

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO GIVES MORE THAN HE GETS

This Rare Servant of Uncle Sam Is Stephen T. Mather Who, Lured by the Great Outdoors, Sacrifices His Own Interests to Save Our National Parks

BY DONALD WILHELM

ONCE in a while you strike on a man who loves his job. Once in a long while you strike on one who loves his job 365 days a year and 365 days leap years. And once in a great, great while you strike on a government official who not only loves his job 365 days a year and 365 days leap years, but in addition goes deep down into his pockets to spend 10 or 12 times as much as his salary to make his job a whole lot more than a going concern.

Now, just here in our own little reading circle Stephen T. Mather, the director of national parks, is one such man. But the writer whispers this information to you confidentially and warns you not to divulge it to Mr. Mather. For if you do the guilt is on your own soul—for Mr. Mather, mountaineer, lover of the out-of-doors, Nestor of the national parks, will simply stretch out and die of a stroke of modesty!

You never saw an interview with Mr. Mather. When he sees one threatened he makes one of his innumerable transcontinental trips, leaving word that he's on his way. I had to drive my quivering sedan stood right up the elevator in the department of the interior to catch up with him when he saw me coming. I literally ran him down and instead of putting out my lights and hastening on, as the custom has been during the recent summer and autumn in Washington, I got out with a fountain pen in hand and pounced upon his helpless frame. I think he would have welcomed the parting and speeded this coming guest had I not busied myself so promptly. This approach, in fact, albeit noisy and spectacular, caused him to have a stroke—of modesty.

He got into his desk chair, with an eye on that loaded shorthand pen and submitted wearily.

"How," I asked, "did you ever come by this love of the national parks?"

He answered that he was born in California—53 years ago, by the way—and then answered specifically: "It was a climb up Mount Rainier 15 years ago that made a mountain man of me forever."

Then did he go into a long and well-prepared whispering in my left ear about himself?

He did not. He got up, with an air of suggesting that though he had said precious little about himself he had said quite too much. He strolled to the window looking out over the Washington monument and the Lincoln memorial and mused on a contemplated ride in an airplane.

"That's a beautiful view from here," your correspondent suggested, inclining back to the leading question.

"When I get back here from the parks," he answered, "I feel as if I had been gone for years."

"The parks are shrines," I remarked. And that, by the way, is what they are, to him.

"They are the nation's playgrounds," he said, going back to his desk.

Then he settled himself as comfortably as he could, in the circumstances—a fairly tall man with hair almost white, who because of his pent-up enthusiasm and energy seems taller than he is. He picked up a snapshot of his daughter, his only child, one of three pictures of her in his office, and described her horse-riding and marksmanship and endurance. And finally, back at the leading question, his point of view about the parks, he said:

"You see, the commercial development of America has been, in a sense, largely the matter of rather recent years. A long way back we went through the pioneering phase, when those who went ahead blazed the way out to the frontiers. Then there came the linking up—the building of bridges and roads, settlements, etc. We are now in what you might call the refinement or intensive phase. That is, there is hardly any more land available for colonization in the old sense."

"And the result?"

"Well, it is quite natural for many persons to look rather covetously on the park areas. For instance, here you have a farmer who wants to graze his herds and hasn't, he thinks, enough grazing land. It is hard for him to look over to a couple of million acres in one of the parks without a wish that he could use those acres. That's natural as anything in the world. If we were in his shoes probably a lot of us would feel exactly as he does, and as sheep men and cattlemen often feel."

There are other lovers of the national parks who do not speak so tolerantly of those who wish to invade the parks commercially. When you talk to them and then talk to Mr. Mather you appreciate that tolerance is his middle name.

"We have seen, however," he went on, "what ruinous results inevitably come from grazing—sheep in park areas. John Muir refers to sheep as 'hoof locusts.' In the state of Washington during the war, when great pressure was brought in Washington to induce us to permit the use of the parks for grazing, a goodly lot of citizens assured us over their names that they would rather have their lawns used for sheep grazing than men to turn their herds loose in the wild-flowered gardens of Mount Rainier national park."

He added the cattle grazing, likewise, has no place in the parks, except outlying districts where little harm can be done, which can be and are leased. Then he went on to indicate that just as the demands for commercial uses of the park increase year by year, so the number of travelers using the parks is increasing by leaps and bounds.

"It simply comes to this: We have to be consistent and take one view or the other: either we have to agree that the parks should be used for commercial developments, for grazing, irrigation purposes and like purposes, or else we must preserve the tradition that led to the establishment of the parks, that they are to be national playgrounds. In other words, we have to convince the people out west that the parks are far more precious to the people of the country than any commercial good that will come from invasion of the park traditions."

"Of course," Mr. Mather went on,



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Stephen T. Mather, Director of National Parks.

camp development of the parks, always with large financial returns to the people of the country, we feel that the greatest development is going to be along the line of free public camps. We are providing facilities for people to house themselves in the open, in carefully regulated camps where water supplies, sanitary facilities, even electric lights are provided. In fact, in some of the parks these provisions have encouraged motorists to such an extent as would amaze easterners. In the Yosemite during the past season, for instance, out of 50,000 tourists, 40,000 came in their own cars and 25,000 of them registered, actually signed on, for free camps."

But the danger of invasion of the parks by sheep and cattle herds is of distinctly less importance than the danger of invasion by irrigationists. "There will never be any serious desire in future years," Mr. Mather explained, "for grazing in the parks except in outlying sections. In the

thought is there is hardly an instance where practically the same results or better results cannot be obtained in other ways, i. e., without any invasion of the national parks. That, for instance, is the case in the plans advanced for the damming of Yellowstone lake."

The champions of irrigation developments, Mr. Mather pointed out, see only part of the picture or are encouraged to attempt to draw water from the parks by the case with which a waterfall, say, in one of the parks, can be utilized with no expenditure even for the purchase of lands.

But, largely because of the persuasive eloquence of this one man, it may be doubted whether the irrigationists, with innumerable opportunities for the development of "white coast" outside the parks, will ever make much headway in the parks. In fact, the whole question was made a definite and tangible issue after the

GREATEST ASSET OF CITY NOW IS WELL GUARDED

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Buckman school today is being used as part of the extension division of the University of Oregon course in public health nursing, demonstrations being given there daily. Outside organizations have co-operated to a great extent in the furthering of local work. Mrs. Blanche Blumauer, Jr., chairman of the local Junior Red Cross, has fostered the city dental clinic. Dentists of Portland have donated heavily to this service and it marks the application of a war lesson in the manner in which portable outfits are used from school to school.

The first dental unit was set up October 1 and now there are five dentists employed one-half time and five oral hygienists full time. At the present rate they make 4000 examinations weekly and other cities are coming to study the methods in use here. Part of their work consists of lectures and slides are exhibited showing the influence of bad teeth on the body. Over a thousand children have had extensive dental work done by the city dentist and many have been cared for by their own dentist. After the first examination frequent surveys are made to check up and ascertain why necessary dental work is not done. A spirit of competition is fostered by bestowing buttons for perfect teeth to each child and giving the class room a star when all the pupils have buttons. One case of dirty teeth will lose the room star and the result is that the children insist on frequent tooth brush drill. Special emphasis is placed on the care of permanent teeth.

Milk Feeding Proves Vital

Local milk stations have proven a vital factor in improving the health of school children. These milk stations are made possible by co-operation between the Parent-Teachers organizations, dairymen and the health bureau. Proceeds from the sale of Red Cross seals in the schools are utilized for this work. When a child is given the milk treatment, they are first weighed and entry made on charts furnished by the Oregon Tubercular society, and in some schools children have been found to be 25 per cent under weight. This is mainly in the districts where deserted mothers reside.

The Oregon Dairy Commission contributes five dollars in cash for each

close of the last session of congress. In the closing days an act was passed establishing the federal water power commission, composed of the secretaries of agriculture, interior and war, to pass on all applications for the use of irrigation opportunities on property held by the United States, including the Indian reservations and the 150,000,000 acres of national forests.

Soon after the water power bill was passed applications by the hundred poured in, many of which vitally affected the scenic beauties of the parks. As a result, in August the water power commission by singling out one application and ruling for all on the basis of that one, passed the following resolution.

It appearing from the record of applications before the commission that an application has been filed for the utilization of Cataract creek within the Grand Canyon National Park in the state of Arizona, it is moved that it be the established policy of the commission not to entertain or to consider any application for use of water power sites in any national park.

But the point here is that these various attempts to interfere with the park tradition, by irrigationists, sheepmen, cattlemen and others, might easily be carried through in one instance or another, if there were no national park service and no Mr. Mather.

He is a business man by training and it so happened that he was a classmate of the former secretary of the interior, Mr. Lane, at the University of California. When 1915 came around Mr. Lane needed an assistant to have as his special province the national parks and the various eleemosynary institutions, such as Freedmen's hospital, which are in the department of the interior. He asked Mr. Mather to come to Washington as that assistant.

Mr. Mather had large business interests headed up to him as president of two companies producing, refining and selling borax. These kept him busy and of course he knew that his government salary of \$2750 would hardly pay for the employment of a man, or men, to take his place. Nevertheless he came to Washington and went to work.

In large part through his efforts congress passed, the following year, August 25, 1916, a bill introduced by another Californian, Congressman William Kent, which established as a bureau the national park service. Mr. Mather then resigned as assistant to the secretary and became director of national parks, and his salary of \$2750 was increased to \$4500.

The writer knows of his own knowledge many instances where the director has, in the past several years, used his own funds to encourage the spirit of those beneath him or to do specific things for which no appropriation was made by congress. During the last year, in fact, it is probably no exaggeration to say that Mr. Mather has spent from his own pocket fully \$50,000 in the public interests and how much more that one cannot by diligent search check up, one can only guess.

In addition he has been giving himself to his work in a way that few government officials ever do. Fully two-thirds of the year he is traveling from park to park by laborious train journeys, then, in the parks themselves, riding horseback, roving here and there, so that when you mention the topography of this or that corner of this or that park, he can sit back and tell you almost all about it.

It is, in short, no exaggeration to say that not only is he giving his own funds to the working out of an absorbing dream that posterity will doubtless thank him for a million times, but he is giving his life to preserve and increase what we may call "the national park tradition."

station established as well as furnishing milk tickets and straws. All milk is furnished at the wholesale rate and some dairymen contribute a certain proportion of their output free of charge, this making it possible to furnish the necessary nourishment to children of the poor whose parents have no funds. The wonderful change in the physical and mental development of the child under this treatment is easily discernible a few days after the start. Children who found it difficult to make their necessary scholastic grades do so easily when properly nourished. There seems to be a splendid opportunity for practical philanthropy in furthering this work by the establishment of open-air rooms in which backward children may rest. Portland now has one school of this character which cares for 45 or 50 cases that show a pre-disposition to tuberculosis. Dr. J. Hunter Wells makes an examination weekly and nurses from the Oregon Tubercular association care for these cases. It is impossible to send many small children to this far distant place and for that reason Dr. Eames would like to see a number of small centers established throughout the city.

Free Dispensary is Founded.

Laboratories in the city hall care for the cultures taken from the school rooms. At the corner of Fourth and Jefferson streets the University of Oregon maintains a free dispensary and clinic open to children alone three times weekly and to adults the rest of the time. In the matter of milk stations the city of Seattle school board maintains them there and pays the whole cost as well as the cost for dental clinics. In Portland there would be no enterprise of this character if it were not made possible by outside help.

Children are the greatest article of value in the city of Portland, they are its real wealth, and a great improvement is already noticeable in the class of school children since the inception of this service a short time ago. Some portions of the local work are attracting national attention.

Coyote Drives to Be Made.

HOLLISTER, Cal.—Farmers of this section early next month will start a drive on the coyotes, which have been destroying crops lately. Residents are to be heard and join the government poisoner while he is working against the coyotes.

"the automobile has proved a marvelous stimulus to the playground idea. The parks to the nation are becoming what parks are to cities—what Central park is to New York and Rock Creek park is to Washington. And right on that point I consider that while we are spending thousands of dollars in hotel and