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The Yosemite Valley.

(By Florence V. Hughes, in 'Golden Rule'.)

Through the centre of the Yosemite Valley winds a clear, deep river of melted snow, wearied by its plunge over fearful cliffs. On its banks grow cool ferns and great masses of pure azaleas, while over the whole floor of the valley is spread a carpet of the lovely wild flowers of California, lifting their tiny, perishable faces up to the frowning walls that are scarred and worn by glaciers of by-gone ages. Down their sides leap the most beautiful waterfalls in all the world, mingling their ceaseless thunder with the soft music of giant pines at their feet.

Here and there cool springs bubble forth from the mosses, and for two miles at the lower end of the valley the river dashes itself in rage against the boulders that line its path, drops into deep, sullen pools, and flings white arms aloft as if in despair at its enforced retreat from a scene of such enchantment.

In strong contrast to the fury of these cascades, at the head of the valley lies beautiful Mirror Lake, placid and serene. Here there are two Yosemitees—one far above one's head, and the other reflected six thousand feet below, quite as perfect in color and detail, and intensified in beauty. It is a sight never to be forgotten to see the sun rise a mile below one's feet, to see his first rays light up a corner of majestic Half Dome, and transform three fringing evergreens into a film of burnished silver.

Near Mirror Lake is the foot of the trail leading up to the only two falls that are not visible from the floor of the valley. It is a long and difficult climb to the top of the higher and more beautiful of the two, Nevada Falls; but one is more than repaid by the first glimpse of the great, filmy clouds of vapor, which, flung far over the precipice, are caught by the wind, swaying to and fro, and pierced by swift white rockets that burst upon the rocks six hundred feet beneath, to float away in rainbowed mist.

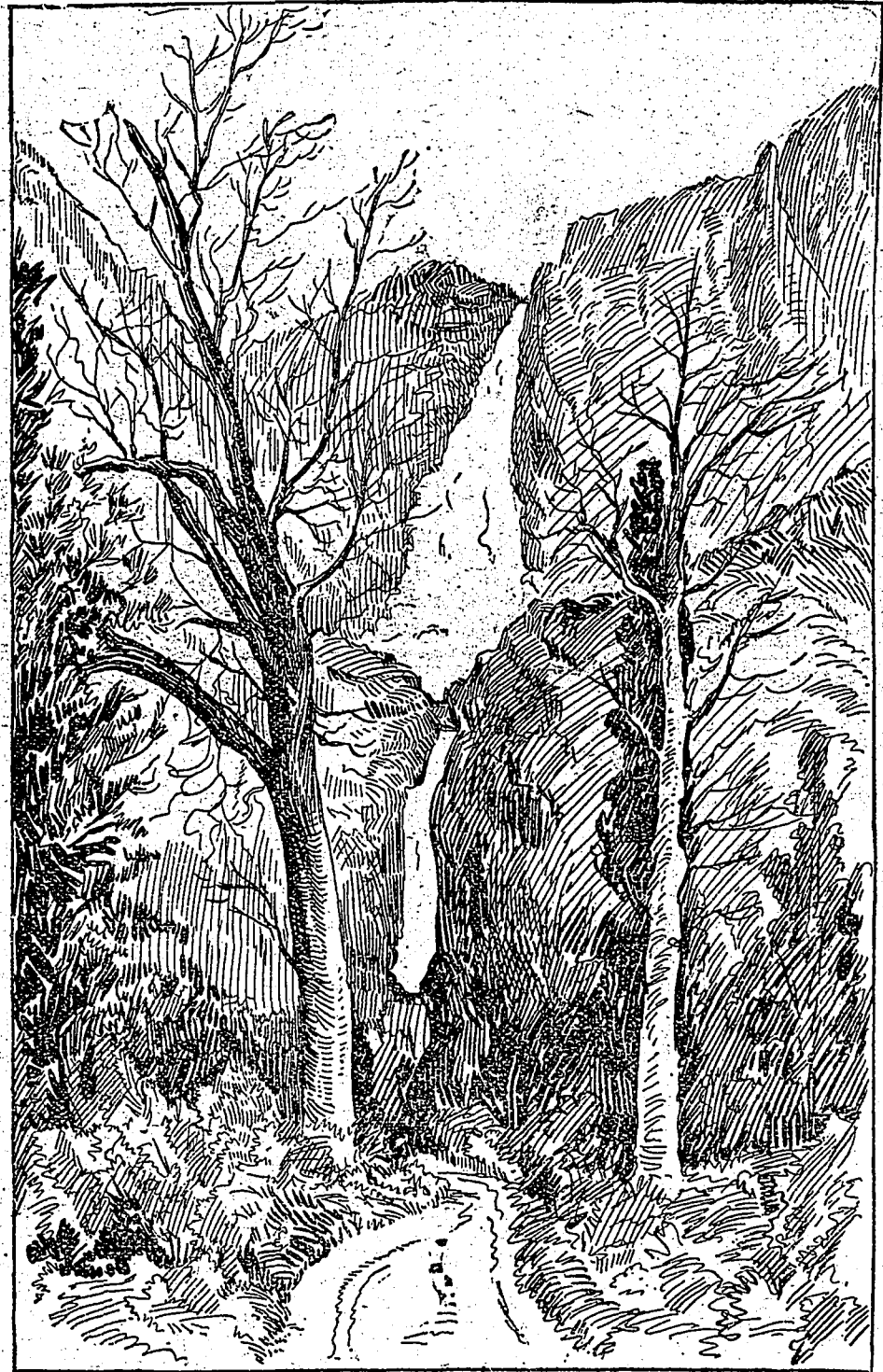
Even above the place of its fatal plunge the swift-flowing river loses all likeness to water, though the very rocks beneath one's feet tremble with the onward, resistless rush of these soft, cloudlike billows. As one reluctantly descends the trail and reaches the Diamond Cascade, half-way between Nevada and Vernal Falls, one is again loath to believe that this can be water—these millions of diamonds tossed high into the air, these great sprays of frostwork silhouetted against the blue of a California sky. Yet, within these rocky walls, barely twelve feet apart, is confined the whole of the Merced River, rushing headlong, at the rate of sixty miles an hour, to its plunge at Vernal Falls, half a mile away. Vernal Falls is by far the smallest sister of all the falls; yet it measures twice the height of Niagara, though only seventy feet wide, and carrying, of course, a far less volume of water.

At this point it is best to leave the old trail, if one is not afraid of a little wetting, and descend two stairways into a stone arch lined with moss and ferns. Here one finds oneself the centre of a small circular rainbow that moves forward with one's advance through the mist of the fall, and demolishes

the last remnant of any childish hope of finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow by the discovery that, alas! it has no end.

If one's stay in the Yosemite is limited, it is never Glacier Point that is omitted from the long list of charming excursions; and, unless one has been brought up from childhood upon four-mile mountain trails, it is

the bottom, the mule slowly revolves upon a pivot, and the rider is once more headed up the narrow trail, while his heart momentarily resumes its normal position. In reality there is no danger, and one's fears are obliterated in the first glance at the whole upper end of the valley displayed in magnificent panorama. Over the opposite black cliff the Yosemite Fall makes the stupendous leap of half



UPPER AND LOWER YOSEMITE FALLS.

best to trust one's safety to the sturdy legs of 'Doc' or 'Mamie,' or any one of the mules for rent in the valley. At first it seems rather a hazardous undertaking, for the mule insists on taking the extreme outer edge of the trail, and, when he reaches the numerous sharp curves, hangs his head far over the precipice. Then, just as his rider has made a rapid calculation, based upon the laws that govern falling bodies, as to how many seconds it will take him and the mule to reach

a mile; the clear, swift river at one's feet becomes a stagnant, green pool; the orchard is a checkerboard, and horses and carriages bear a laughable resemblance to tiny toy waggons wound up by a string and sent gliding across a green carpet. To the right tower lofty Clouds' Rest and the inaccessible rounded mass of Half Dome. Far across the green canons gleam the silver threads of Vernal and Nevada Falls, while beyond, rising tier upon tier, the snow-covered peaks of