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PILGRIMS IN A NATIONAL PARK TOWNSITE

by Jim Butler

I. Into townsite gift-shops
they pour,
pilgrims
from our urban centres.
They linger here
in restaurants, shops, arcades.
As if by preference
to mingle
among paintings of mountains,
carvings and mounts of wildlife.
To thumb through books
of words and photographs,
when the reality
is waiting near at hand.
Unworthy substitutes.
they pilfer precious time
in trade for banality.

Yet here in shops
they linger.

Wandering aimlessly before store windows;
where the mountains
humbly bid
for their attention,
as reflections in glass.
An amorphous
shimmering phantom
beckoning.

II. Turnabout one and all.

Browse through
Nature's true book shelves.
Read her signs

in a universal language.
Gaze upon treasures
of a billion years antiquity;
carvings of
colossal magnitude
and timeless process.
The product of artisans
as old as time itself;
yet such precisionists
that they work
upon them still.
Modifying them
even as you watch.

III. Pause with the wildlife.

Don't waste your admiration
on lifeless head mounts
on stone walls
or paintings on
plates and ashtrays.

There is no substitute
for the living animal.

The spark of life,
wonder
or movement.

Or the mysteries
which still surround
even the most familiar.

IV. Go Pilgrims!

Leave this place.
Embrace things still wild. Authentic. Untamed.

This place is tantamount
to that which imprisons your spirit
and smothers your personality.

Listen.
The mountains call you still.
And await you.
Now go.