer and Nobel Prize winner, author of "Quo Vadis," 1846-1916)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Recently the Yosemite Museum staff had the unusual pleasure of receiving a letter from Dr. Richard C. Lewanski, of the Polish Department of the U. S. Army Language School in Monterey, Calif. Enclosed was a brief excerpt from the work of a renowned Polish writer, appearing both in his native language and in English translation by Dr. Lewanski, to whom we are grateful for permission to print the translated statement below. Dr. Lewanski explains:

I received recently from Poland *Listy z Ameryki* ("Letters from America") by the famous Polish novelist and author of "Quo Vadis," Henryk Sienkiewicz. I reread it with special interest, as the second volume deals almost entirely with California. Sienkiewicz spent several months in California, and in Mariposa he wrote his short story *Wspomnienia z Maripozy* ("Remembrances from Mariposa"). Between 1870 and 1880 he used to live in Billings' Hotel there. The purpose of this letter is to share with you a few lines pertaining to Yosemite. I attach them to this letter in Polish original and in English translation.

"Yosemite is an artistic dream of God, where the radiant tresses of the waterfalls are interwoven with the ribbons of the rainbow, where the mirrors of the lakes capture all the

blue of the sky, where the trees rise to 400 feet and the earth is submerged by a flood of blooms; and divided by a wall of rock start the sterile and waterless plains."





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Dan Anderson