A Trip Through the California Sierras

In September 1904

Previously Unpublished Historical Essay

By George Bucknam Dorr

FOREWORD

by Ray DeLea

There are very few published accounts of pack trips in the Sierra Nevada in the early years of the Twentieth Century. In fact, I am only personally aware of a couple. The first is the 1903 Sierra Club trip into Sequoia National Park. Henry Brown's book Mineral King Country gives a good account of the 1903 Sierra Club High Trip from Mineral King via Farewell Gap to the Kern River, Mt. Whitney and return to the Giant Forest by way of Kaweah Gap to Giant Forest.

The next detailed published account doesn't occur until the 1916 Sierra Club High Trip from Camp Nelson, in Sequoia National Park, to the Kern River, Mt. Whitney, Center Basin, Rae Lake and Onion Valley via Kearsarge Pass. This trip was detailed by Jessie McGilvray Treat and published in one of the Sierra Club's *Bulletins*.

It is no wonder then that it was a treasure to discover George Dorr's 1904 unpublished account of his pack trips to the summit of Mt. Whitney, Mineral King country, and his trans-Sierra trip from Onion Valley (Kearsarge Pass), Kings River, Marvin Pass, JO Pass and Giant Forest. George's description of his High Sierra adventures with a seemingly inexperienced packer was an adventure to be sure. He and his packer's ordeals with mountain mule wrecks, snow, loosing the trail and wandering in circles are humorous but are a reflection on the real ordeals faced by people packing in the Sierra Nevada in those early years. I'm sure that George, being an "easterner," was probably overwhelmed by not only the grandeur of the Sierra Nevada mountains but by the challenges presented to him by his packer. As a Sierra Nevada packer myself for six summers with Mt. Whitney Pack Trains, I can relate to George's mountain trials as well as to those of the packer. George's stories will not only thrill you but give you pause as to the struggles those early packers and guests must have endured to experience John Muir's Range of Light.

NOTE 1: This previously unpublished copyrighted account is held in manuscript form at the Bar Harbor Historical Society. For a full account of the life of Maine land conservationist and horticulturist George B. Dorr, consult Creating Acadia National Park (Bar Harbor: Friends of Acadia, 2016).

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NOTE 2: The graphical content and Foreword were not part of the original manuscript but were added by Ray DeLea to improve the impact of the manuscript.

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Part I - Mt. Whitney Trip

I had a very interesting trip out west, from first to last, for I had never been in any part of California before and even the things that disappointed me interested me as well. I went straight out to San Francisco stayed there for three or four days, seeing some of the Berkeley College men to who I had letters and then down to Monterey, to see its cypresses. From there I went on down the coast to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. At Los Angeles I ran down for a day and night to Santa Catalina Island and then I went straight up through the San Joaquin Valley to Visalia in the Kaweah River country whence I went up by stage to Giant Forest in the national Sequoia Park where I outfitted for my mountain trip.

I took a packer, a Maine man originally and of my own name, and some mules and we went out together for a three weeks' trip across the high Sierras to Owens Valley on their eastern side, going out through the Kern River country and returning by Kearsarge Pass and King's River, then back to Giant Forest where I started from.

Some of the men I met at Berkeley College, who had been out on geological and botanical expeditions through that region laid this route out for me as the most interesting I could follow and it certainly opened up magnificent scenery and showed me the Sierra forests in a most interesting way. But the distances were great, the trail steep and difficult, the cañons we had to cross profound, and the weather was stormy, in spite of John Muir who writes of

Winter on the summit of Mt. Whitney

delightful Indian summer weather lasting on until November in the mountains there. The first storm broke while my packer and I were climbing Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the States, and when we reached the top we were in the fiercest storm of wind and bitter, cutting sleet and snow I ever ran up against. We had slept the night before, as we usually did throughout the trip, without a tent although I had carried one of light oil-silk along and when we got back to camp our camping outfit, spread out over the ground, was already buried two or three inches deep in snow. We got the tent up for shelter, with some difficulty, and then my packer, exhausted by the cold and climb gave out, the middle of the afternoon, rolled himself up shivering in his blankets and under mine which I piled up over him until night, and slept until I called him in the morning.

We were than camped on the edge or a high Alpine meadow, eleven thousand feet above the sea. It snowed all that day. The next day it snowed again but we got off in the morning and rode all day through the storm, fearing to get snowed in upon the heights and having no feed for our stock who depend on grazing in the mountain meadows. Toward dusk we lost our way, my packer never having been over the trail which we were following before, and we camped at sundown on the edge of another meadow only a thousand feet or so lower than the one which we had left. By that time it had stopped snowing and we spread out our blankets and provisions and cooked our supper only to have it begin to snow again while we ate it. We put up the tent again and made ourselves fairly comfortable under it although it snowed all through the night. In the morning it cleared but it was bitterly cold and all the wood about had soaked up so much moisture from the snow that we found it impossible to start a fire. Toward noon, however, the sun came out and then the scene was beautiful beyond words, the mountains all about us covered with fresh fallen snow which covered too the meadow down below us and loaded down the pines and firs what shut it in.

The next morning we started out again, found our trail and followed it up over a high pass that led from the western to the eastern watershed. The snow lay three and four feet deep over the summit of the pass, obliterating the trail. The last few hundred feet of climb on either side went steeply up and down a granite slide, the rocks big and loosely piled together and the whole bedded deep in snow. It was very difficult getting up it with our loaded mules but when it came to getting them down on the other side it seemed to me almost impossible without some accident. However, I went

first, feeling the way as best I could among the rocks and leading my unloaded saddle horse, a sure-footed beast, behind me. Then when I had explored the way my packer drove the loaded animals down along it and somehow they got through all right – no eastern horses could have done it.

Then it was plain sailing until we reached the edge of Owens Valley where we came out on one of the most magnificent scenes that I have ever looked on. Owens Valley skirts the base of the high Sierras from Nevada southward on the eastern side. Owens River runs down from the eastern slope of the Sierras further north, to Owens Lake which lies across the valley like the Dead Sea across the Valley or the Jordan, a great salt pool with smooth salt plains that were its bottom once stretching out from it to north and south.

The trail that I was following led me suddenly out above the valley opposite this lake which lay six thousand feet below me, its nearer surface pale gray-green, its farther surface lost in the dark shadow and the swirling mists of a thunder squall which lay over it, black and awful, its cloud-mass rent by flashes of lightning, the whole far down below the point on which we stood. Further up, the valley lay in sunshine, a desert bounded on its eastern side by desert mountains with here and there a splash of green upon its floor where irrigation turned it into garden. A little later we, too, ware swallowed up in a fierce hail storm and than descended rapidly to the valley and rode for hours across it until long after dark, to reach a village that had seemed quite near when we stood and looked at from up above.

We slept that night at the foot of a great stack of hay, alfalfa hay, not nearly so good to sleep on as eastern Timothy, by the way, and ate ripe grapes from off their vines and thawed out in the sunshine. Then we rode up the valley twenty mills to another ranch above and the next day started up Kearsarge Pass to return back west.

Part II - Mineral King Pack Trip

I started out for my mountain trip from Visalia, one of the small agricultural cities in the broad San Joaquin valley; I went by stage, my way lying at first across the flat plain of the valley floor through yellow stubble fields and past immense orchards of plum trees whose fruit was being gathered up and dried for prunes; then I came into the foothills region with its great orchards of apples, oranges and lemons and its brown hill slopes; and early in the afternoon I reached the ranch of a man named Redstone on the Kaweah river where I was to spend the night.

Main Street Visalia, CA - circa 1906

My only fellow passenger on the stage was a young electrician from Ohio who had been superintending the construction of a

power plant in the high Sierra which was to supply the valley region opposite with light and power. He had been out there all summer, and his wife, an Ohio girl – they were only marred in the spring – had been there with him and was waiting for him then with horse and buggy at a station on the stage route. But stopping at another station an hour or two before we got there, they told him he was wanted at the telephone and in a few moments he came back and said that they had rung him up from San Francisco to order him to take the next stage back and the night train on to there. He had been away a fortnight and up travelling nearly the whole night before and had counted on getting at least a day or two of rest and with his wife. But he was only able to drive on with me until he reached the station where she was to meet him and then turn back for another five hours' ride across the dusty plain and a night upon the cars. His wife was waiting when he got there and her delight at getting him back and dismay a moment afterward when he told her he had got to leave her again in half an hour – she was all alone there with him so far as friends went – was quite pathetic.

Early the next morning I left the Redstone ranch and drove up all day into the mountains over a road which climbed six thousand feet and which brought me to a park established by the government in one of its forest reservations for the preservation of a splendid growth of giant sequoias. There in the midst of a forest of these trees, mingled with pines and firs, a rough summer camp had been established by two ranchers from below, Broder and Hopper by name, who also outfitted people for trips through the mountains beyond.

We passed no house upon the way after our first couple of hours upon the road and ate our lunch by a spring at the roadside, taking the same horses through with us all day. It was fairly late in the afternoon when we reached the coniferous forest, these conifers not growing in that region lower than five thousand feet or so above the sea, and then in the course of another hour or two, after passing two or three camps of negro soldiers stationed there to guard the park and save it from fire, we reached the camp where I was going. It had one wooden cabin which served as dining room and kitchen, and a number of tents to sleep in. In the evening there was a campfire which lighted up in a wonderful way the great trunks of the sequoias and the tall, branchless shafts of the firs amongst which they were growing.

The great sequoias have but a narrow range of altitude, growing in fairly level belts along the western slope of the Sierras at a height of six or seven thousand feet above the sea, where the first heavy rain-clouds form. Nor do they follow the deeper valleys eastward into the mountain range but stay scattered here and there along its western headlands.

Up and down the length of the Sierras they range, in widely separated groups, for two hundred and fifty to three hundred miles. The forest I was in, the largest of these groups, lay toward the center of this range; it was about eight miles in length, terminating at either end with singular abruptness though the pines and firs which grew a1ong with the sequoias in it continued on uninterruptedly

Doubtless the lower limit of the sequoia's growth is set by rain,

its growth beginning at the lowest point at which it can obtain from the up-driven ocean air rain and dew sufficient for its needs, and a leaf evaporation checked at night by falling temperature; while its upward limit, lying close upon the downward one, is similarly set by its avoidance of the mountain cold of the region to which it has been driven by its need of moisture but which is perhaps less natural to it than a lower one. Probably too the narrow, island-like areas in which it grows amongst the general forest are not as accidental as they seem but have an unseen cause in warmth and moisture-bearing currents of the atmosphere or cold ones from the mountain peaks to north and east. The largest and the finest trees were apt I found to grow in dells or hollows on the mountain slopes where there was greater moisture in the soil.

The only other still existing species of sequoia, the Redwood of commerce, grows in similar fashion in northern California along a narrow belt between the Coast Range mountains and the sea where the rainfall is the heaviest in the state and where its rainless summers are compensated by dense continual fogs. The redwood has developed a vigorous power of sprouting from the root when the trunk has been destroyed by axe or fire and this seems to have weakened, through long absence of selection, the vitality of its seed but the giant sequoia in the Sierras seemed to seed itself, so far as I could see, freely wherever it could get a moist and open seed bed. Once I saw a small and grassy meadow bordered by some old sequoias where a dense growth of young ones, bunched together where the seeds had fallen, was growing up in the most vigorous way, its trees ranging from young seedlings up to others of fifty feet or more in height still clothed to the ground with their dense foliage. So probably

Giant Sequoia Tree

the reason why one does not see more young trees growing in the present groves is mainly due to the dry climate of today in California, making the forest floor even where the old sequoias grow too dry to serve them well as nursery beds; and partly too to the way in which the sequoia forest is invaded by other trees which grow from a drier seed bed or in deeper shade than the sequoia can. But there can be no question but that if moist and open seed beds were prepared for it and sown with the collected seed – a small expense – a new sequoia forest would spring up far greater in extent than the existing one, along its general range. And the tree is so beautiful in its youth and grows so rapidly that this would be well worth the doing, especially as the region where it might be done is one of immense future importance to California in relief from the summer's heat and drought in the great plains below.

The foliage of the sequoia is dense when the tree is young, clothing it to the ground and giving it a cone-like and aspiring form. This form it keeps, with thinner foliage, as an older tree until the growing distance between its leading shoots and the roots from which the sap is pumped to them begins to limit their supply, when the lateral branches, better nourished, broaden out and give the tree in age a round-topped character, some of these branches growing then to a great size. While this is going on the lower branches gradually die away, leaving the great shaft of the trunk bare for a hundred feet or more. The foliage is tassel-like in character, the tassel upward turned and cone-like the tree itself in shape, the leaves, a warm and yellow green in color, growing stiffly forward from the branchlet stem which is itself as green as they, and having the size and somewhat of the rounded form of bits of twine. The roots are fibrous, not extending far away hut filling the ground around the tree with an inverted cup-shaped mass, while the trunk swells out near the ground to a diameter that is sometimes half again as great as what it has fifteen or twenty feet above, buttressing the shaft, which stands erect through the Sierra gales rather by its own solidity and basal breadth than by a grip upon the ground like that of oaks or pines. The largest tree I saw was two hundred and seventy-five feet high and somewhat over thirty feet across upon the ground, its age supposed to be not less than five thousand years and possibly considerably more, judging by the counted rings on others that have been felled or cut into. The rings in all of the outer portion of the older trees are extraordinarily close together, showing how slow the growth to that great size has been. I could hardly have counted some that I looked at myself without a microscope.

One's first impression of the older trees is that of giant shafts with gnarled, irregular branches and tufts of foliage at their top. The leaves and branches seem but an accessory to the shaft rather than it a column built up for their support. The uppermost branches too heighten this effect in which one feels at first a lack of grace, standing out broken, bare and dead against the sky in nearly all the older trees, which have been either struck by lightning in the course of their long centuries of life or broken by some winter gale when laden with ice and snow. But the color of the warm green foliage high up against the sky and the warm red color or the deeply furrowed bark below are singularly beautiful and the massive dignity of the shaft itself united to the sense one has of its great age and permanence is most impressive, the impression growing on one rather than lessening as one lingers in its presence. The bark is very thick, fifteen or eighteen inches often in the older trees, and it is said to be very resistant to fire, protecting the tree, together with the tree's own height, and saving it when all the other forest trees about are swept away.

The most striking tree which grows with the sequoias, companion to it in its forests but ranging besides the whole length of the Sierra in its lower forest belt, is the sugar Pine, Pinus Lambertiana, the largest of all pine trees in the world. I saw many trees in the course of my trip that were from seven to eight feet through, a yard above the ground, and a few that were still larger. The tree grows also to great height; trees of two hundred and fifty feet and upward being often cut by the lumbermen, they told me. Its foliage is like the foliage of our white pine, which its wood resembles also, it being far the most valuable commercially of all the trees that grow on the Pacific slope. It is much more open in its habit, however, than our white pine, not

making such dense masses of foliage but thrusting out long limbs that are bare and branchless near the tree, droop at a distance from it, and then rise again as they divide and clothe themselves with foliage in their outer part. And these long limbs, reaching out distinct and separate above the general forest and waving with wide sweeps in every wind, combine with the tree's great height and straight, majestic trunk to give it its distinctive character and the forest where it grows one of its most striking features. The bark is finely ribbed and firm even on the oldest trees and warm brown in color, the trunk being branchless usually to a great height and never, so far as I had opportunity to see, remaining clothed to the ground as it comes to be an older tree, as our white pine does when growing in the open.

The forest is an open one throughout the whole Sierra region. Deciduous trees there are none but bush-like willows, poplars and alder trees of no great size along the hanks of streams, and in the lower valley-bottoms only, oaks and large-leaved maples. But bushes of the sort one finds in semi-arid regions, low, still and spreading, grow over the open slopes and in broad patches here and there among the pines where sunlight falls. But there are other slopes whole mountain sides sometimes – open or dotted only with occasional pines, that but for them seem absolutely bare of plant or shrub, steep slopes of rock and sand.

There are few herbaceous plants beneath the forest trees and almost none that grow upon the open slopes – except where water flows; the soil granitic sands and gravels – is too barren and the rainfall in the summer time too slight for that. And though there are many

open meadows in among the higher mountains, left by glaciers, they are apt to be too wet for any but marsh plants to grow in them. The real Sierra gardens lie along the banks of streams alone, or here and there in patches upon slopes kept moist by water soaking down from springs above, or else on ledges, narrow shelters along the faces of the cliffs, onto which water comes dripping down in early summer from melting snow above. When I was there it was too late for any but a few belated flowers – gentians in the meadows here and there; brilliant penstemons glowing along the well-drained sides of some steep water course, with an occasional belated columbine or other mountain flower among the rocks; but it was evident that in spite of countless little mountain gardens brilliant in the early summer yet the region as a whole is barren in herbaceous life though what it has is brilliant in its flowering time and grows abundantly where it can grow at all, in tiny oases along great barren [mountain slopes].

Mineral King

Animal life I hardly saw on all my trip, save deer in the Government Park from which I started. The footprints of wild cats wee fairly common on the snow or running along the sandy trails, and there were occasional tracks of hares and foxes. But almost the only animals I actually saw, the deer apart, were squirrels which were wonderfully abundant and active everywhere, gathering up the forest cones and storing them for winter. Birds were also rare, though woodpeckers were fairly common. I never saw an eagle on my trip and rarely hawk, but owls I often heard at night, hooting in the forest.

The men to whose camp I had come at Giant Forest had no packer there to send out with me nor a full supply of mules and horses but they sent me over with the camp cook – a lank, red-bearded man – to another place, two days' ride away across the mountains, where they had some men and animals at work packing cement up for a reservoir / dam that an electric power company was building. This was a place called Mineral King, a rough camp of a few scattered shanties and a store, occupied in summer only – a place to which miners and prospectors came to get supplies or hunters as a starting point from which to go up through the higher mountains and the wild region to the eastward. It lay at the head of one of the valleys that penetrated these mountains from the west. A rough stage road ran up the valley to it, and from it several trails led up across the mountains.

My own camp outfit included a light tent; a couple of old comforters – comfits as they call them there – cotton wadded; a sleeping bag which I had made myself in San Francisco out of an

army blanket and a swan's down quilt; a camera outfit which I found it difficult to make use of upon a trip so rough and hasty; a few books about the trees and mountains; and a change of boots and clothing. It could be loaded easily enough upon a single mule so far as weight went but the care we had to take to shelter my cameras and their belongings from the rough mule hitches necessary to keep the loads from shifting made the load a difficult one to pack.

The rest of our outfit consisted of our food supplies, cooking utensils, my packer's bed – a pile of cotton-wadded comfits – and a small canvas bag in which he kept his clothes. This might easily have been made a fairly light load for another mule but my outfitter, to whom I left the detail of supplies, made it heavy with canned foods, preserves and other needless things. We were well started on our way to Mineral King however before I found this out. Our way lay up through the belt of sugar pines and giant sequoias, then along a barren ridge of rock and steeply down a vast slope of dust-like sand with desert vegetation growing sparsely through it, then across the river at its bottom – three-thousand feet or so below the upland meadow where we had stopped at noon to feed our stock and lunch – and up a similar steep slope, not quite so high, upon its other side. My horse, a small one at beat, I found in no condition to carry me up or down these slopes without distress, so I got off and walked, leading him, while my long-legged guide, the cook – a guide by courtesy, for I found he knew the trail no better than I did myself – rode ahead contentedly on a lean gray horse of tougher make than mine which he was mounted on. The last ascent, coming toward the end of a long day. and that the first one out, was very fatiguing. I led my horse, moreover, and he instead of being grateful to me for

walking had a most exasperating trick of stopping every little while, pulling me back when the climb was steepest.

Looking north towards Timber Gap from Farewell Gap

At length we got up to the top of the steeper slope, however, and passed in solemn twilight into a gently sloping glade shadowed by giant firs. Some larger wild animal – we could not distinguish what – bounded across it as we rode in. As we went on the darkness deepened quickly and by the time we reached the further end of the glade and rode on out of it through a low, dense wood to the crest of the ridge we had been climbing, our mules and horses only saw the trail.

Then descending again, after a little we came suddenly out of the wood and found ourselves at the head of a grassy opening fringed with tall, dark firs which led far and steeply down into a valley filled with pale blue light and misty distances by the moon just rising over

the mountains opposite. It was too dark to go further – we had only come so far because we had passed no grazing ground before since early in the afternoon – and we were ourselves too tired. We stopped and listened. There was a low gurgle of water near us in the grass, and we unpacked our mules and camped just where we were.

It was my first night out. I lay down against one of the roots of a great fir tree – a tree which I measured in the morning and found to be eighteen feet around. It overhung the sloping meadow at its very head, just above the little spring, so that I could hear its water gently fall as I lay in bed. Other firs rose up on either side the meadow, which were scarcely smaller than the one beneath which I was sleeping and which seemed in the dimness of the night to rise to immeasurable heights against the sky, undefined. And down beyond lay the great depth of the moonlit, misty valley and the pale blue, moonlit and partly shadowed mountains on its farther aide. It was a wonderful camping ground, full of poetry.

The next morning I waked with the dawn, the whole aspect of nature changed. A few rosy clouds were floating over the mountains to the eastward, the landscape was full of daytime color. I roused my companion who gathered in our grazing stock. We made a hasty breakfast and started down the trail. An hour below we reached the meadows – Wet Meadows called – where we had panned, by the map, to camp the night before – a level bit of open marsh land set amidst a wood of pine and fir, dense for the region. We did not pause there but rode on all the morning through, crossing the valley down into which we had looked from our camping ground the night before and climbing up its further side.

It was not until noon that we reached another camping ground, so rocky and barren of all herbage were the valley sides which we were traversing, but at noon we came to a most interesting spot where a little circular meadow was enclosed by an isolated grove of giant sequoias – the first we had seen since starting – whose seedlings, growing in dense clumps and ranging from trees just big enough to be visible to others fifty or sixty feet in height with lower limbs still sweeping to the ground, filled the drier fringes of the meadow. This was the best seeding ground of the sequoia that I saw and showed its need quite plainly, a moist soil and an open, sheltered exposure.

We stayed there for a couple of hours. I was sorry afterward that I had not stayed on until the next day, to make a better study of these younger trees. Then we rode on up a narrow valley with a tumultuous stream, which we left at last to climb a huge glacier moraine beyond which we passed into a hanging valley with precipitous sides, gradually rising toward a wooded ridge which closed the valley in behind and formed, pillared on either side by mountains, the pass to Mineral King – Timber Gap as it was called. Our stock, evidently not in good condition when we started and over-loaded for their strength, began to show signs of exhaustion although our pace was slow. Presently one of the mules lay down upon the trail. A horse would not have done it until his last ounce of energy was spent but that is one of the ways, as I found afterward, in which a mule is different from a horse – as soon as they get discouraged they lie down. The man I had with me, who had never packed before, knew little more about their ways than I myself. We were only three or four miles at most, as well as we could reckon

from the map, from Mineral King. A more experienced packer would have simply shifted the pack from the mule on to one of the saddle horses and left the mule to follow – which she could have done quite easily as her condition in the morning showed. But I had her upon my conscience and leaving my man to follow after me in the early morning with the stock, I took a few things with me for the night in case I missed the trail – for it was then sundown and red sunset clouds were already floating in the western sky – and went on alone, on foot, to Mineral King.

I got up over the pass and through its timbered gap before it got too dark to see. An open slope of dry, hard earth and broken stone swept down from the timber's edge into the valley where the lights of the little settlement for which I was bound could be already seen two thousand feet below. It was rough going for I only had a pair of stout moccasins upon my feet and the twilight was too dim to pick one's way, out at last I got down, found the roadway in the valley bottom, crossed a river, and made my way in the dark to Mineral King's Post Office and only store.

It was not a very promising place to arrive at. Two or three men were lounging about a roughly carpentered room but no one seemed prepared to shoulder any responsibility for making me at home. At last it was arranged that I should have a room to sleep in there, above the store, and get my meals as I could elsewhere. Then I asked where I could find the man who was to go out with me as a packer. A little hut one hundred feet away was pointed out and there I went. Four men were playing cards around a table. I asked if Frank Dorr – the man who was to go out with me as packer – was there, and

one of the men came out to speak with me. Finding who I was he asked me in, introduced me to his companions, one of whom then offered to cook me up some supper – fried ham and fried potatoes – cut in chunks soda biscuit and a pot of tea. Afterward, I sat and talked with them awhile and then went back to my room above the store, where I found after I had put my light out that I could see stars from my bed through cracks and openings between the rough-hewn shingles which made the buildings roof.

The next day the man I had left behind was slow in coming on and we lost the morning but immediately after dinner Frank Dorr and I started on our three weeks' trip, having in the meantime overhauled our baggage and left some of the heaviest of our food supplies and other things behind. But as our journey was to be a hard one and Dorr, moreover thought it best to take a tremendously heavy Dutch oven, or iron baking pan and a few other heavy things along from Mineral King, we decided fortunately as it proved, to take along an extra mule to carry them.

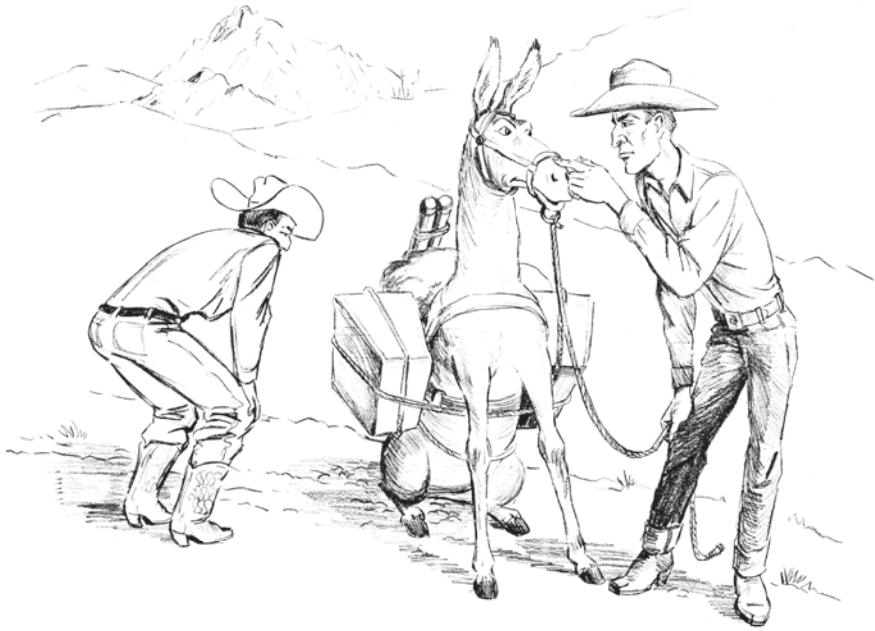
We rode for a time up the valley we were in, passing on the way a strongly effervescent mineral spring where we stopped and drank, the water being as pleasant as that of any of the famous springs I know. We passed several such springs upon our trip and they seemed to be common in the region. Some of them being hot and others cold and evidently varying widely in the salts which they contained. Further up we climbed another steep moraine into a hanging valley. Bare of trees, which reminded me very much of Alpine valleys I have seen in Switzerland just below the snow line. This valley we rode throughout the length, coming at its further end to a steep ascent

whose bare crest flanked on either side by mountains, formed the pass to the region we were going to – a pass called Farewell Gap.

The crest was narrow, its further, southern side was so steep and shalely, and the wind that blew across it so gusty and fierce that it seemed to me for a moment my horse could hardly keep his footing on the scarce trodden trail which we began to descend.

The view had wholly changed. A range of volcanic mountains formed the western side of the valley we had come into and instead of gray granite.

A group of Sierra Club folks in Mineral King in 1906



Part III - Kings Canyon / Sequoia National Park Pack Trip

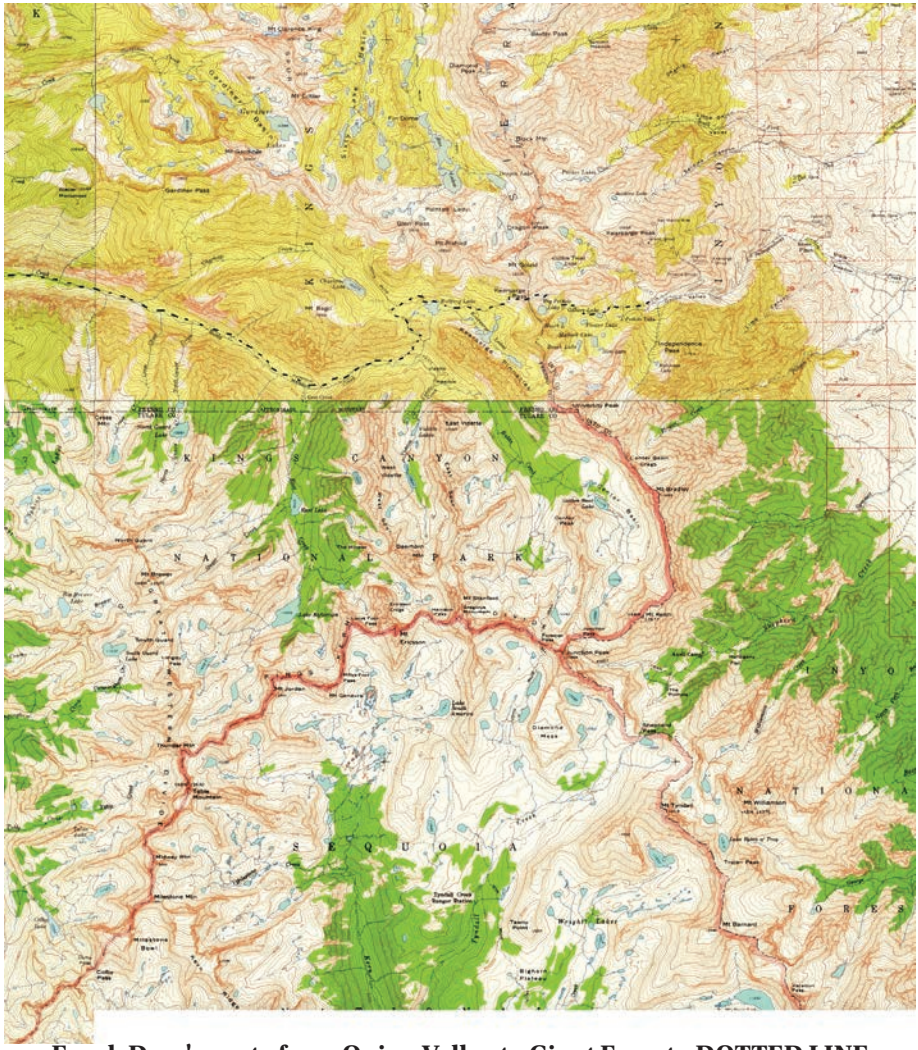
I want to finish telling you about my trip through the mountains while it is fresh in my mind. I stopped where I was starting out from Owens Valley to return back across the Sierras over Kearsage Pass. But I want first to give you some idea of Owens Valley for it interested me a good deal.

If you left the Southern Pacific road at Reno just before it begins its climb out of Nevada over the Sierras, and followed the Sierras southward, rising up to the west of you like a great mountain wall, past Carson City, you would after a time find yourself in Owens Valley, and through it you could then pass on beyond with scarce a rise to the Mojave Desert. A new line of railroad is now under survey to run from Salt Lake down along this route to southern California, reaching Los Angeles through one of the low passes which break through the mountains there. When it is built, this route will doubtless be used instead of the San Francisco one by people going to southern California over the Union Pacific for it is not only much shorter and saves the long climb over the high Sierras, but the view of them which it would give one is superb, the rise is so abrupt, the range so continuous and the height so great, from eight to eleven thousand feet above the valley floor. The valley itself is naturally an arid plain, open at either end but narrowly shut in by mountains upon either side. The sun there is hot but the heat is tempered by the valley's height, 4000 feet above the sea, and by the dryness of the air, and the winter is only just too cold for growing oranges – with a

Frank Dorr's route from Onion Valley to Giant Forest - DOTTED LINE

dozen degrees or so of frost. Other fruit grows there better than in California – with finer flavor and, wherever there is irrigation, the crops are great.

On one of the ranches that I stayed at, owned by a man who had come out there thirty odd years ago from western New York, they



Frank Dorr's route from Onion Valley to Giant Forest - DOTTED LINE

raised 400 tons of alfalfa hay a year from less than one hundred and fifty acres of grass-land and had, besides, great orchards of apple trees and pears and peaches, and vineyards for raisins, and great stands of bee hives – for honey is one of their great industries there, the bees feeding on the alfalfa flowers which make a pure white honey famous for its flavor. This ranch got all the water that it needed for its

400 acres, much of which was used for pasture land, from a stream piped down from the mountains a couple of miles away, but the owner of the other ranch at which I stayed, some twenty miles away from this had selected his land with reference to an irrigation canal which had seemed certain of accomplishment when he settled on it near thirty years ago but which had finally failed through want or combination among the ranchers in his region and the opposition of new settlers in the upper valley and then after twenty-five years of efforts to obtain it and meager crops and disappointment he had suddenly discovered that water more than he could use for all his farm had lain beneath it all the while, needing but a shallow driven well to bring it flowing to the surface. And it seemed to me that with the great Sierra range above it with its heavy snowfall abundant water ought some day to be obtained, by storage reservoirs above and by artesian wells below, turn the valley into a garden, walled in by mountains, giving it surpassing beauty. And if one of the great continental lines should then run through it, how wonderful its change from barrenness and solitude. There is a dramatic quality about it which appeals to one's imagination. I talked a great deal about the valley with these two ranchers, leading men in their region and interesting characters both of them. And all through my trip I talked a good deal with the men I met and got a great deal from them. All of the older men and most of the younger ones as well have come from elsewhere and have known other lands, other modes of life, and another climate. This makes them interesting. And then all the older men have tried their band at various enterprises, failing in one thing and succeeding in another. And both the older and the younger men alike are alive to all the new developments of the land and time, and the air is full of talk about them, while one learns in

Trail from Onion Valley - Kearsarge Pass at top of photo.

and cinched it tighter but again it turned. Then I called to my man to stop but he was already out of sight and hearing and I started to lead the mule down. She refused to budge. Then I got behind and whacked her. It was hard to get her moving even so but once she got well started on her way down the hill and saw I was behind her she lit out at a trot for the hay fields she had left and I after her on the double quick to catch her.

Meanwhile my man had found the right trail and started up it, leaving me behind. I chased the mule a mile or more, she quickening her step whenever I did mine, and I thought she wouldn't stop until she reached the ranch which we had started from but presently I found a chance to cut across and head her off. It seemed to me a forlorn hope for she might easily have kept ahead of me by quickening

her step. A horse would have done it but mules are oddly different in their ways and I found out afterward that it was characteristic of them to give up and surrender, if they simply see you start out to head them off. So I caught mine and headed up the hill again.

But she went back in quite a different mood, and a mile or so beyond the point at which I picked up my pack train's trail she refused for good and all to go another step. Not a single step would she stir, do what I would, so I tied her to a scrub oak alongside the trail, took of her saddle and bridle, picked up my saddlebag and trudged along up hill to find my outfit. I had to climb twenty-five hundred feet or more before I reached our camping ground – a few acres of open meadow ground shut in by mountains, precipitous and towering, the highest of the range. It was dark starlight when I got there. There was no wood for a campfire – barely enough for cooking and my packer had crept in among some bushes to keep warm. He made me a cup of tea and then we went to bed. I called him at early dawn and he started off at once to get the mule. I stayed and had just begun to make a fire and get some breakfast when a fierce hail storm began. I gave breakfast up and gathered up our bedding and supplies into a heap and spread my tent over them. We had not put it up the night before and rarely used it. Then I crept under it myself and read until my man returned bringing the mule, whom he had only got to start, himself, by putting a slip noose round her neck and tying the rope to the horn of the saddle of the mule whom he had ridden down who literally hauled her up, he walking.

It was still hailing when he got back and we started to pitch the tent and wait for better weather, but with one of those sudden

changes which one finds among the mountains, the sun was shining before we had more than fixed upon our camping ground. So we packed up instead and started out to make the pass. It was then about nine o'clock in the morning and the summit of the pass was still five thousand feet above us.

A few hundred feet above our camping ground we came to snow lying since the storm which had begun the day we climbed Mt. Whitney. From there on we walked, using my saddle horse to drag the still reluctant mule along our stock was weak from hardship and poor feed upon the mountains coming over, but it seemed best to push on lest another storm should come and block the pass.

The snow got deeper and the trail more steep. Finally we lost the trail completely, buried in the snow which was up to our knees. We went on without it for some time, and then found it again zigzaging sharply up among big broken rocks facing a cliff that barred our way. There the snow had drifted deeply and at one place nearer the top the horses were up to their shoulders and even then kept breaking through to lower depths. The necessity of dragging up the little mule, who still refused to go, made it doubly difficult, too, on the sharp zigzags of the trail. We reached the top, however, of that cliff and trudged along for quite a piece without more difficulty than the deep snow might make on such a trail, rocky and rough and always climbing. But presently we came to another sharp ascent, rock-strewn, with short, sharp zigzags leading steeply up it, and here we nearly met with catastrophe. The little mule held back and the horse, pulling her up and making a sharp turn, pulled her over toward him and then was himself pulled back on top of her by the

rope which he was towing by. My packer called to me – for I went on ahead and trod the trail out and he drove up the stock behind and I came back to find the horse literally sitting on the mule and both of them perched upon a rook slide steep enough almost for them to roll down, once they started. It would have been very ludicrous if it had not been awfully serious for the animals. I hardly thought it possible to get them out of the scrape without a broken leg, but my packer managed quite skillfully to roll the horse down hill, with my help, so that he landed on his feet below. Then we got the mule up, with no bones broken, thanks to the soft snow. Then we started out again, not stopping anywhere for rest or lunch, and made our way around a series of dark, little glacier lakes embedded in the snow and full of still reflections of the cliffs and peaks about them, until late in the afternoon we reached, just beyond the furthest lake which nestled at its foot, a sharp, high ridge, of rock and gravel buried deep in snow, closing the valley through which we had been mounting. Its crest, a thousand feet above the lake, was the pass which we were seeking, the highest travelled pass, I have been told, in the United States or Canada. At first the footing, was good, as we began to climb it, and the ascent easy but for the depth of snow, but as we got up higher the climb grew steeper and small stones and gravel gave place under foot to rocks, making sure footing hard to find. The snow grew deeper, too, the higher up we got and the trail was lost beneath it. I still went ahead, leading the foremost mule and treading out a practicable way for the others to follow as I could find it. My packer was quite used up with the long climb, the exposure and high air.

As we got near the top the rock slide became steep enough to be

View west from Kearsarge Pass

would with horses, sheer exhaustion. My packer, tired out himself, was quite hopeless, the most discouraged thing you ever saw. He sat down on the snow and looked at her with a forlorn and desperate expression. I went on, leaving the other animals strung out in a file behind, and broke my way through to the summit, across which the snow was drifted higher than my head. The crest was very sharp however, only a few feet wide, and I easily broke through the drift and looked down the valley on the western side.

The view was wonderful. The sun was setting and the valley I looked down to the westward opened far away toward the sunset sky, flooded with warm light. Deep down below me on the western side lay another little chain of glacier lakes, dark and fringed with pines. Further down, the creek that led from them opened into the deep King's River cañon.

To the eastward, framed in the half ellipse of the valley up which we had climbed and columned by snow-clad peaks on either side, lay Owens Valley, eight thousand feet below, over which there hung, shadowing it and reaching up behind the snow peaks either side, the black, magnificent cloud-mass of a great thunderstorm. At our feet below, in solitude and stillness, lay the basin of the glacier lakes, its rocky detail lost in the deep snow while the still water in the lakes themselves was deep sea-green in color.

I could only linger for a few moments to look at it, for it was most important for us to get down to camping ground among the sheltering pines below before it got too dark to see our way. Stamping the snow down as best I could along the path which I had made I led the strongest or our mules up through it, one or two of the others following. It was difficult work for them because the snow was drifted deep among the rocks just eastward of the summit and where I with my lighter weight could walk securely, though up to my waist in snow, they again and again could reach no solid footing shoulder deep, but plunged and floundered. In the mean time my packer had taken everything off the little mule, our spare saddle which she had been carrying, and her bridle, and the rope by which we had been leading her, and packed them on the horse; then he started the horse up after the other stock, along our trail, leaving the mule lying on the snow when lo, she rose and followed. The packer and I looked at each other without a word and felt as though a miracle had happened; and now that I look back on it I feel so still.

The descent on the western side of the pass was rapid, for though

the snow was still up to our knees, it was much less deep than on the eastern side and the slope beneath it was of gravel, not of rock.

We went on for another hour till it was starlight only and then camped among some pine trees near the lakes. The snow was still some eighteen inches deep but while my man unpacked the mules I cut down an old dead pine whose branches against the sky, telling of dry firewood close at hand, had led us to stop there, and we soon had a bright warm fire to make ourselves some tea and cook some bacon by. Then my man rolled himself up in his blankets without more ado and fell asleep, exhausted. I was not quite so tired as he and it occurred to me that it would be well to gather up our flour and other things and get them under cover. I had just finished doing this and made my bed upon the snow between two folds of my tent – my man had used for this a canvas strip we had for covering the pack when it began to snow again, and snowed all night. There was no use turning out our stock to graze so we gave them a part of our flour – little enough it was which lined their dark faces comically in the morning, and tied them in a row under the shelter of some low pines a few feet off from where we lay – where they stamped and quarreled and stood patiently by turns till dawn.

The next morning we made an early start and by the middle of the forenoon got out of snow, the bare ground very welcome under foot. The first change we had to let our animals feed, on a patch of meadow grass that grew beside the creek, we stopped awhile; then, when we started again I let my packer push on ahead with the stock, headed for a rangers' camp for we had now come into one of the Government reservations – which we knew that we should find a

Bullfrog Lake

now," and there was the red mule he had been riding earlier in the trip, the best one that we had, gagging and nearly choked, unable to swallow. My packer thought that he was going to die, but I had once seen a horse affected in the same way, the day I went down into the Grand Cañon in Arizona. Then a freshet had swept away the feed alongside of the stream in the side cañon through which we were descending and our horses had browsed at noon on the thorny desert bushes of the region. That horse got well during the night which followed, the trouble having come apparently from a thorn lodged in his throat deep down; so I thought that the same might have happened to our mule.

We unpacked our animals and turned them loose to feed, those

that could. Then taking each a piece of cheese for lunch to eat upon the way – there wasn't any bread – we both started down the valley for the rangers' camp. The trees were magnificent, sugar pines from seven to eight feet through and yellow pines and firs from five to six feet through, growing in open woods alongside of the stream which tumbled swiftly down in a succession of cascades with deep, clear pools between. My man hoped to find the rangers still at their camp and, if he got down early enough, to return with a fresh horse and grain, so I let him push on, thinking, if he did get back, to meet him on the way and go back with him, and if not, to follow him down to the camp for the night.

After a time I came out where the high hanging valley I was in broke away abruptly to the level forest covered bottom of King's River Cañon rock-walled and deep like the Yosemite. The sun was slowly sinking down the cañon, lighting warmly up and deeply shadowing its granite walls and the tree tops of the somber forest at its bottom. High up above, the peaks were white with snow, which caught the lingering sunlight and the sunset glow when all was growing dark about me and below.

I sat there for a long while, looking down at the valley. Then I went down quickly, knowing that my man would not return, but by the time I reached the bottom it was already growing dark. I crossed the creek which I had left above which had plunged down from the upper valley by a bold succession of cascades and falls, on a rough log bridge and passed into the woods beyond. I had not gone a hundred yards, however, before I came upon another still as broad and deep as that, and waded it again. By that time it had

Glaciated Kings River Canyon

grown quite dark under the tall pines and firs and cedars which there grew close together and I found I could no longer see the trail. Fortunately I had with me in the small bag I carried slung across my shoulder a little folding candle lantern, the only lantern that we had with us upon the trip, and a short bit of candle. I lit that and started out again upon the trail. But I found that a woodland trail could easily get lost by candle light and I lost it promptly. In a little while I found myself down by the edge of the river – where I had no business to be. I made my way to the last brook which I had crossed, found my trail and started out afresh. That time I landed in a thicket. I began to think I should have to make a fire and spend the night by it where I was. But I went back to the brook again to find my trail and, following it up step by step with greater care, that time I

kept it, coming out soon into more open ground where it was better marked. After following it down for a couple of miles over the valley floor and across a series of well marked glacier moraines it led me to the river where there should be a bridge, I knew from my map, across to the rangers' camp. The bridge was there but the rangers had been rebuilding it and all there was of it were two great logs about a yard apart, stretching from shore to shore. A heavy wire ran out from either side sloping to each log part way across; and for part of the way across, rought cross-pieces had been laid. At the entrance I found one of my man's mittens, left to tell me he had gone across. I followed, but when I came to the middle of the bridge where there was no wire to steady myself by, I did not like it! Daylight is better than a candle lantern when one comes to crossing rivers up on logs – so I sat down, straddling the log, and worked my way along until I reached the wire that ran out from the other side.

A little way beyond I found the rangers' camp. There were two or three rough buildings but no light. I called and presently my packer answered me from inside one of them. He came to a square hole in it which served as a window and told me that the rangers had gone down the valley, that very day apparently, for their trail was fresh; he had found some sacks of barley they had left, however. The door was pad-locked, so I scrambled in after my packer through the window opening and found two rough bedsteads with axe-riven slats and a few old strips of canvas with one or two abandoned comfits, as they call them there. Altogether they did not make more than warm covering for one of us and he thinking that I had decided not to come had already made his bed with the whole pile. He offered to share it with me but I told him I did not sleep sound enough for that! So

we divided out the spoils sleeping none too warm in consequence.

The next morning, anxious over our mules, we made an early start, breakfasting on a bunch of raisins and a few nuts I had with me in my bag and each of us taking a little sack of barley for the mules. I again let my packer go ahead, lingering on the way to see the trees.

When I got up to where we had left our stock I found the red mule who had been so ill the day before, grazing cheerfully and looking like himself again. So with a lightened heart I gave him a few handfuls of my barley and went on up to see how the little mule had fared. And presently I met my packer, mounted once more and driving down the mule before him, looking like her earlier self again and with her bell tinkling out in lively fashion as she came down the trail. She was on her feet and feeding when he found her, having already grazed some distance down the trail, and he said that the sound of her bell, which he heard before he saw her, was the best music he had ever heard. So we came back to where our pack was lying and cooked ourselves the first hot meal which we had had since the morning of the day before, and rested in the sunshine.

Cedar Grove Ranger Station

The valley we were in was an interesting one, cut out by the drainage from a group of the highest mountains in the Sierra range

and extending back into its wildest scenery. And at its lower end it opened, hanging high above it, into one of the deepest or the deep Sierra cañons at its head, looking down it to the west through perpendicular walls of granite cut by meeting glaciers driven onward by the pressure of vast fields of ice and snow sweeping down a thousand feet a mile perhaps, from the great peaks behind. There were relatively level stretches in this upper valley with open groves of splendid pines and firs, trees with great columnar trunks and deeply scaled or furrowed bark that ranged in color from warm red in certain species to deep browns and grays in others. And on the steeper, open slopes between and extending up the rocky bases of the cliffs which closed the valley in or down into open bits of meadowland bordering here and there the streams grew ferns and bushes and herbaceous plants turned to autumn coloring, browns and yellows, reminding one of home. And everywhere throughout the valley there was the sound of waterfall and rapid.

Had the season been earlier and my time less short I would have stayed on there camping for some days, but it was too late for lingering and the next morning we started out soon after sunrise, walking still ourselves, but with our little troop in good order and all there.

When it got down to the bridge, however, it narrowly escaped a new catastrophe. The entrance to the bridge was slightly barred across, to show that it could not be used, but our pack mules coming quickly down the trail ahead of the packer, scorned the slight obstruction and stepping over it walked out in single file on the short section over which cross pieces had been laid. The bridge

Zumwalt Meadows in Kings River Canyon

the bridge and get them to the bank again, fording the stream.

At the rangers' camp we gave them a good feed of barley, packed one of the saddle horses with a coupe of feeds more, and started out afresh down the valley. From there on I again let my packer go ahead, lingering along to see the valley. The day was beautiful and the cliffs, which are like the great smooth granite cliffs of the Yosemite though not so high, were glorious in the warm sunshine as they rose almost perpendicularly up from the level, sandy valley floor against the blue sky over head. This level floor of the valley with its sandy bottom – in which it also resembles the Yosemite – seems to be one of the peculiar features of' these Yosemite valleys, as they call them there. In the Yosemite it seems to have been caused by a recent lake formation in the valley and I suppose that similar lakes may have been formed in a number of these deep-cut glacier valleys by the moraines left

Kings River Bridge near Cedar Grove

as the glaciers receded, which they probably did quite rapidly at the end of the glacial epoch. In the Yosemite valley the level floor is only a few miles in length, seven or eight I judged, and in King's River cañon it seemed to me about the same, though not so wide and more obstructed by a succession of moraines. Here oak trees began to show themselves, and poplars along the water's edge – while in the valley up above, the last few miles, I had already found in sheltered hollows the large-leaved Californian maple, and the alder growing as a well-shaped tree of medium size. This maple was the only tree I saw, by the way, while I was among the mountains which had rich autumnal colouring, lighting up the landscape along the banks of streams here and in the Yosemite with golden colour such as that with which the canoe birch lights up our woods at home; some of the shrubs however and the herbaceous plants before hard frosts had cut them down took on rich hues that added not a little to the beauty of the landscape here and there.

The day was beautiful and warm with sunshine and I had a delightful sense of leisure and a pleasant walk ahead as I saw my packer and his mules disappearing down the trail. I followed on more slowly for a while, then I said to myself "I'll sit down in the sun

by the river and read a while." After I had read a few minutes I said to myself, "Perhaps it was better not to read but just to sit and look at things and enjoy the sunshine," and the next thing that I knew I was waking up with a delightful sense of absolute repose and far away detachment from all earthly things. I got up and wandered down the trail another while and then the clear fresh water tempted me and I joined a large trout whom I saw swimming in a pool – at least I tried to, for he didn't stay. And I didn't stay long either, for the water was bitterly cold.

Then I walked slowly down the trail, level, and sandy and partly shaded by large oaks, for three or four miles more until I reached another bridge opposite which the trail which we were following left the valley, at the foot of the deeper portion of its cañon, and climbed up over the lower mountains that bordered it beyond. It was then about an hour before sundown. I knew that the meadow where we meant to camp lay fairly high above the valley and that I had a climb before me but I had not given it much thought – now I got out my map, which gave the altitudes, and found that I had three thousand three hundred feet to climb before I got to camp.

The trail was a good one built by the rangers up a sandy slope covered with pines and firs. It zigzaged interminably, rising steadily but never seeming to advance. At last just as the last deep sunset glow was fading in the west I reached the top of the ridge I had been climbing and looked out to the westward – I had been climbing up the ridge's eastern side – down the King's River valley I had left. I sat down and rested there awhile, until the deep red western glow had narrowed and vanished. Then I got out again my little folding

candle lantern and followed on along the trail. It led now along the ridge, close to its summit on the eastern side, and gave me in the deepening twilight and the starlight as I went along, a great, solemn view of the wide upper basin of King's River valley – for I was now higher than the steep cañon's sides – a view which stretched back to the mountains of the eastern watershed which we had crossed two days before. The lower portion of the basin was filled with a dark coniferous forest, black, solemn and still beneath the snow covered slopes above. The wind, which an hour before had soughed through the pine forest with the sound of rushing water, had dropped when the sun went down, and the occasional hooting of an owl or distant cry of some wild animal and once or twice the crash of a falling tree alone broke the silence. The sense of solitude was great – one does not seem so solitary in a narrow place, in a small valley or the like. One fills it with one's own life and presence as it were. But the great solitude of a great basin such as that, upon an autumn night starlit alone, with its dark forests, unseen depths and white enclosing peaks has a remote, mysterious quality in it which makes one feel that one is looking out upon another world, timeless and still, which life is strange to.

The next morning we mounted again, for the first time since we left Owens Valley, and rode along an easy trail for an hour or more, coming then to some large meadows – called Horse Corral Meadows – beyond which the trail ran up a steep, forested hillside. Up which we went on foot again to ease our horses. The trail was as new to my packer as myself and we were rather taken back as we went on to find we had a pass to climb not marked upon the map, which rose seventeen hundred feet or more, as I afterward found out, above the

meadow. The last part of the way up we found ourselves in snow again and beyond the summit our way lay through a long, level stretch of upland meadows over which the melting snow lay deep and even. The trail branched in these meadows but only a single trail was visible, slightly sunken on the surface of the snow, and as only one was marked upon my map we followed on along the trail we saw without a question and coming out of the snow went quickly down an open slope of sand, as easy to descend as hard to climb. We had already got far down it, congratulating ourselves that we had not had to climb it instead, with our tired selves and stock, when it began to dawn upon us that we were going in the wrong direction, the trail bending steadily to the westward while our main course lay eastward. We called a halt and studied map and compass.

There was no doubt that we had missed our trail but my packer thought our animals too tired to climb the hill which we had just come down and it seemed to us as we studied it over on the map that the trail we were following must connect further on, by a few miles detour, with the one we should have taken. So we went on, down through a magnificent fir forest for another hour or so. Then, coming out upon an open sandy slope, we came upon a camp with tent and campfire, by which there was a woman cooking. We stopped and questioned her as to where we were and found we were indeed not only off our trail but that the trail which we were on was leading us down into a valley through which we and our pack animals would reach the stage road country in the foothills at a point where we would be several days by stage away from where we started and where our pack animals were to be left.

It was then the middle of the afternoon, we ourselves were tired, our stock exhausted, so we decided to camp where we were till morning and then climb the hill again. But while we were talking with the woman and looking at our map, our animals went on, turning off from the main trail onto another which ran up alongside of a brook that flowed down past the camp. I told my packer when I saw them moving off that we had best go after them and round them up but the woman said there was a little meadow just above where their horses went to graze and that ours were headed for it and would stop and feed there; so we stayed on talking until our plans were made. Then we went up to the little meadow to get our animals and bring them back to camp, and found they had not stopped but gone straight on, following the brook course up along a well marked trail. More than that, they whom we had thought too tired to climb the hill again when we first discovered we had missed our way, had "hit the trail" up this brook-course as soon as we were out of sight, at a jog trot apparently, and were already out of sight and hearing. We followed at a trot, too, not knowing how far they might go before we overtook them, and a mile and a half up the trail, considerably out of breath ourselves, we got them just as the foremost of them reached the same Horse Corral Meadows we had left to climb the pass that morning. We had made a complete circuit with the aid of our mules.

How the mules knew that the pleasant meadows they had reluctantly passed through that morning lay just above them on that brook-course is a mystery. None of them were familiar with the region nor had ever been on that mistaken trail of ours before, so far as my packer knew. But one of the things that struck me most upon the trip was the extraordinary memory of our pack mules for a trail.

One of them, the oldest in the lot, led us the day we left Mt. Whitney, all day long across snow covered ground and in a driving storm, following a trail we often could not see ourselves, and which he had only followed once before. Now and then he hesitated for a moment and once he went astray for a few steps, but quickly found his way again. They seem to take so little notice as they go along the trail, reluctant and protesting, that their after memory of its every twist and turn and power to trace it even through a storm is wonderful. No doubt the salvation of all herding animals depends upon such faculty; yet, it is plainly not a mere instinct with them but an act of conscious thought, of reasoning from noted and remembered fact – quite as much with them as with the Indian or hunter on the trail.

We camped that night at Horse Corral Meadows since we were back there and the feed was good, but we ourselves walked down again and got our supper with the people in the camp below, where we had seen some venison cut in strips – jerkin as they call it – hanging up to dry, I carrying down in slight return a bag of nuts which we had brought from Owens Valley. The owner of the camp turned out to be one of the leading men in the San Joaquin Valley opposite us below, who had come up with his wife some weeks before to get a change of air, and to look after cattle of his which had been ranging through the summer in the now snow-covered meadows up above.

They made us very welcome. Our host first offered us hospitality in the shape of a demi-john of whiskey which "the boys," he said, – two cowboys whom he had with him – had brought up from below, and then his wife gave us the first good meal which we had had since Owens Valley, a venison stew, baked beans and soda biscuit,

and fruits of their own preserving.

The next day we climbed our pass again, found the right trail – which led us on for hours, plodding along through heavy melting snow, then down across a deep and narrow cañon called the Marble Fork of the Kaweah – and an hour before sundown got back among the sequoias of the Giant Forest out of which I had started on my trip three weeks before. When I came to the sequoias I sent my horse ahead with the packer and spent a quiet hour alone with the great trees. Then I went slowly through groups of them scattered through a wood of giant pines and firs, to my outfitter's camp, a log cabin in the midst of the sequoia grove. But he himself had gone down to his ranch among the foothills, and there was no one but my packer there, and two people, a man and a woman, who had driven up to spend a night or two and see the trees. They turned out to be brother and sister, he from Los Angeles, she the wife of an anarchist editor in the town below, but both from eastern Maine not many years before. My packer opened the log cabin to them with its cooking stove and we shared our supper and our breakfast in the morning with them, she cooking for us all – and well – in genuine "down east" fashion.

The next morning my packer turned out the stock which we had with us upon the journey, to wild pasture, along with other stock their owner had up there, to stay until winter spoilt the feed in the wild meadow lands and grassy openings. Then he caught three other horses from among those at pasture, packed one of them with my camping outfit and saddled up the other two for us to ride. The road was a good one, the upper part of it just finished by the government, and gave us some wonderful views of deep

valleys opening out westward through the foothills to the great plain beyond, valleys with long pale slopes no longer forest clad and full of sunlit atmosphere. For the first thousand feet or so of descent, however, the way lay through a forest of pine and fir, the sequoias being left behind soon after we had started. Five trees only made this forest up – the sugar pine and yellow pine and two silver-tipped firs – as they were called out there abies magnifica, with a vast, red trunk, and abies concolor, with a rough grayish one, which alone distinguished it to the eye from its companion, and a cedar-like tree, libocedrus decurrens, with foliage that recalls our arbor vitae. Quite suddenly, however, the coniferous forest stopped as we went on and low, spreading oaks, bushes of an arid region, and countless western buckeyes, bare of leaf with poisonous nut-like fruits untouched upon the trees, took its place.

After we left the forest the road followed a high and narrow ridge dividing two deep valleys, down one side of which it finally descended to the Kaweah River beside which solitary ranches, outposts of the agricultural region down below, began to show themselves. Reaching at length the valley bottom, five thousand feet or so below our morning camp, we rode on past cultivated farms and apple orchards to a ranch belonging to the father in law of the man who owned the camp above and had outfitted me. This man, Redstone by name, was quite a character in his way. (At the beginning of the Civil War his home was in Ohio.) When the first news of firing on Fort Sumter came he rushed out he told me the story himself – and posted a call for volunteers, acting on his own initiative. That night he led a rousing meeting and enrolled a troop which, drilled and organized, soon went off to the war. But

Redstone himself had made such a success of this that he was kept on at home for other work of this same kind and never – comically enough as it seemed to me – got into actual service so far as I could learn. Afterward, he was sent out to Europe, "on a special mission." As he told me to the foreign governments, on some engineering scheme or new invention – I didn't gather what – which brought him interviews with some of the crowned heads and leading statesmen of the time abroad – a fact which he evidently looked back upon with not a little satisfaction, introducing the subject by asking me whether I had seen much of royalty when I was abroad the year before. Incidentally, he had been arrested at Pola, the Austrian naval station in Istria, for making sketches of the coast and then released upon sending a telegram to our minister at Vienna, with permission to go on and sketch whatever he chose. Later this same errand brought him to London where he met Mazzini who interested him in an international community movement and got him to go back to America and organize a branch out there. This he did and led out a community to California where they settled in the valley where he is living now. It was they who had built the lower portion of the road down which I rode, in order to open up some mines and they were about to complete it and establish a sawmill in the Sequoia forest region up above where the government made its reservation there. But the movement proved a failure and the community disappeared, leaving Mr. Redstone behind as a flood might leave a tree upon the river bank to root alone. He had a pleasant little ranch along the river bank with old spreading oaks, and grape vines by it and fields and pasture lands and orchards beyond the ranch, of the limit of the hard Sierra winter.

The next day at noon I took the stage into Exeter, “stage” being a euphemism tor a rickety old wagon with a pair of horses and a driver who gathered, up the mail from boxes at the roadside as he went along, and who explained to me that he had “a regular stage wagon – a big one with four horses,”' but that he hadn't brought it out that morning as he had got soaked the day before and thought that day he’d bring a wagon with a top to it. My bags just filled the back seat, he and I the front one. “Now,” said he, “it'll be just my luck to have a lot of people want to ride. It's always the way when I bring this wagon out.” Presently a man with a bundle in his hand came walking out to meet us as we came in sight. “There,” said the driver, “I told you so! He wants to ride!” “Kind o’ crowded, ain’t ye?” said the man. “Guess we’ll make it somehow if you want to go,” said the driver. “But there’s two more people down at the next house,” said the man, “who want to get up to town. I don't know what they'll do if you can’t take 'em. I guess I’ll have to wait and go tomorrow.” So west on the bags and cramped our knees with them and somehow managed to get these other people in. They proved to be a carpenter and his wife who had come out to that region from Iowa. We supped together that evening at a little working man’s eating house while we waited for our train and I picked up a good deal that was interesting from him. The way still lay down the Kaweah valley until the valley issued on the plain, its enclosing hillsides which bad been an arid brown when I went up three weeks before – already green with young grass springing from the recent rains. Some of the best orange and lemon groves in the state lay scattered here and there in sheltered nooks along the valley bottom or ran up over the black-loamed foothills as they reached out into the plain. One orange grove I saw – hundreds of acres in extent – covered the whole western slope of a

Main Street - Exeter, CA

gently sloping hill five hundred feet in height above the plain and was irrigated by water pumped to the hilltop from the river by power obtained from a reservoir built in the high Sierras a hundred miles away, and used for lighting the cities opposite it in the central valley up and down for many miles. It is a curious thing that the lower foot hills which lie open to the plain are warmer in winter than the plain below them, less subject to frosts, the cold air settling over the valley bottom and driving up the warmer. So that one passes through and out of the orange and lemon growing belt upon these and not as one descends into the valley. Later, when I went into the Yosemite, I met a man who had a ranch over five thousand feet above the sea, where he was raising on an open western slope, a crop of strawberries which he expected to market early in December.

I started out for my mountain trip from Visalia, one of the small agricultural cities in the broad San Joaquin valley. I went by stage,

The "Stagecoach" to Exeter, CA

my way lying at first across the flat plain of the valley floor, through yellow stubble fields and immense orchards of plums where the fruit was being gathered up and dried for prunes. Then I came into the foothills region with its great orchards of apples, oranges and lemons and its brown hill-slopes; and early in the afternoon I reached the ranch of a man named Redstone on the Kaweah river where I was to spend the night.

The road out from Visalia was oiled for the first five miles. This I found widely done throughout California, the crude oil obtained from wells in the coast region being used for it. It makes a rather pleasant road to drive over, in relief from dust and glare, but my driver told me that in the hot summer weather it was apt to soften and get sticky and was, besides, so heating to the horses' feet that he had found their shoes too hot sometimes to rest his hand on.

My only fellow passenger on the stage was a young man from Ohio in the employment of an electric works' construction company in one of the Ohio cities, who had been superintending the work on an electric power plant for a Californian company which was utilizing a

water power in the high Sierra to supply the region opposite with light and power. He had been in that region all summer, superintending the work, and his wife, an Ohio girl – they were only married in the spring – had been with him and was waiting for him then at the end of the stage route. The middle of the day we stopped at a store by the roadside which was one of the regular stations of the stage, and the store keeper came out and told him that he was wanted at the telephone. He came back in a few moments and said that they had rung him up from his company's office in San Francisco to order him to take the next stage back and the evening train there. He was very blue over it, for he had been away a fortnight and up traveling nearly the whole night before and had counted on getting at least a day or two of rest and on being with his wife. But he could only drive ahead with me until he reached the next station of the stage, to which his wife had driven down to meet him, and then turn back from there on another five hours' stage-ride over the dusty road which we had just travelled. His wife was waiting for him and her delight at getting him back and dismay when he told her he had got to leave her again in another half hour – she was all alone there with him so far as friends went – was really pathetic.

The next morning I left the Redstone ranch in the early morning and drove up all day into the mountains over a road which climbed about six thousand feet during the day and which brought me at the end of it to a park established by the government in one of its reservations for the preservation of a splendid growth of the giant sequoias. There, in the midst of a forest of these trees, mingled with pines and firs, a rough summer camp bad been established by two ranchers from below, Broder and Hopping by name, who also

outfitted people for trips through the mountains beyond.

We passed no house upon the way after our first couple of hours upon the road, and ate our lunch by a spring at the roadside, taking the same horses through with us all day. Late in the afternoon we reached the coniferous forest, these conifers not growing in that region lower than five thousand feet or so above the sea, and in the course of another hour or so, after passing two or three camps of negro soldiers stationed there to guard the park and save it from fire, we reached the camp where I was going. There was one wooden cabin, which served as dining room and kitchen, and a number of tents to sleep in. In the evening there was a campfire which lighted up in a wonderful way the great trunks of the sequoias and the tall branchless shafts of the pines and firs among which they were growing. These shafts were bare for at least a hundred feet above the ground, the tree tops lost in the firelight, and the effect was that of some great, many-columned hall whose columns, vast and irregular, reached up mysteriously into the darkness, with here and there the sight of stars between.