A FRIEND OF THE TREES
BY M. KENNEDY BAILEY

THE first time I saw Enos A. Mills he was addressing, at a national convention, an audience which became strangely silent as he pleaded for his friends the trees. Wearing as he did the look of one who lives his life in the open,—the look of contact with the trees and the beating sun and the forest trail, there was something in the man’s personality that spoke unconsciously of decades consecrated to the wilds and cloistered in them. He seemed to have come to the platform impelled by his affection for the forests to go out and tell the world of their danger. As you listened you felt the beauty of the forest’s life, the pathos of its struggles against the accidents of nature and the abuse of man, the joy of its days, the majesty of its nights, the tragedy of its death. You felt almost as if this man had been sent by the trees themselves to ask a busy world of men and women to protect them, for in the bearing and look of the speaker was unmistakable kinship with them,—a kinship that told of many years spent alone with nature in the intimate companionship of which poets have dreamed, but few men have actually experienced,—perhaps no other for the same purpose and in the same spirit that has animated Enos Mills.

Years later I saw Mr. Mills in his own mammoth forests up near the timber line in the Colorado Rockies. He was still about his business, this time writing the message that for ten months of the year he had been delivering from the lecture platform. He wrote in a cabin studio that would have delighted William Morris by its simple furnishings made from the limbs of fire-killed trees, its tables supported upon weather-carved stumps, its wonderful balustrades of rock-flattened pine roots, wrought by time and nature into beautiful shapes and strange fretwork. He is not at first easy to understand, unless you approach him as he approaches the trees, meeting him on his own ground of love for the natural and sweet and wholesome. As he laid down his firearms before entering the sanctuary of the forest, so must you lay down the armament of conventional small talk and small thought before being admitted on a basis of friendship with so intense and sincere a lover of nature.

It is really the artist in Enos Mills that has made him one of the most effectual defenders the forests have today. He knows
the beavers at their work of soil-making and moisture-conservation.

On the broad east shoulder of Long's Peak, Estes Park, Colorado, Mr. Mills has built an inn for the entertainment of nature-loving holiday makers, artists, writers and students. Naturalists and nature-students are apt to congregate there in summer. Botanists take the mountain trails every morning and return at noon with full portfolios. In the evening young men armed with field-glasses and knapsacks start for "The Timberline," another cabin built by Mr. Mills at the point where the forest stops and the snow begins. There they spend the night and make an early start the following morning for the Peak. Nobody plucks wantonly the flowers on Long's Peak and nobody shoots the game, and as you walk along the mountain trail you realize that this is the true spirit of Arcady,—this leaving of the

flowers to bloom, the flocks to feed and the trees to flourish.

The sleeping cabins and large central structure of the Inn cluster about Mr. Mills' own cabin studio, where he lives all win-

ter as well as summer, when not lecturing. He has probably made more speeches on the subject of forestry than anyone else in America, carrying his plea for their preservation into every State and territory and before audiences as various as there are kinds of human beings. No one is too old or too young; none too rich or too poor to feel the blessing of trees. Fashionable society and the slums have heard him in large cities; he has spoken in college and in kindergarten; the students at Tuskegee have listened to his impassioned words and Boston has been aroused to enthusiasm on behalf of the forests. In clubs and conventions interested in the conservation of the natural resources of the country, Mr. Mills has been much in demand. Most of his early addresses were delivered at his own expense,—a kind of philanthropy not very popular or widespread ten or fifteen years ago. Inasmuch as he earned the money to pay for his self-appointed mission of tree-preserver by deserting it at intervals to work in the mines or to act as guide through mountain passes, his task was not an easy

LONG'S PEAK INN: MR. MILLS' MOUNTAIN HOME.

LIVING ROOM IN THE INN.
THE STORY OF MANY WINDS.

That it brought results of immense importance we are assured by the changed conditions that exist today. It would be difficult to estimate the influence of this one man in bringing the country to its senses with respect to the forests. Now the forests have many champions and the idea of their conservation is becoming firmly established.

Mr. Mills’ book, “Wild Life in the Rockies,” which appeared a year ago, is a new and vivid interpretation of the spirit of the wilds. The chapter entitled “The Wilds without Firearms” is an interesting revelation of Nature’s friendliness, her fine response to the overtures of one who persisted in entering her domain unarmed and in regarding her forests as sanctuary. It is to this chapter that one must look for a revelation of the author’s personality and what he encountered in his early acquaintanceship with the deep woods. Another chapter is “The Story of a Thousand-Year Pine,”—the first adequate biography ever written of an individual tree. This pine tree essay brings a new, large and most interesting element into literature. “It is almost a marvel,” we read in this essay, “that trees should be the oldest of living things.” The pine of which Mr. Mills wrote was born in the year 856 near the Cliff-Dwellers’ Mesa Verde. It was cut down in 1903. A poet might have taken these dates and reconstructed from his imagination the drama enacted about it in all those centuries of time. But poet and naturalist together have done vastly more than that. Not only has Mr. Mills painted with swift, bold brushstrokes the pageant of the years, but he has read from the tree’s own scroll, as it opened under his saw and knife-blade, the records of its personal experiences. He knew in what year the borers attacked it and what year it was cured by the woodpecker surgeon. He knew the very season and the year in which it suffered an earthquake shock, and when it was, in turn, the target for Indian arrows and for the bullets of white men. His Old Pine was 636 years old when Columbus discovered America, and yet it was green and healthy when cut down seven years ago.

One of the aids Mr. Mills has found ready to his hand in expressing the natural life of the mountains is the camera, which he uses with marked success. Here again the artist stands revealed where naturalist and forester may have been supposed to have it all their own way. His pictures are remarkable for the skill and imagination displayed in the selection of subjects.

THE DEMOCRACY OF ART

“Potentially, every man is an artist. Between the artist, so called, and the ordinary man there is no gulf fixed which cannot be passed. Such are the terms of our mechanical civilization today that art has become specialized, and the practice of it is limited to a few; in consequence artists have become a kind of class. But essentially the possibilities of art lie within the scope of any man, given the right conditions. That man is an artist who fashions a new thing that he may express himself in response to his need. Whatever the form in which it may manifest itself, the art spirit is one.”

Carleton Noyes.