



Collapse 1917

The morning after the gala celebration of New Year 1917, Mather said we had to have a serious talk before the conference on national parks opened. He was very secretive. Instead of using his office, we met in a small conference room rarely used by Lane or his other assistants, and he admonished me to tell no one of our meeting.

He started off the conversation in an extremely somber vein, mentioning past successes but dwelling almost entirely on failures or projects uncompleted. It was somewhat of a surprise to me, for Mather was usually all enthusiasm, bursting with ideas and optimistic plans. He wasn't one to look back. The more he talked, the more depressed he seemed.

He kept going over his disagreements with Bob Marshall, and repeatedly he said, "Horace, do you realize this is the day Bob's transfer from our outfit becomes effective?" He never got over Marshall's estrangement and enmity.

He also dwelled on the problems with various park concessions, particularly the Desmond Company in Yosemite. Making the Grand Canyon a national park, and the mining claims there, deeply disturbed him.

He even worried about Lane. With the election over, he felt Lane would probably be replaced by a new secretary, who would not be interested in national parks, or, worse, be antagonistic to them—"probably be

some citified easterner who wouldn't care a tinker's damn about anything west of the Hudson unless it would be to develop the resources."

There was no use in arguing that some of the ideas seemed pretty pessimistic, so I remained silent and listened to these downbeat troubles.

For the first time, Mather told me in some detail about his financial involvement with the Desmond Company and the serious trouble it was in, especially since Desmond himself had disassociated himself from it. He confessed that he, along with a few others, was committed to bailing the company out. Of course, I had long known that the whole matter had been kept under wraps, but he seemed unaware that there were possible illegal elements involved. Apparently innocent of the law, the participants had gone along with their plans and agreements until circumstances had forced them into a box.

Alarmed and apprehensive, I asked if he would fill me in on details. After all, I was an attorney and had spent some time investigating the legal angles of their problem. I honored this man, and in his present condition I was fearful that he could bring disgrace on himself, his partners, and the new National Park Service. The more I turned it over in my mind, the more worried I became, and the more questions I asked.

He suddenly clammed up. He instructed me to forget our meeting and everything that we had talked about. Instead, my concern for him made me press for details, offering any help I could give him. He became very nervous, his voice rising. Suddenly he refused to discuss the matter any further, and he switched to the question of who would run the new service.

Mather knew that Lane wanted him to be confirmed as director, but he was indecisive. He seesawed back and forth. First he felt his job wasn't finished until the bureau was set up, with proper appropriations and an organization to provide smooth operations. Then he lapsed into this black hole of depression, talking about his inability to solve the vast assortment of problems.

"I'm not an organization man. I like to do things in the field, not fiddle-faddle around an office, pushing papers and digging around in details. When you leave, I would have nobody to take care of these things, and I simply cannot tackle them by myself."

Well, now we were getting down to the nuts and bolts of the conversation. He had to know whether I was going back to California, whether I was going to leave the service as planned after the superintendents' conference and appearing before congressional committees for appropri-

ations to start up the Park Service. He probed and probed without coming directly to the point.

Although I had been offered opportunities in several fine San Francisco law firms and a teaching position at the University of California, I really had been too busy and concerned with national park affairs to think beyond the conference and the appropriation problems. Looking across the room at this worried, disturbed man, whom I had learned to admire so deeply, I made a fast decision.

"Mr. Mather, let's not concern ourselves with these problems today. You know I'm always with you and will not walk away until we have an opportunity to assess our future. We're like parents to this new National Park Service. We created it, we gave birth to it, and we'll always take its interests to heart. Let's just tackle one thing at a time. Let's make this superintendents' conference, into which you've put so much of yourself, a great success. That's the prime consideration right now."

Well, he instantly brightened up, jumped to his feet, and began his pacing, which always meant furious thinking, a problem of his feet keeping up with his mind. He switched moods completely as he began rattling off details and instructions about tomorrow's meeting. I left him with a feeling of relief.

Stephen Mather had a brilliant conception for this Fourth National Parks Conference. He hoped that the broad inclusion of people from a variety of fields would result in discussions leading to plans and policies for the organization and future direction of the new bureau. It was to be a teaching and a learning experience for all, designed to cover as many spheres of knowledge concerning the national parks as he could find learned speakers—economics, reclamation, roads, sciences from botany to biology, photography, art, education, and even religion. The concept was fascinating, and Bob Yard carried out his chief's ideas superbly. He contacted the participants and suggested the topics for their lectures, and if there was to be a slide show, he chose the pictures to be shown.

For my part, I had the management of the sessions, seeing that the speakers were lined up in proper order and obtaining any equipment they requested. I also saw to the refreshments, accommodations in hotels, and problems that arose for our guests.

It was a bright, sunny morning of Tuesday, January 2, 1917, when hundreds of people streamed into the auditorium of the New National Museum for the first session of the National Parks Conference. There were more interested applicants than we could handle here.

The morning session opened right on time, with Mather presiding over the theme of economics, and the national parks. He filled the morning with fairly innocuous talks by Secretary Lane, Senator Reed Smoot, and Representatives Scott Ferris, Irvine Lenroot, and William Kent, leaders in the fight to pass the bill creating the National Park Service. It was most interesting to hear the divergent views of the congressmen.

Mather closed the morning session with an accolade for Robert Marshall. As he spoke, his voice began to tremble and his hands twisted his program into a knot. He abruptly stopped talking and simply stared at the audience. Bob Yard, who was near him, quickly shuffled just enough to jar him lightly. He seemed to waken from a trance and then finished with a fine announcement of the exhibition of paintings to be shown in the evening session. The meeting was adjourned. Only Yard and I seemed to notice the interruption. From the look on his face, I could see that he was as concerned and fearful as I, but we didn't discuss it.

After lunch Mather had scheduled a real eye-opener, someone to shake the audience awake after their encounter with much delicious food and drink. He also thought he needed a person who would keep the audience from drifting away in the afternoon as so often happens. So he scheduled as leadoff speaker the fireball Enos Mills, "Father of Rocky Mountain National Park," a famous writer and lecturer.

The topic of Mills's speech, as printed in the program, was "The National Parks for All the People." One interesting thought he reiterated several times was that it would never do to have public schools make money for their upkeep or public playgrounds make profits to operate them. So why should national parks become moneymakers to pay for themselves? Let the people's taxes take care of property they used and enjoyed.

As Mills had taken more than a lion's share of the afternoon, other speakers sympathetically shortened theirs. But it wasn't only Mills who rambled. Strangely, Mather interjected several unscheduled talks of his own during the afternoon—his thoughts or experiences in various parks. Speaking about concessions in Yosemite, he rambled about the Desmond Company. He explained that after paying interest on the investment and depreciation, the company would keep seventy-five percent and give twenty-five percent to the Park Service for the first five years. Then it would be fifty-fifty. Normally the government took a flat percentage of the gross receipts, so this was an odd arrangement.

My attention had kind of drifted off until I heard Mather say: "A group of public-spirited men of broad vision are working out a most comprehensive set of plans, etc." I came to with a jolt, my heart nearly flipping over for fear he was about to go on to explain his part in financing the Desmond Company. That would have been a catastrophe. While I was still holding my breath, he abruptly switched topics.

Later, when he was to introduce Assistant Attorney General Huston Thompson, Mather wandered off on Crater Lake. He told a long story about how sheep had grazed there and destroyed all the wild flowers, which had fragile roots due to volcanic ash in the soil. He added that it would take fifty years or more to see them again unless artificial means were used to reintroduce them.

At this point in his story, Mather's voice began to falter and he seemed about to cry. Hardly daring to move, I thought a diversion would have to be created immediately. But what? The chair: I'd let my chair crash on the floor. As quickly as the thought flashed into my head, Mather's voice strengthened and he quietly announced Huston Thompson as the next speaker.

Another puzzling moment was past, but with each my apprehension was growing. What on earth was the trouble with my beloved chief?

An evening session was held at 8:15 in the galleries on the second floor of the New National Museum to honor the opening of the First Annual Exhibition of National Parks Painting. Dr. William H. Holmes, curator of the National Gallery of Art, addressed the gathering.

During the festivities, Mather called me over and gave me a card with the name of James L. Smith engraved on it. He told me to get rid of Smith, who was being detained in a nearby corridor, apparently causing the guard some trouble. When I located Mr. Smith, I found him to be a pleasant, well-dressed man, hugging an enormous, paper-wrapped package. I dismissed the guard, telling him that I would handle the situation.

Introducing myself to the gentleman, I asked what I could do for him. Indicating the package under his arm, Smith replied that he had come to display his paintings of national parks. He added that he was very unhappy because the guard had refused to let him into the exhibit room. I carefully explained about the conference, that it was by invitation only, and that this exhibition was not open to the general public at this time.

"Well, Mr. Albright, that's not the point," said Smith. "My paintings of the national parks are the finest in the world, and I am the greatest

painter in the world. So my paintings should be in the gallery, now." His voice echoed down the corridor, growing louder and louder as he began to unwrap his artwork and go into details of his greatness. I nervously looked around for the guard, but of course he had disappeared. It was only a question of time until this uproar would reach the guests, but what to do with this mad artist?

At this moment, around the corner came a total stranger. With no introduction, I hauled him to one side and briefed him on my problem. While Smith babbled on, pulling his paintings free of the paper, we quickly agreed on action to be taken. We each grabbed one of Smith's arms, lifted him off his feet, and hurried him to a guard, who carted him away. I returned to pick up his paintings and thus lost track of my helper.

Later I discovered who had helped me hoist Mr. Smith out of the National Gallery. It was Orville Wright. At the afternoon session of January 5, he spoke to the conference on "Air Routes to the National Parks." Most of the conferees shook their heads in disbelief at his futuristic ideas, and I decided I'd been dealing with two loonies instead of one that night at the National Gallery.

The second day of the conference, January 3, started off on a bad note. I was at the auditorium before seven o'clock again, but no one else was around. About half an hour later Bob Yard walked in and wanted to know where Mather was. He had to talk to him immediately about a switch in speakers. As he obviously wasn't here, Yard went off to call him at the Cosmos Club.

Mather had left the club about 6:30 A.M. That early? In the black of night? And where was he? I suggested maybe he'd gone to meet someone for breakfast, but Yard seemed terribly worried. "Bob," I said, "you seem to know something I don't about Mr. Mather's odd behavior. You've known him far longer than I have. I'd surely appreciate it if you'd tell me what is troubling him. Maybe together we could do something about it."

"Oh," replied Bob, "he's just tired, too much to do and think about. He'll be all right."

So we let it go at that. But as the ten o'clock starting time for the second session approached, I was really getting nervous. So was Yard. Before I had time to open my mouth, he said: "Horace, I've tried every place I can think of and I can't locate Steve. I'll have to take his place as presiding officer. But what will I tell them about Steve's absence?"

"Don't even mention it," I said. "Everybody will just think you are supposed to be there instead of Mather."

And so it went. Fortunately, it was a terrible, rainy day. The attendance was very poor. So few showed up that we moved from the auditorium to a smaller room in the museum. Yard explained to the audience that this second day was devoted to education: education of people to know their parks and to show how parks could be used to educate the people.

January 4 was a lost day. Stephen Mather never appeared. Yard was so exhausted by his concern and efforts to find Mather that he became ill and had to go home. I contacted Congressman Gillett to check the Capitol and Secretary Lane to advise him of the problem. Neither could find a clue to Mather's whereabouts, but Lane advised me to "keep a lid on the situation" until he could do more investigating. I kept up the announced schedule of "Recreational Use of the National Parks" and had Enos Mills preside over the sessions.

When I entered the auditorium the following morning, there, big as life and apparently fit as a fiddle, stood Stephen Mather. Well, you can imagine my astonishment. All the way to the museum I had been tossing around one idea after another about what would have to be said to the conference concerning Mather's prolonged absence. Now he greeted me very calmly, inquired how things had been going, and started reviewing the upcoming events of the conference.

Stunned into silence for some time, I finally blurted out: "Excuse me, Mr. Mather, but could I ask where you were recently? Yard and I needed some advice on a few issues and were unable to locate you at the Cosmos Club."

He looked at me in an odd manner and replied, "Well, of course you couldn't. I've been here at the museum most of the time running the show."

Now it was my turn to stare and mutter: "Well, we must have missed you with all the crowds. But where did you spend the night?"

With that he furiously turned on me: "I don't believe that is any of your business, Horace. What's wrong with you? What do you mean where was I at night? I was at my home. With my wife." Of course, his wife and home were in Chicago.

Well, I certainly wasn't going to argue. I was grateful that he was alive and well. So I changed the subject immediately, settling on the morning conference program. Mather pleasantly discussed this with me as though the previous conversation had never taken place. And he opened the session promptly at 9:30 A.M.

He told the assembled group, which was even smaller than before, that the meeting would be "more or less of a desultory nature," mainly confined to answering questions that had been placed in a box the day before. After several questions, Mather signaled to me to take his place and then quietly exited the auditorium. My first inclination was to run after him, but I didn't dare, as there was no one else to assume the chair of presiding officer. I spent the next hour or so running the show, but inwardly in a panic. Where had Mather gone? For how long? What was this disappearing act all about?

After several other speakers had finished their dissertations, I was suddenly asked a question about Hetch Hetchy. Right in the middle of my reply, Stephen Mather nonchalantly reappeared and assumed the role of presiding officer.

Fortunately, one of the questions was for Enos Mills, who could talk on anything for any length of time. It provided a much needed breather. The question was, "Would women make good guides in the national parks?" Yes! "The profession of a guide in a national park is that of a philosopher and a friend and an instructor. Hence I do not see why a woman could not do this as well and in many cases even better than a man." He added that guides should have equality of opportunity among the women as well as among the men. Of course, guides meant rangers, and this was heady stuff in those days.

When Mills stopped long enough to ask if anyone had a question, Mather quickly stepped in and added his own thoughts on the subject of guides—very clear, very rational, very thoughtful. Then Enos was back, lecturing again on his favorite subject, freedom of competition in national parks, allowing as many concessioners as wanted to compete, anathema to Mather. But he remained calm, simply letting Mills go on.

The morning session ended with Mather exhorting everyone to be back in the afternoon. "All those who are interested in the development of motor traffic to the parks should make a point of attending," he said. And, of course, who was more interested in motor travel to the parks than Stephen Mather? It was almost a phobia with him. Yet he was not seen again until the following morning.

Much later, various men who attended the conference told me that they had only given casual thought to Mather's absences up to this time. They imagined he was just terribly busy with details of the meeting. But his absence from a session devoted to his favorite topic (along with concessions) now seemed highly unusual, almost bizarre. Questions arose in

many minds as to whether he was ill, upset, or angry at something. Frankly, as long as he appeared well and strong, I gave up trying to decide where he went or why. Just get us through one more day, I prayed.

The afternoon session passed quietly with a large audience and interesting speakers. Probably the most intriguing was my friend of opening night, Orville Wright. He made quite a prediction. "While it seems certain it [aerial navigation] can never compete with the railway train or the steamboat in carrying large bodies of people, it will be but a short time till parties now accommodated in automobiles will be safely and easily carried." He added that no matter how many people came to a park in airplanes, the only way to see parks was from the ground. Most of us thought he didn't have all his wheels on the track.

The evening session went smoothly, with not a sign of Mr. Mather. But there he was at the lectern the next morning, ready to preside over the last day of the conference. He could hardly be recognized as the gregarious, fun-loving, convivial man he usually was. Now he wore a somber visage, unsmiling and seldom mixing with conferees.

The morning session was devoted entirely to the Grand Canyon. Before the second speaker could follow the first, Mather suddenly told the audience he had been called to the Capitol for another committee meeting and walked out. Yard and I exchanged helpless looks, which meant, "Let the cards fall where they may."

When the lunch break came, Yard and I decided he'd have to take over once more if Mather didn't reappear. For the first time, Bob hesitantly gave me a hint of Mather's trouble, probably a nervous condition like the one he had experienced years before. He hastily reassured me that it wasn't anything serious, that Mather just had to get away sometimes to relax and calm himself when he felt too nervous and tired. With the conference over, he'd be free from stress, could leave Washington for a long rest, and then he'd be just fine again.

I questioned Yard to get some details about this former problem. When? Where? Under what circumstances? Most of all, what happened? He shrugged all my inquiries aside: "Ask Steve yourself someday when he's his old self. It's really not my place to discuss it." I could see his point and dropped the subject.

When the afternoon session began at 2:30, there was Stephen Mather at the podium once more, calm and unruffled. I was almost getting used to this. Mather remained until the session ended late in the afternoon.

Everyone heaped praises on Mather, the most memorable being Emerson Hough's: "In the short period of two and a half years, changes bordering on the miraculous have taken place in the entire administration of our system of parks ... and we all know very largely where the credit for that work should be placed."

I don't know much about the evening session, as I left when the afternoon session was finished. I checked with Mather to learn if he needed me for anything else, but he just looked at me dolefully and said, "There isn't anything else for you to do and there really isn't much use for me either." I tried to buck him up by reminding him of all the wonderful things that had been said about him, the praise everyone was heaping on him, how the conference had been such a marvelous success. He just stood there, sadly shaking his head and muttering, "I don't know, I just don't know."

Well, I didn't know either and was so concerned that I hunted up E. O. McCormick, our old friend from the Southern Pacific Railroad. I related the conversation and suggested he take Mather over to the Cosmos Club with some other friends to have a late supper and a convivial, relaxing evening. He'd already thought of the same thing and had corralled Hough, Congressman Gillett, and Ford Harvey. They'd cheer Steve up for sure.

I felt that I should probably go along with the conferees for the evening, especially the park superintendents and supervisors. I had banked on spending a good deal of time with them, discussing problems and getting their opinions and suggestions. And here the conference was over. Mather really hadn't talked to them at all, and I had seen so little of them, obviously missing a golden opportunity. Within minutes, I noticed that everyone had split up and gone in different directions.

Normally I guess I would have pursued my idea, but I was physically and mentally exhausted. Worry over Mr. Mather had taken a lot out of me. Then, too, it was my birthday, and I had barely laid eyes on Grace for a week. At home, she was waiting for me with my favorite chocolate cake aglow with twenty-seven candles. As I blew them out, I must have made a fervent wish that Mr. Mather would be back to his old self again.

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I honestly don't recall whether it was the evening of January 7 or 8 that my world seemed to collapse. I suppose it's the old saying that we don't remember what we don't want to. My memory comes back in strong

with a telephone call about ten o'clock on one of those two evenings. It was E. O. McCormick. He talked rapidly and with a sense of extreme urgency. "Horace, get over here to the Cosmos Club as fast as you can. Something terrible is going on with Steve. For God's sakes, *hurry!* Run!"

I raced up the stairs, repeated to Grace what McCormick had said, and then literally ran all the way to the club. Hough was waiting for me by the front door. "Steve has totally come apart. He's raving, absolutely insane." I didn't waste time, just told him to take me to Mather.

I wasn't prepared for what I saw a few minutes later. His friends had taken Mather into a small reception room and closed the door against curious onlookers. Though loosely held by McCormick, he was rocking back and forth, alternately crying, moaning, and hoarsely trying to get something said. I couldn't understand a thing. He was incoherent. His movements became more agitated while his voice rose. I feared he might possibly hurt himself. As I was younger and stronger, I replaced McCormick, holding him with both arms. Several of us talked quietly to him, trying to soothe his wild mood, but to no avail. Suddenly he broke out of my hold, rushed for the door, and, with an anguished cry, proclaimed he couldn't live any longer feeling as he did. We all understood what he said that time.

McCormick and I grabbed him and hustled him upstairs to a bedroom. Hough went to locate a doctor. Fortunately, there was one at the Cosmos Club, so he was at the room in a few minutes and efficiently got a sedative down Mather's throat. Within ten minutes, he had calmed down considerably, which gave us time to have a consultation with the doctor.

McCormick and Hough related the events of the evening at the Cosmos Club, where the group was having dinner in a private room. Apparently Mather had been getting more and more depressed since the conference had ended. When he should have been pleased, he felt that he had not measured up to his opportunity, that he had accomplished little or nothing, and that he should leave the government service at once. He kept referring to his inadequacy to meet the problems before him and saw no future for himself in this work, which he said he loved above every other activity in his whole life.

His friends were increasingly concerned about his behavior and kept trying to cheer him up. No use. As the meal progressed, Mather talked incessantly, more deeply depressed than ever. He was a failure. He would leave the Park Service. There really was nothing more in life for him. Then he lapsed into silence. He seemed to lose interest in the conversation

around him, grew silent, and when he did speak referred to little but his troubles. The other men nervously kept up a running conversation about trips they had made with Mather, praising him, laughing about the good times.

Suddenly Mather broke down completely, put his head on the table, and began to cry. His friends were completely in the dark, didn't know what had happened or what to do. They were simply appalled. I was called because they hoped I might know how to handle him.

Of course, I didn't. I proposed that we find Bob Yard immediately. I felt he had knowledge of some earlier problem Mather had experienced. But Yard and his family had gone away to New Jersey. Then I remembered that Mather had told me his wife might be visiting her mother in New Jersey. We agreed that I should call Jane Mather immediately, even though it was past midnight. Those three would stay with Mather, who was now huddled in a ball at the corner of the bed, muttering incoherently to himself.

Mrs. Mather answered the phone herself. She was quite calm and didn't seem alarmed as she listened quietly to my account. I gave her all the information I could recall since she had been here in Washington the week before. For the doctor's information, she told me, in minute detail, of the severe mental breakdown her husband had suffered in 1903. She thought his present state seemed very similar to that time, when he had collapsed from overwork and nervous tension. In 1903 he had tried a five-week vacation in the South and appeared to be much better. However, it didn't last.

In June 1903 he had spent four months in a sanitarium in Wisconsin and then a few more at the shore in Atlantic City. But every time he went back to work in Chicago, his trouble flared up. Finally the doctors made him give up all work and go to Europe for eight months. When he returned, recuperated and fired up to get back to his position as manager of sales in the Chicago office of Pacific Coast Borax Company, he found that Borax Smith had cut him off the payroll one month after he had gone to Europe. This was a terrible blow and almost set him off again.

Mrs. Mather said that he had been saved by a new interest and activity. In the fall of 1904 he had joined with an old friend, Tom Thorkildsen, in a new company, mining and refining borax, in direct competition with his former employer. Reorganized in 1908, it became Thorkildsen-Mather Company, then Sterling Borax. It was extremely successful and made Mather a millionaire. Although he had suffered short

periods of nervousness or depression from time to time, he had seemed to control a more serious episode by avoiding business concerns and escaping to the West, to the wilderness areas, as in 1906, 1912, and 1914.

After Mrs. Mather had provided me with as much information as was necessary at the time, she gave me specific instructions to take Mr. Mather in the morning to Dr. T. H. Weisenburg in Philadelphia. She would contact him to make arrangements and to expect us before noon.

The doctor at the Cosmos Club listened to all this information and decided Mather was safe until morning as long as someone stayed with him. He gave him another sedative, which he said should put him to sleep. It didn't. McCormick insisted on staying with me, as Mather was so restless. We had the club bring in a cot for me. McCormick lay on the other twin bed next to Mather. It was a weird night, and we three got little rest. Mather would suddenly wake up, crying or calling out incoherently, extremely agitated and rolling around on top of the bed or, several times, leaping onto the floor.

At daybreak I went to Mather's lodging and packed his clothes and personal items, putting everything else in several boxes to store at the club. I could get them later. I took a taxi home to tell Grace what had happened and to pick up a few things for myself, not knowing how long I might have to be gone. She was dreadfully upset, for she so loved Mr. Mather. I made her promise to go stay at Eva Larsen's, as she really wasn't well enough to be alone. Then I returned to the Cosmos Club.

McCormick and I got Mather washed and dressed in clean clothes. Fortunately, he was almost somnolent, whether from depression or sedatives I don't know. It was a blessing, however, as we could get him to the train and manage the short ride to Philadelphia. McCormick's influence had gotten us a drawing room, so we could let Mather rest in a quiet atmosphere. McCormick and I were worn out and didn't say five words on the whole trip, so saddened and depressed ourselves that there was nothing to talk about.

In Philadelphia we took Mather in a taxi out to Dr. Weisenburg's office. An attendant gently led Mather away, so we could talk freely with the doctor. As we waited in a comfortable parlor, the door opened and Jane Mather appeared. We went over events of the last few weeks, and she recounted her painful experiences with Mather's nervous breakdown in 1903. It certainly looked to us like a similar mental illness.

About an hour later, Dr. Weisenburg joined us. We three reiterated all the facts we knew about both 1903 and the present. He listened carefully

and asked quite a few questions, but was noncommittal, saying only that he would contact us as soon as he had made an evaluation.

Mrs. Mather asked if we could say good-bye to her husband. The doctor discouraged her. However, when she insisted, he left the room and shortly returned with Mather and the male nurse. Mrs. Mather attempted to talk to him, but he just stared blankly at us all. Mrs. Mather turned and left the room. McCormick and I were close to tears as we watched the attendant slowly lead our dear friend away down the hall. By this time, he had apparently sunk into a deep, silent abyss, not appearing to know people or his surroundings. He was to go to a sanitarium in Devon, Pennsylvania. He was not to see or talk to anyone until further notice.

Mrs. Mather and I had a quiet talk alone before we separated. We agreed that nothing should be said about Mr. Mather's condition to anyone except perhaps Secretary Lane. And even to those who had witnessed his breakdown that night at the Cosmos Club, I was to gloss over his condition, say that he was fine, just suffering from exhaustion. A little rest would have him back on the job in no time. She was very sensitive on this score. She requested that I take care of all government duties in which Mather was involved, as well as his financial concerns in Washington. She would have his attorney in Chicago handle Mather family matters as well as his borax business. We would coordinate our efforts and keep each other informed.

She felt she had never been involved in Mather's affairs and could now only advise, not take charge. I had never known Jane Mather well but was most impressed by her quiet acceptance of her husband's illness, by her ability to formulate plans under stress, and by her competence in arranging her life and her daughter's in the emergency. I reassured her, promising to take as much as possible off her shoulders. Young and inexperienced as I was, I didn't realize what this would entail.

On the way back to Washington, McCormick and I agreed we would keep everything to do with Mather's problems under our hats. If asked, we would give no explanation except that he was worn out and needed a rest, that he would be back soon. There would be absolutely no hint of mental problems, no leaking of details. He added: "Horace, we'll leave it at that. And I won't even expect any further details unless you wish to tell me. I understand." We parted at Union Station, the saddest men anyone would ever want to meet.