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The Sieur de Monts National Monument
as a Huguenot Memorial

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THE WILD GARDENS OF ACADIA
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LOOKING SEAWARD FROM ACADIA MOUNTAIN
THE SIEUR DE MONTS NATIONAL MONUMENT AS A HUGUENOT MEMORIAL.

George Bucknam Dorr

De Monts was a Huguenot and the governor of a Huguenot city of refuge in southwestern France. He sprang from a Huguenot family and his father had fought by King Henry's side through the Religious Wars, as had De Monts himself in their later course. In commemorating him and the development that sprang from his initiative upon these shores, the Sieur de Monts National Monument commemorates as well the great movement for religious freedom of the 16th and 17th centuries in France.

The founding of Acadia took place during the one brief period of religious toleration France knew in centuries. After it, there came a time of reaction, of intolerance and brutal persecution, that drove from France by tens and ultimately hundreds of thousands the Huguenots, men who dared to think for themselves in religious matters and to assert their right to worship in accordance with their conscience.

Forbidden to leave the country, they fled as they could, to the Lowlands, to England and America.

The coming of these Huguenot families to unite their fortunes with those of the English colonists on our Atlantic shore became a most important factor in the early development of America, enriching its people with some of the best blood in

The Sieur de Monts National Monument on the coast of Maine forms the first and as yet the only National park, other than military, to the east of the Mississippi or bordering upon the ocean. A gift to the Nation, accepted by the President and Secretary of the Interior under the powers given them by the Monument Act of 1906, it occupies the grand range of seaward-facing mountains which gave Mount Desert Island its original name—Isle des Monts deserts—and has made it a beacon to mariners from the time of Champlain on. This whole region lay in the French province of Acadia founded by De Monts in 1604, and held by France thereafter until lost to England on the battlefields of Europe in the 18th century.
France and with men of exceptional courage, enterprise, and readiness to sacrifice to high ideals. The energy, moral and intellectual, of that inheritance still makes itself felt in America to-day. An astonishing number of those sharing in it have been leaders in the Nation at one time or another, in social ways, in business, in the world of statesmanship and thought.

In this, different though it was in many ways, the Huguenot stock resembles the old Puritan stock of New England, brought out to America by a like cause, the quest after freedom to worship according to their faith. That these two elements, tried and selected out by persecution, should have had so great a part in molding the development of a mixed and multitudinous people like the American, in which numerically they now form so relatively small a part, is tremendously striking and significant.

We are passing into new religious phases now, seeking to adjust our convictions to a wider view and better knowledge of material fact, but now as then, religious conviction in some sort must ultimately prove the touchstone of character and the molding force of the new world that presently will issue from our racial and social strifes. The form changes but the issue remains the same; individual freedom with the superior moral fibre and personal initiative it breeds against the greater efficiency of autocratic State control.

Often successful, as one looks back over the pages of history, rarely has anything constructive or enduring been founded by the latter; but all that stands out as marking progress and the high attainments of national character has been associated with individual freedom and ruling by the people. It is for this above all that the Huguenot immigration to America stands. The religious tenets fought for and suffered for no longer retain their old importance, but the great principle of human freedom, the freedom of the individual soul, which lay behind, is a living issue still, and on it hangs the future of humanity.