In California alone, of all this wide world, there grows to-day a tree whose ancestors were nourished by the soil of more than one continent in the salubrious times before the ice of the tertiary migrated from its northern home. This tree is the redwood (sequoia sempervirens), a near cousin of the "big tree" (sequoia gigantea), and easily confounded with it. The big trees are found at a considerable distance inland from the Pacific; but the redwoods cling closely to the coast-line, for they are found only in a strip of country twenty miles wide that borders on the ocean, and extends from near the Oregon line as far south as Santa Cruz. The primeval forest, undisturbed by man, is impressive in its grandeur. The solemn silence, the great pillars of gray, indistinct in the dim light, rising so symmetrically on all sides, the dark, damp ground, quite free from underbrush, the light green ceiling of interlacing foliage, through which the light feebly streams hundreds of feet above one,—all conspire to create in one a feeling of insignificance, and cause him to wonder how many thousands of years ago they, too, were insignificant. Though not so large as the big trees, the redwoods are by no means diminutive, for they frequently grow to be over twenty feet in diameter and five hundred feet in height. Ten such trees put end to end would reach a mile. What splendid fishing-poles they would have made for the Titans of old! It is not unusual to find single acres of forest containing a million feet of standing timber, and single trees have been known to yield ninety thousand feet of lumber.

As the name implies, the wood of the tree is red,—a deeper red than cherry, and often almost brown, though the color varies much in different parts of the tree. This inner red circle is surrounded by a white ring of growing wood, and without that lies the brown, fibrous bark, often a foot or more in thickness. The sap from the living tree is pink in color and very liquid, but speedily turns black on removal. The water in which the logs are kept soon becomes of a dark brown color, and the hands of the mill men employed in handling the lumber are stained deeply black. The bark, on account of its porous and fibrous nature, is used to a considerable extent on the roads traversing the redwoods, where the ground is wet all through the winter. Its peculiar properties make smooth and passable highways, which otherwise would be veritable mud-lakes, strewn here and there with bottomless pits. The wood varies much in grain, according to the portion of the tree from which it is taken. Near the butt the wood is quite dark and close-grained; a little higher in the tree these properties are less marked; and toward the top of the tree the wood is soft and porous, and much lighter than at its base. I doubt if any wood, including even sugar-pine, splits as smoothly along the grain as does the redwood. A whole house might be built from it without the aid of drawknife or plane, for the timbers, boards, and shingles split out of the tree as symmetrically as if cut by a saw. In the butt of the tree the grain is often wavy and prettily colored, but it is from excrescences growing on the sides of the trees that the most beautiful specimens of curly redwood are procured. Excrescences six or eight feet in diameter often occur, and are usually quite sound. The grain is extremely erratic in these, with a coloring of rich, dark red; and since the wood takes a polish like glass, cabinets and tables of extreme beauty are made from them.

During April, after the winter rains, common to the region, have well-nigh ceased, the loggers begin to make their way into the woods, and within a short time the logging claims are scenes of great activity. Should the claim be a fresh one, and as yet unworked, the first work done is in clearing off an acre of land on some convenient level spot. Then follows the erection of the shanties. As if by magic the crude buildings rise into existence, and the end of a week sees the long, low cook-house completed, closely beset by the smaller dwelling-houses of the loggers, with the barn, loosely put together, looming up at a distance like a monster sentinel.

The cook-house is the centre of settlement, both from size and gastronomic importance;