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NATIONAL PARKS IN STATE FORESTS

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MR. CHAIRMAN, FELLOW FORESTERS,

It is really a milestone in my life as a Forester, if I am a Forester, to meet the real Foresters of Ireland. When I think of the work I have done I have felt I have been working in the dark, unadvised, often laughed at, and never encouraged. It has been wonderful to me lately, having taken a few trips through parts of Ireland that I had not seen for thirty or forty years—for I am of an immense age—to see beginnings of forests. At all hours, day and night, I find myself running into little belts of forests, but I never meet Foresters. They seem to be something as fascinating and invisible as the fairies but their work is there and if I am speaking to any one of them to-day, let me congratulate them.

I am not going to talk about Forestry. I am going to put as briefly as I can the idea of a national park. I have not come to receive the usual praises and bouquets which are handed around at Irish meetings; in fact I expect that my suggestions will be torn to shreds, and out of the discussion something useful, not merely laudatory, will arise. I spoke of my immense age. Now that I look back, during my own lifetime I seem to have touched on the beginnings of the national park, not only in England and Scotland, but even in America. Since the year 1903 I have had an intense, overwhelming interest in trees. That year there was a great wind and a very famous wood in my grandfather's place was toppled over. It made an enormous impression on me to go out and see a magnificent wood of conifers 60 and 70 years old in a state of dereliction and, filled with sorrow and amazement, I ran out that afternoon with a small tree in a flower pot and planted it. I have been planting ever since, and I hope that I shall attain to the ambition of every Forester and be buried in a coffin made of planks from trees that I planted with my own hands. What interested me in my early visits to America was to get in touch with the great lumber kings and their crusading enemies, those who revived forestry in the United States on a scale of magnificence. I knew the great Theodore

Roosevelt and his great lieutenant, Gifford Pinchot, afterwards Governor of Pennsylvania, and I was able to go about America and saw a few stands that had been saved of the great original woods, sights that you have no idea of and which I cannot describe but which I have seen as a result of journeys difficult indeed, away from railways. I have seen the last stands in Wisconsin and I have seen the Warren Woods which a Mr. Warren snatched from the power of the lumber kings saying: "I will show posterity what a great part of America looked like when it belonged to God Almighty."

But I have seen the terrible districts in Canada and the United States where the lumber kings went through, reaping disaster and wreckage to make their fortunes and leaving stagnation and horror impossible to describe. Against that, you have the new woods, the new forests, and you have a man like Theodore Roosevelt who could say to them: "Destroyers! Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." And finally, I have seen in my own time great portions of the American public becoming tree-conscious to an extraordinary degree—States where great and famous trees are scheduled, named and marked and no man can touch, and where forestry and the science of trees enters a great deal into the education. So that, in my own lifetime, I have seen the worst happen in America and then the tide turn, and it is turning more every day.

I have followed as well as I could the developments in England and Scotland and tried to reproduce them, if I could at all. I live on the Ulster borders. I think you could reach me. I am half in and half out, on my famous bog, half of it republican and the other half monarchical! You have only got to travel the well-trodden track of the smugglers and you will find your way there. I have lived too much in that corner and it is only recently I have been going out into other parts of Ireland and trying to estimate things as they are. I have known two public men in this country, each of whom, I think, was a milestone; each of whom, if he did not actually reverse a side of our life, certainly altered it for all time. One was George Wyndham, whom I knew when he was passing the Land Act which, I think, changed this country as far as he could, and the other was Horace Plunkett, who changed farming. The great disaster is that neither of them was interested enough to change forestry, and of course the time of the George Wyndham Act was the time when great parks could have been set aside and sites of national parks might then have been devised. But perhaps the man who will make Irish forestry a reality, a monument to himself and a delight to posterity, is not yet on the horizon. But I feel certain he will come and take your labours and mine and our ideas and make Ireland what she should be, a normal timber-growing country.

Now I have promised to stick to the idea of the national park. During my travels I have always avoided towns and the sights that were shown one—the buildings and the civic life—they were all

well enough in their way but I have always struck out to see the national parks. Of course there is no doubt the Americans have got ahead of the world. The Yosemite Valley of the great trees, and the Yellowstone—yes, those are the greatest national parks that will ever be made, greater even than the Kruger National Park in South Africa, which is more of a sanctuary for fauna. It is interesting that the idea sprang up in my own lifetime almost. Take the Yellowstone. Why, that idea was given to the Washington Government by a traveller, a pioneer, a cattle puncher from Canada, an uncle of mine, who prospected in Wyoming before it was a State. It was General Sheridan who sent him out there and he brought back this idea and the Washington Government, acting with their usual promptitude, made this a Garden of Eden, one of the most beautiful sights on this earth. The natural rock, the natural forest fauna and flora, all survive over an enormous area of hundreds of square miles. The idea, of course, has gone right through America and every time I return there is a new national park. I have not seen that of the Adirondacks, but it is a very wonderful one, among the lakes. There is a new one in Maine and, incidentally, there is another in the Rockies—Estas Park—which was simply the prospecting ground of another Irishman, the late Lord Dunraven, who bought up a few thousand acres at, I think, a few cents an acre, and only sold it when they proposed to tax him something like half a dollar an acre. This park is now worth millions and millions, but it all belonged to one Irishman at one time.

What I feel is that the idea is not a slow idea, once it gets root, and Ireland is not stagnant, whatever people may say. The changes in my lifetime have been astonishing, and the face of the land is changing. It is our business to see that it changes for the better.

Well, now I want just practically to tell you what the Scots expect to do and what the English are already doing and then, I am not going to be dogmatic, I am going to leave it to you. You know these things much better than I do. Let your minds think in parallels of the places in Ireland which are suitable for national parks. You must know corners of Ireland that others do not know at all. You must know the condition of the soils, the contour of the mountains and, though of course, forestry is largely commercial and I expect to be naturally heavily attacked on that point, I hear the national park drags in a number of interests which I hope we shall extend to those who are interested in them, e.g., the forest interest, the naturalist interest, the sporting interest, even the medical interest. I have seen the great balsam woods where, in America, they lay out the sufferers from consumption to receive the healing of nature. I am sure that if I ever developed this disease I should flatly decline to go into any of these hospitals but would go into the woods and lie down under the trees, and if Nature did not heal me, I should not care to go on.

I propose just to deal with the places roughly which the Scots, who are entirely separate from the English in this matter, have set aside as suitable sites for national parks. I dealt with this in *Studies* as well as I could. The English have appointed a Standing Committee and the Scots a Council. In this I think the English are moving much faster. The Scots are following and I am sure we in time, with a certain dignity of slowness, will come after. They tell me in Tipperary that the devil was never able to tempt the Irish people. He offered them half of the world, he offered them empire. They were not taking any of these. When he was in despair he turned to them and he said: "There is no hurry," and they unfortunately believed him. It is for you gentlemen to know and decide whether the question of the national parks is a question for hurry or not. I do not mean a question of weeks and months, but a question of our own generation. I do not know if you know Scotch geography at all, but what I have worked at is the Scotch report and I am speaking of it. You see, there are only two or three of the sites that I have been able to get a glimpse of. I have compared the English report of what is already done with the Scotch and I have been able to see most of these and thus I have, with some effrontery, more like a schoolboy, drawn up a list of possible Irish sites—ten of them, corresponding with the ten English. The type of Scotch national park is certainly very different from the type the English expect. I shall give you the five selected.

Lough Lomond which, of course, has a good deal of afforestation in process and which is well organised with hotels. That is a place where romance is going to lead the tourist. Then, a place which I have not seen, is Glen Affric—those three enormous glens each 20 miles long, which run along the other side of the Caledonian canal. This, if they make it a park, will, of course, only attract the most adventurous—the explorer type. Then, what is more likely to be their great central park, is that large massif of Ben Nevis and Glencoe. That will be where the naturalists will find their treasure. The Cairngorms are also selected because they cover the remnant of the old Caledonian forest, and now I want to ask whether there is any remnant of the old Irish forest left in Ireland. I have always been trying to see for myself if there is. I have sometimes been taken on an expedition to see remnants of the ancient forest which I knew enough to see were not so. The other Scotch proposal is Lough Torridon which, of course, is largely geological and I should think would cause a heavy mortality among rock climbers, but it has deer forests which are thick with most interesting flora and fauna and I should think afforestation will have a very difficult time there.

I turn now to England and I should have said Wales, because in this matter Wales is apparently going to throw her lot in with England. Ten districts there are proposed, and if I know the English will, we shall live to see some of them in existence. Things

are moving with enormous speed, interesting things, which I heard one of the speakers talking about. The thing which interested me most during the war was seeing the fen country, which I have known as marsh, very reminiscent of some of our corners of Ireland, simply turned, by powerful drainage and determination by men and machines, into corn land—the most astonishing change-over. Now if the English are going to pour that same practical power and determination into forestry as they threaten and dig their wastes and their sand dunes, dig their Scotch mountains and re-forest them, they will do something on the same gigantic scale, but they never seem to do anything till their backs are against the wall and then they are stronger than most. I am going to give you the areas instead of giving you a wordy discourse. I am trying to leave with you the fundamental seeds of an idea which is germant on the other side of the channel and with us is still dormant, but in your minds I am certain it will work out and I do not think that anything will be done unless the minds, or rather the experience, of many are put together. Well, now, nobody has the slightest idea what the face of England is going to look like in fifty years, or even in twenty. The country is in a state of enormous confusion. It does not know where it is, either financially, politically or culturally, in art or in agriculture. Now I am not mocking at that very great and hardly-used country which has come through what nobody expected it would come through, but I am wondering, and I am often admiring them. The English countryside is in a pretty sad state at the present moment in many cases but you get glimpses that call for the greatest admiration. As I said, the way they dug their fens and the way they are already building up and trying to secure their agricultural assets which they built out of almost nothing during the war. If to their agricultural programme their Government really decides to add one that should appeal to the Socialist ideas in force, they should really tackle it and we may see the beginnings of the first national parks. Some may be failures, but somehow or other, they generally achieve success.

Their proposals are, first of all, to take the Lake district. That I know extremely well. That would be 860 square miles and it could probably look after itself. Afforestation is beginning there, the tourist element is secure there. I might say that the enormous volume of English tourism is now limited to what are called sterling areas, that is to say that Switzerland is no longer going to be the playground of England's thousands of holiday-makers. The Riviera and Monte Carlo districts are "broke" for all time. The question is, what we can do to take their place. The English, I am perfectly certain, are going to put up the equivalent of the Riviera attractions in their own country. The Lake district, as I say, is going to be the easiest, because they have the population unanimously behind the idea. The great landowners and the powers that be are quite

certain that the Lake district is No. 1 priority, National Park of England.

Secondly, there is Snowdonia. This, of course, is the massif of Snowdon and the great mountainous district around. I did not realise till I went to see it that it covers 200 square miles and is the nearest I have ever seen to the Rockies.

Then, Dartmoor is the third and, down in the centre of England, the Peak district and the Dovedale, which amount to 500 square miles. They want to preserve the coastline in parts and have planned to lay out about 100 square miles of the Pembroke coast—a certain amount of this will be inland of course—selected parts of the Cornish coast, the Craven Pennines, embracing an area of 470 square miles; the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons; Exmoor, and, last of all, a smaller area which covers the Roman Wall, that famous wall which still stands in many parts of England, by which the great Emperor Hadrian made the first determined attempt to keep the Scotch out of England.

I should, of course, have provided myself with a large hanging map with the districts I am about to mention coloured, but you are probably good geographers. At any rate, you must have the map of Ireland in your mind, and this is my very humble—I would say, schoolboy—parallel to those ten.

Corresponding to the Lake district—well, it leaps to the mind. There could only be Killarney. Snowdonia?—The nearest to this, I think, is the North Donegal Highlands. I don't know if you know them well. I have explored them when I was young and walked and lost myself on those wonderful mountains; in fact one of my best walks in my walking days was from Finntown up into the Poisoned Glen where I was overtaken by the night and, by all proper folklore, I should never have come out alive! But that magnificent part of Ireland, as far as I know, is as I knew it when I walked through it. I remember once walking for six hours without meeting a human being. Well, of course, I have never been able to explain, but I did meet one being, but he was not a human being, but that is another story.

Dartmoor—perhaps the Curragh; the Peak district and Dovedale—I think the Wicklow mountains. Of course the Wicklow mountains have changed in my time. I have walked through this in the day and in the night and have seen a great deal of Ireland, when I was young, because the great Standish O'Grady who, I suppose, started all the literary Irish movement, told me: "You will never see Ireland or know Ireland or understand or feel the peace or the beauty of it unless you walk around Ireland and walk at night." I took his advice and I never regretted it but I lost myself in the Wicklow mountains. I must go back to them, however, because to me, the most fascinating map is the map that hangs in Dr. Anderson's room. When I come to Dublin I go and look at it

and see forests and woods painted in and I feel I would like to get reproductions of it and it should be in the schools and colleges and everybody who is interested in forestry, when they feel discouraged and the rabbits and the goats have destroyed trees and fences and they have endured all the miseries and disappointments the Forester has to endure, will get marvellous encouragement by looking at the map and feeling: Well, there is somebody trying to do the same there, and here, and on that mountain and in that glen—and then one goes back and one lays down the wire again and starts once more.

Well, to go back—the Pembroke coast—I suppose the immediate parallel is the Clare coast, with all that exotic flora; the Cornish coast—I have put down Achill Island. Now, it is a very curious thing, about 60 years ago a great African traveller, the late Sir Harry Johnson, wrote and printed a most interesting plea that Achill Island should be set aside as a national park and a sanctuary; that the fauna and the flora, all the interesting things, should be preserved there and that people would come from all over the British Isles and Europe to see them. I think the article may be read in the English *Spectator*. I just came across it by pure chance. Instead of the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons, the Galtees perhaps; for Exmoor, the Dingle peninsula . . . and there I leave it.

As for the Roman wall, I do not think we have got anything like it except the Black Pig's Dyke. That causes such controversy that I had better ask you to consider that I have not mentioned it. As a Northerner I can tell you that there is a Black Pig's Dyke, although you may not believe it, and that the original people of Ireland were contained in it.

I have given you a very rapid sketch of my ideas, but there is one last thing that may be of interest. Amongst Foresters in the south of England, instead of putting up a stone monument to those who had died during the second world war, it had been decided to plant a tree for every man who had been killed, and this would amount to a forest of 120,000 trees. I think this is a splendid idea, and that it would please you to hear of it.

As you see, I have not tried to force any of my ideas but have thrown it out in its first, most fundamental shape. If this is the first meeting in Ireland where the idea of the national park has been broached and developed, perhaps it may prove to be one of the historical meetings in our history—historical, not because of the lecturer, but because I have had the kind attention, sympathy and, I hope, the keen, clear criticism of the handful of men who, I think, and shall continue to think, are doing more for Ireland than any other handful.
