

BEAR MEADOWS**An Attractive Bit of Nature Near College.**

Regarding the Bear Meadows, an interesting bit of wild nature in our neighborhood, the following article, written by Dr. Buckhout about twenty years ago may serve to give a good idea of its former state, but as to its present condition the results are what might have been anticipated. Commercialism has done its work and left its trail of consequences.

Now that the state has acquired the property along with the region about it, we may expect that it may be slowly restored to its pristine condition. This may take many years, but it is much more probable and will require less of artificial aid than will be the case in the surrounding mountain lands, since there will be a measure of protection from fire, that greatest obstacle in any reforestation.

"To the many who in times past have visited the "Bear Meadows," in Center County, the announcement that a lumber company has begun operations there will come with a feeling of genuine regret. The isolation by which the meadows have been preserved so long has been overcome at last, and it is now only a question of time when they will be despoiled of their chief attraction, the trees, and it is to be feared, left as barren and uninviting as modern lumbering methods can make them. The place is unique, and has its like nowhere else in this region, though common enough elsewhere; and from time immemorial has been a favorite resort of hunters, fishermen, and others, who have found a special attraction in its curious peat bog, whose treacherous surface, shaking like jelly, has mired many a venturesome explorer, and about whose margins pitcher plants and cranberries, with many less conspicuous plants, grow in profusion. Various

orchids and ferns, particularly northern forms, found a shelter here. But the crowning glory lay in the fringe of noble spruces, black and an occasional balsam spruce, which reached a great size, and because of their beautiful symmetry and color always attracted attention. Various other trees are especially fine, notably the so-called tulip poplar (*Liriodendron*), and any one who was ever rash enough to try a short cut through the laurel (*rhododendron*) generally paid for it both in time and temper, and was made to declare that it was a little thicker and worse tangled than any he had ever tried before. Here were the favorite places for bear pens, and probably every fall and winter since the settlement of Penn's valley, bears have been caught in these traps set in the laurel thickets. On the outskirts and hillsides occur the usual trees of the region—the oaks, particularly the chestnut oak, pitch pine, etc. Parties coming here to hunt and fish were wont to make free use of everything which nature had so lavishly produced, and which seemed to have no owner and no value. If huts were needed, especially in summer, they were made of huge plates of bark peeled from the standing spruces, and half hidden by the dark green of their living comrades, many blighted, spiry trunks could be seen, silent witnesses accentuating the barbarity of destruction. Here, too, in time past came the shingle maker when he wanted some extra good hand-shaved pine shingles; and whenever a farmer needed a particularly neat, long, straight stick for any purpose, a trip to the "meadows" was generally undertaken to get it. Perhaps the fascination and air of mystery about the place had more to do with it than the special excellence of the timber; for such a trip was a promise of a day's fishing after harvest, a something held in

anticipation by many people, wherein distance lends its usual enchantment.

"The Indians were reputed to have come here for this and that, and the dark waters of the little stream charged with organic matter have been thought to favor the curious idea that the meadows held some peculiar mineral wealth. Many of the so-called 'coal' mines east of the Alleghanies have been opened hereabouts, commonly in the lower silurian shales, which, as they crop out below the meadows, are strangely deceptive in their blackness. Specimens of them have several times been sent to the writer, and they have always come from near the 'Bear Meadows,' evidently a point much in their favor. Upon one visit to a 'mine' which had 'almost reached the coal,' some fine specimens of pyrites were shown, which the miner remarked, 'were almost too bright for iron, and not quite the right color for copper, but mightn't they be brass?'"

"With the extension of the Lewisburg and Tyrone railroad through the seven mountains and into and through Penn's Valley, considerable timber land before inaccessible has been opened to a market. That about the Bear Meadows has remained untouched, however, until now. Recently some 5,000 acres, in which the meadows are included, have been secured by a lumber company, who are now making preparations to cut from it. A tramway is being constructed to it, and active lumbering will soon begin. The actual amount of timber is not great, for some parts have none at all and others a very scanty growth of anything usable, and much of it is past its prime, and should have been cut long ago. The regret that this isolated spot has at length been invaded is rather for the fear that wholesale cutting will be followed by neglect, and we shall have another case ad-