

WHO ARE THE FRIENDS OF OUR NATIVE LAND-SCAPE

JOHN G. D. MACK, *State Chief Engineer*

It is a double pleasure for me to attend a meeting of the State Horticultural Society, first on account of having been assigned a subject in which I am so greatly interested, and second, because one of my early recollections is about such an association. My father was a lawyer but had been a farmer until twenty-six years of age, and he never lost interest in agriculture and horticulture, never missing a meeting of the County Horticultural Society, so that I heard the subject discussed at home from the time when I had but the most vague notion what it was all about except that it had something to do with apples.

I am going to discuss an idealistic subject, "The Friends of Our Native Landscape," an organization of universal appeal.

The word "Idealistic" is used with deliberation, for we are so filled with the idea that in education everything but the so-called "practical subject," a greatly overworked term by the way, must be eliminated, rigidly excluding the theoretical and idealistic.

A disciple of the practical school is destined to meet many a rude shock as he finds case after case in which the despised "theoretical trash" turns out to be more practical than anything taught in the empirical school.

Scarcely an illustration comes to mind in which any one of the great basic inventions which make the comforts of present life what they are, but at some time past was the serious plaything of a man whom his neighbors were sure was not quite right and who was frittering away his time.

The future, even for a year, appears an interminable period, but a year in the past seems but a moment.

The future being so long distant we do not realize that it will soon be here and thus do not lay the proper plans.

We do not plan to broaden our streets, when it might be planned with small expense, except in rare cases, until we suddenly find the expense is prohibitive on account of development.

We have not protected nature's beauties. If we do not protect them, critics of the future will regard us, who destroy the charming vista, the choice bit of woodland, the marvelous rock founda-

tions, such as there are at Devil's Lake and vicinity as we regard the vandals who wrecked the architectural monuments of antiquity.

Fortunately an awakening is at hand and it is getting more and more the force of law behind it.

Creative laws trail public sentiment, seldom if ever does the law go in advance.

One of the greatest stimulants has been "The Friends of Our Native Landscape," organized in Chicago some ten years ago, under the militant spirit of that true friend of nature Mr. Jens. Jensen.

Wisconsin has its new County Rural Planning Law, an immeasurable step in our state in advance in the preservation of nature's best works.

The Woman's Clubs have some great things to their credit in the preservation of landmarks as has the Wisconsin Archaeological Society.

I am a member of the landmarks committee of the State Historical Society. Under the leadership of the Hon. P. V. Lawson, this committee took for its first work the arousing of public sentiment in the preservation of Aztalan.

Many cities have done wonderful work in planning and securing parks, drives and playgrounds.

The Friends of Our Native Landscape, however, is the all including organization where all the specialists may get together and by mass action arouse public sentiment before it is too late and the damage done beyond repair.

I have tried to think of a group who would not be interested in the work of the Friends, but with no success.

One large group, the children, will all be with us, for most of them would rather live outdoors than indoors. The native landscape appeals to them for their imagination is still unimpaired, and they regard the finest of man made parks with some disdain, in comparison with the woodland, lakes and streams as left by nature.

Then we might consider the persons who like to hunt, camp, fish, drive or walk, in addition to many other outdoor diversions, all will be with us. Also the farmer, who has quite as much if not more appreciation of these things than has the city dweller.

Why do so many persons choose for their vacation place the wildest spots they can reach? It is to get away for a time from the artificial places, back to places like the haunts of their distant ancestors, some authorities hold. These ancestral traits are in all of us in some form.

For those who can not go to the distant places the Friends propose to bring the distant places nearer home, that all may have opportunity to enjoy them, and thus add to the happiness of those here and those to come.

Is it idealistic? Possibly, but at the same time, it is so intensely practical that it should delight the narrowest exponent of the purely utilitarian.

My topic is, "Who are the Friends of Our Native Landscape?" It will be easier to reverse the question and tell who are the enemies, for when the purposes of the Friends are understood, there are no enemies.

IS SPARTA COMING BACK?

F. KERN

Just why our Secretary should have imposed upon your good nature and your presence here by placing me on the program, when I am not a public speaker, I cannot quite understand, but I received this notice not long ago: "You are drafted. Your topic is: 'Is Sparta Coming Back?' and, like every good soldier who is drafted, I am here. The topic assigned me, "Is Sparta Coming Back," is peculiarly worded and is mighty hard to talk on by one who has lived all his life in and around Sparta. Had my topic read "Is Sparta Going Back?" I could have made a very short address and told you the whole story by saying, "NO," but the Secretary, when he assigned this topic, must have had in mind the story told of the president of one of the Gould lines, where a train pulled into a station and young George Gould stepped off the train and accosted the car inspector, Jed, who had been with the company for a long term, and the president said to Jed, "How they using you, Jed?" "Nothin' extra." "This is a pretty good line, isn't it?" "I should say not." "They pay good salaries, don't they?" "Not very." Then Gould said, "You don't know me, do you Jed?" to which Jed replied, "Yes, and I