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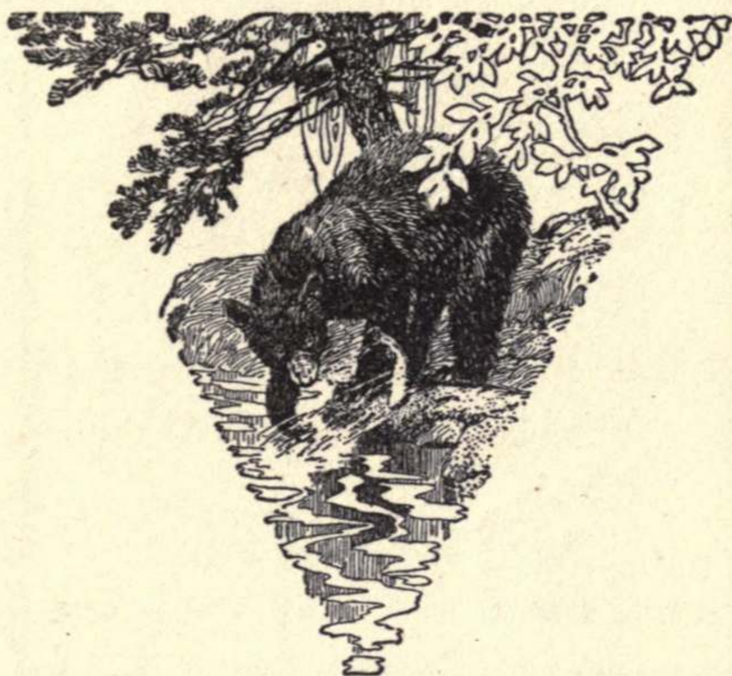
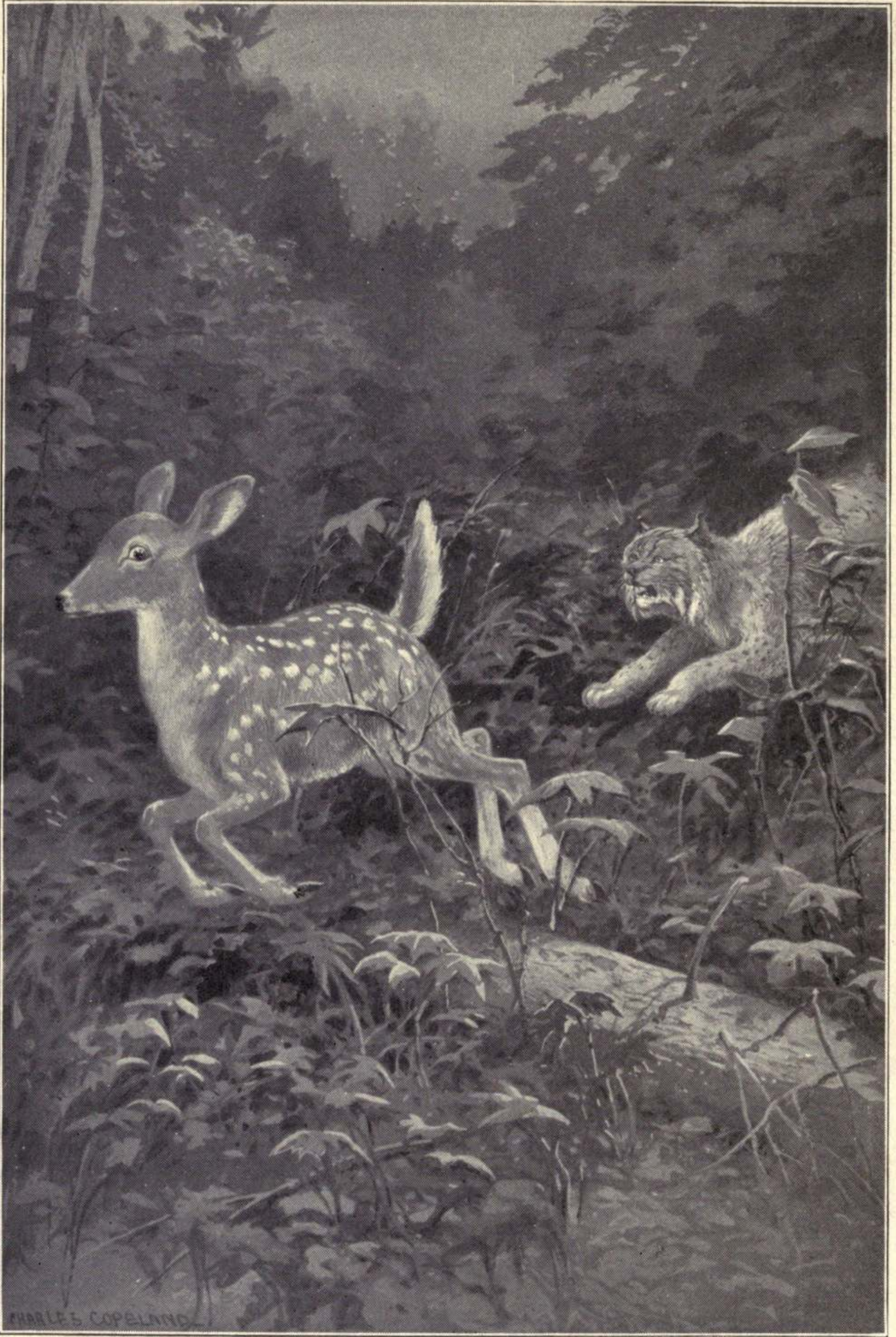
FIELD AND FOREST FRIENDS





THE fawn had not taken three jumps when she was after him

FIELD AND FOREST FRIENDS

A BOY'S WORLD
AND HOW HE DISCOVERED IT

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

AUTHOR OF "SHAGGYCOAT," "THE TRAIL TO THE WOODS," "LITTLE FORESTERS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES COPELAND

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TO EVERY BOY
WHO HAS FOUND THE TRAIL
AND FOLLOWED IT
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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THE TRAIL TO WOODS AND WATERS

FIELD AND FOREST FRIENDS

INTRODUCTORY

The Trail to Woods and Waters

THE trail to woods and waters was a double one that I followed with eager feet in the happy days of boyhood.

The first branch of this winding trail started just under an old pair of bars, where we let the cows through from a crooked lane into the barnyard.

Each morning I let down these bars, and started the cows for pasture and each night I put them up again when the cows were driven home.

The trail wound about many a grassy hillock or mossy hollow and around many

a jagged stone through the lane to the pasture, for it was a cows' path, and all cow paths are crooked. Many a sharp stone lurked in ambush for bare chubby feet. Feet that were always covered with stone bruises and cuts. Toes that were bandaged with rags, much to the disfigurement of the small chubby feet.

What a ludicrous picture it was; that of the small boy hopping on one foot and holding on to his other when he stubbed his toe upon a sharp rock. If the wound was very bad, the small urchin had to sit down in the grass and nurse the injured member, holding it, with wonderful contortions, close to his mouth that he might blow upon it and cool the fever and pain. What boy of you who reads these pages ever warmed his cold feet on a frosty morning in the flattened down grass where the old cow had slept the night before, keeping the earth warm and inviting for blue, aching toes?

All the way of its many turns and twists, this trail to the woods was fringed with weeds and grasses, with flowers and bushes, many of which were hung with delicious fruit.

Just at the point where the lane led into the pasture, a golden sweet apple tree stood. Here the small boy always stopped, not only to refresh himself with a half dozen apples, for he was not a dainty boy, but also to shy apples at the red squirrels that were always scolding and frisking about in the tree.

Further out in the pasture a ways the trail led under a leaning apple tree. The tree was so much inclined that the boy called it the leaning tower. He could stand perfectly erect and walk up the trunk of the tree without taking hold with his hands—the only tree on the farm that admitted of such a stunt. Here, perched upon the trunk of this friendly tree, about twenty feet from the ground, the boy

would sit for five minutes, looking off across the country to see if anything out of the ordinary was doing. Perhaps in the mowing, beyond the pasture he would spy a woodchuck sitting erect, looking for all the world like a small black stump, or maybe he would discover a hawk sailing high up in the heavens. If so, he would watch the big bird and try to discover what he was hunting.

Further on, the trail led by great clumps of raspberries and blackberries. At these spots, the boy always stopped for refreshments. Only those who have tasted the wild fruit directly from the vine or bush, know its delicious flavor.

Finally on the trail led into a maple grove and this was the beginning of the sweet green woods. In this maple grove, the boy loved to linger, for it was the sugar bush.

It did not take much imagination to see the trees each with a painted bucket dan-

gling upon its side, or to hear the musical drip, drip, drip, of the sap into the pails. This was what the boy called "The Song of the Sap." To make the picture complete however, he had to imagine white clouds of smoke and steam pouring from the sugar house, and this was more difficult on a hot summer's day.

The sugar orchard was the home of the gray squirrels, and it was a delight to sit perfectly still upon an old log and see if one could discover a squirrel dropping down maple seeds, and if so to spy out the gray fellow high up in the treetop balancing himself nicely upon a small limb, getting his breakfast.

It was so cool and sweet here in the slumbrous aisles of the maple grove that there was always a temptation to linger, while the silver footed moments of summertime sped by.

The Trail to the waters the boy reached out in the meadow in front of the old farm-

house in which he lived. But the trail did not start there.

One day the small urchin took his lunch and followed the little stream for a mile up through the meadows to its source, just to see where the trail really did begin.

He tramped by many a swaying clump of willows, or green cat-tails. The sweet flag he always marked down in his mind, for he would come some other day and dig the root which, when it was cured with sugar and spice, was fit for a King.

Many a time the boy was fooled, thinking he had found the beginning of the trail, but when he would poke away the grass he would find that the tiny stream went still further back for its source. At last he found it however, high up in a hillside. It was a small basin perhaps a foot across, fringed with ferns and water grasses and in its middle the water pure, cool and sweet, bubbled up in a tiny living fountain. Up from the cool sweet earth

it gushed, a thing of wonder and beauty.

It was evening when the boy returned home and he was late in driving home the cows, but he felt well repaid for the long tramp, for he had found the secret of the little stream. He had followed the trail to the waters from its very beginning.

The course of the trail from that point was well known to him.

The source alone had been its mystery.

He knew all its deep holes and the rapids, where the speckled trout loved to lie, and the pebbly shallows where the minnows darted, and the deep hole where the lazy suckers stood with head upstream sucking in their dinner.

He knew the bank where the noisy kingfisher had his nest, and his favorite stump from which he loved to fish.

The broad pool where the heron speared fish, and the tall grasses that hid the muskrat's house.

All the little waterfalls, including the

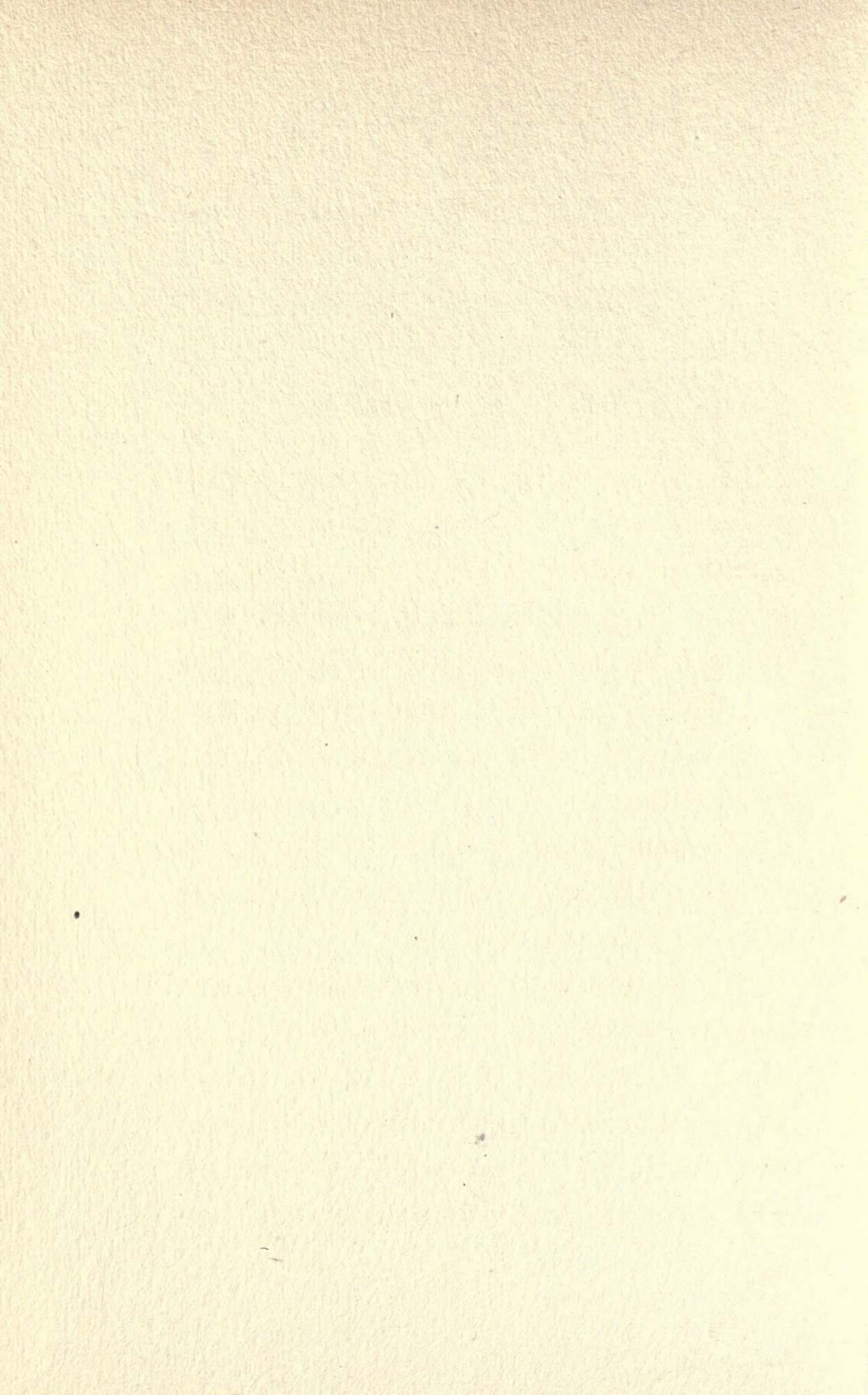
one that turned his small water wheel he knew.

He knew the brook in spring when it ran riot, in summer when it had dwindled to a tiny thread, in the autumn, when the life along its banks was nipped by the first frost, and in the winter when Jack Frost had sealed up all the pools for their winter sleep.

He had followed this trail to the waters often, down to the broad deep mill pond, where to his young mind it ended.

The mill pond was to this trail to the waters, what the forest was to the trail to the woods—its consummation, and end. The point at which it ceased to be, and became something larger and better.

A TALE FROM THE SKIDWAY



Chapter I

A Tale from the Skidway

A bare-footed, tanned-faced boy, dressed in brown denim overalls and a jumper, sat astride a mammoth pine log in the mill yard, carving his initials in bold letters in the soft bark of the pine. He whistled and smiled as he carved and seemed well content with his occupation and surroundings.

It was always a pleasure for the boy to be about the mill, where everything was so mysterious and terrible.

The hurrying belts, the mad gearing and the screaming circular saw were all wonderful. There was a certain poetry and rhythm in this mad rushing machinery that fascinated, even while it terrified. The boy never could quite understand how

the water which slipped so easily into the end of the flume, only lathing his hand slightly as he held it in the current could be turned into such mad careering force.

When one tired of the hum of wheels and the pounding of belting and the hideous shrieking of the great circular saw, there was always the mill yard to flee to. There the sounds from the mill were all subdued and the placid mill pond, and a fringe of green hills beyond offset the turbulence of the mill.

The initials were finally completed and the boy drove his knife deep into the log and viewed his carving critically.

It did not just suit him, the bark should come off, to make a panel, and then the initials should be carved in the wood instead of the bark, this would be much more artistic, so he gashed the bark savagely, making a rather unsymmetrical square about the initials.

"I wish you would stop," said a deep

mellow voice from the heart of the log. "I don't want to be scarred and hacked when I take my turn on the carriage before the saw. I want to be as nearly perfect as I can, now I am cut in pieces."

The boy pulled the knife from the bark quickly, shut it with a snap and put it into his pocket.

He had often heard the trees and wild-flowers talk in the deep woods, but never a log, and he wished to know more of the monster pine on which he was sitting.

"I did not know you cared," he said sympathetically. "I thought you were only a log, and would soon be sawed into boards, so a few extra cuts would not make any difference."

"Only a butt-log," sighed the old pine, and its voice had a touch of melancholy, like the soughing of wind in pine needles. "Only a butt-log! That is what most people think, but I am more than that. I am a personality. A memory beside which all

the other memories in the countryside pale and are as nothing, unless I make an exception of the memories of the mountains and the cliffs, near which I stood; of course they are older and wiser than I. But I am still a noble memory and a personality as mysterious and rich as the odor of my needles on a fresh summer breeze, when the sun has warmed my thought and stirred me to speak of other days. The things that I have seen would fill a large book, and the memories would all be sweet and wholesome."

"I do not see how you could have seen very much," said the boy skeptically. "You have always been the sentinel pine, standing on the brow of the mountain. My grandfather says you stood there just as you did last year when he was a small boy. You could not stir from the spot. How could you have seen much?"

"I was patient and observing and the world came to me," replied the pine

thoughtfully. "I will tell you my story and then you will see.

"About two hundred and fifty years ago, or thirty or forty years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, a tiny white pine seed, parted company with the cone that bore it and floated leisurely down through the balmy spring atmosphere. It had been two years in forming and was glad to escape from its parent tree and venture into the world on its own account.

"Just at the particular moment that the seed freed itself from the cone, there came a slight puff of wind, that influenced the after-life of the seed greatly, for it wafted it forty or fifty feet into the forest, and deposited it in a dark gloomy hollow. Thus were the agencies of environment working and shaping the future white pine, even before it had germinated.

"This tiny seed was a very insignificant looking thing, seemingly of no more worth than a grain of sand. But here appear-

ances were most deceitful, for the seed held a secret more precious than all else in the world, the secret of life, which with all his inquisitiveness and his genius for finding out things, man has never been able to discover. If that seed could have told the world what it knew that spring morning, the scientist would have hugged himself with delight.

"But the little seed was very modest and unconscious of its importance. It lay there in the mold where the playful spring zephyr had dropped it, and dreamed while the summer days went by.

"Sometimes when the day was warmer than usual, and the heat penetrated to the deep gloom of the dense forest, the seed felt a longing or a desire, for something, it knew not what. Then it seemed to the seed that something was calling to it from above, but the feeling soon passed and the seed kept on dreaming.

"At other times the seed was conscious

of power within itself, a force that made it restless, a memory that was calling, a desire that was stirring, a hope that had not yet been fulfilled. Finally one warm summer morning the seed thought it felt something tugging at its very inner self. Then it awoke, and pushed up through the mold.

"It was much brighter and more cheerful above the mold and the seed was glad that it had obeyed the call, but who it was that called it, the seed did not at first know. Finally, down through the treetops there fell a warm pencil of light, vibrant and delicious.

"It touched the tiny, pale sprouting seedling with its warmth and then the seedling knew that it was its foster father, the sun, who had been calling all through the summer hours. Henceforth, its mother, the earth, and its foster father, the sun, would nourish and sustain it in sunshine and storm, in heat and cold.

"Two years went by and there was only a tiny tuft of green to show for the seven hundred odd days. For, living as it did in the deep forest, under the skirts of large trees, fifteen minutes of sunlight a day was all the little seedling got, and one cannot grow very fast on such short rations. It would have liked to walk out into the sunlight and warmth, but God had placed it in the gloom, so it stayed there and lived its life the best it could.

"On the little pine's fifth birthday, one could have covered it with a tumbler, so slowly it grew.

"When it was ten years old a four quart pail would have screened it from the world, while on its twenty-first birthday, when it was of age, a bushel basket would have covered it. A white pine in the open would have been much larger at this age, but this pine was a victim of circumstances, during its sapling years.

"After this I grew much faster than I

had done before, for the tip of my blue green plumes now reached a pencil of light for which I had been long stretching.

"So instead of a scant fifteen minutes of sunlight a day, I now had an hour of my foster father's gracious smile.

"How it warmed and cheered me! Before, I had been gloomy and foreboding, but now I became hopeful and cheerful, and full of great longings. Before, it had seemed to me that I would never get out of the darkness and the damp mold. Now, I was sure that some day I would be almost as tall as the great monarch pine from which I had sprung.

"The first two decades of my life had been spent almost entirely in the bosom of my mother, the earth. Now I belonged partly to the earth, and partly to the sun. I could not but obey the new impulse within me to stretch up and out. I had been sleeping, had been a dullard and a stupid, and must make up for lost time.

"From being almost afraid of my foster father, the sun, I began to love him, and to look for his coming, as a child for its parent. I was lonely when he was hidden from me; true, he always sent his handmaiden, the moon, to cheer us through the night, but her smile was not so bright and inspiring as that of the glorious sun.

"By the time I was thirty years old, I had reached the height of a man, and felt every inch of my hard-gained height. The rabbit could no longer jump over me and make me feel mean and small, as he had done years before. He had to run around me now, and I laughed at him and felt glad for every inch of my height. The snows of winter no longer bowed me down, as they had done when I was small, nearly breaking my back, and covering me until I could not see the world. I could now keep my head above even a fair sized drift. But the ice storms I still feared,

for they occasionally bowed me down so that they nearly broke my back.

"About this time, I bore my first cone, and if it needed anything more to make me vain, it was this. My parent, the great pine at the edge of the woods, had been rattling down cones ever since I could remember, and I had never had even a sign of a cone. When that first cone fell, I felt as though I had parted company with the most precious thing in the world, but when I found that they came every second year, I was comforted.

"When I was about forty years old, I had a narrow escape from destruction. Up to this time, all the men that I had known had been red men, and I wish they had been the only men the forest had ever known. If they had been, it would not be the sorry sight it is now. These quiet, nature-loving men came and went under the branches of the forest as silently as the deer and the panther. They seemed

a part of the woods, and we looked for their coming and going as we did that of the seasons. But finally the white man came. He awoke the forest with new and terrible lightning, before which the deer and the panther were powerless, and the red man melted away like the snowbanks in early spring. But worst of all, this white man brought with him an implement, keen and bright, which he calls an axe. Ever since the day of his coming the echoes of the axe have resounded through the forest, and one by one my kind have been laid low. As you know, I was the last of the first growth pines on the mountain side.

"As I have already said, when I was about forty years old, this white man came with his axe. The first time I saw him, he was blazing a wood road through the forest.

"He was picking out a path that should be smooth in winter, and as straight as he

could make it, without too much work. He lopped down a sapling here, and a clump of bushes there, and every few feet, he stopped and blazed a tree. This blazed tree would show him the road when the snow was piled so deep that other land marks would be obliterated. He stopped close to me and sighted from one blazed tree to another. Would I be in the way? That was the question. He seemed to think I would for he raised his axe. A shudder ran through me, and I thought of a maple sapling that he had just laid low. How the life blood had gushed from the cut, and with what a thud it had struck mother earth. I knew I never would rise again, for I had seen trees blown over in a great storm and they never did.

"Then the man lowered his axe and stopped to consider. Perhaps I would not be in the way after all, or may be the road would be too rough if it went just where I stood for he changed the mark on

the last tree, blazing the opposite side, and went on, and I was allowed to stand.

"All through the autumn and winter there were strange foreign sounds in the forest. For days at a time there would be the ceaseless ring of the axe and occasionally that thundering crash, that told of one of our number laid low. Then when the logs had been cut and piled, teams came into the woods and loaded them and they were hauled down into the valley, where they were hewed into timber and builded into rude cabins. If anything more was needed to make me vain, it came when a pretty little pair of forest warblers built the daintiest nest, that ever you saw, in my boughs.

"To think that they had chosen me instead of some of the taller trees for their abiding place, filled me with such pride that it is a wonder that I did not crack my bark. All through summer they stayed with me going and coming from the nest,

feeding and rearing their fledglings and I was the happiest, vainest little pine in all the great woods. When the strong winds howled in the treetops, bending them and sometimes even breaking off branches, I stood stiff-backed and resolute, and tried with all my sturdy might not to rock the little downhair lined nest among my green plumes lest I spill some of the joy that it contained.

"When at last the fledglings grew up and the whole family deserted me, I felt as lonesome as a solitary tree out in the open, but I kept the nest for a long time as a remembrance.

"The second winter of the lumbering operations in the forest where I lived, something happened that filled me with grief and nearly wiped me off the face of the white snow covered world as well. It also set me to thinking of how uncertain a thing life is, even for a small insignificant little pine.

"I had often seen the lumberman casting admiring glances at my sire the old sentinel pine, as they passed, but their admiration was the admiration of greed as I soon discovered. It does not pay to be too much admired in a covetous world like this. One day, one of the choppers came and began hacking away at the old pine, under whose protecting arm I had been reared. How grand he looked, and how small and insignificant these two puny wood cutters! But how untiring they plied their axes, and what deep cuts those sharp blades made when they fell! I saw the white chips fly out on the snow and wondered if it hurt my sire to have his sap chipped out like that. At first I thought he would be able to withstand them, I had seen him battle successfully with the hurricane so many times, but I soon saw that he was doomed, and a deep sense of loneliness came over me, even before I saw him laid low.

"Finally I saw the two choppers looking up at the dark blue tiptop plumes of the giant tree, which were sharply silhouetted against the sky. Already the giant tree had begun to totter and waver, like an old man who leans upon his staff. First he swayed a bit one way, and then the other, and finally, with a great rush of wind that was like the roar of a mighty tempest, and a cloud of snow that was thrown up as it struck, the noble pine lay upon the breast of its mother earth, never to rise again.

"My sire had fallen within ten feet of me, and, had I been struck, I should have been broken to bits.

"Once, while they were limbing out the great pine, one of the choppers said he would cut me down, as I was right in the way. I did not care much if he did, the fall of my sire, had so saddened me, but the other chopper told him to notice how tall and straight I was, and how symmetrical. 'Some day that will be as fine

a tree as this,' he said, so I was allowed to stand.

"When the great pine had been cut into logs and drawn away, there was a broad gap in the woods where it had stood. I now got a full blaze of sunlight and all the winds that had formerly buffeted the sentinel. The sun made me grow rapidly, and perhaps even the winds which I at first thought very cold and boisterous helped to develop me. At least they taught me to strike my roots deep in the earth and hold on with might and main.

"Fifty more years went by, and I stood at the edge of the forest where my sire had stood and took the buffets of the wind, and the smile of my foster father, the sun, and was glad, after the manner of a pine. Glad for the sunlight and the cold, the rain and the dew; glad for the rich mold in which I stood, and for the blue sky above me.

"I could never tell you all my thoughts

as I stood there, while spring and summer, autumn and winter, went by. Sometimes when the sun warmed my needles, a rich aromatic odor, full of sweet memories, the memories and longings of a pine, would float out on the merry breeze.

"I saw the beech and the maple put forth their first tiny buds and open their myriad leaves in the springtime, and I saw them stripped of all their glory in the autumn to make a carpet for the forest. They were changeable, sometimes gay and glorious in green or scarlet robes, but I was always the same. I never changed my deep blue green mantle, and to the nature lover I was always the dark, restful pine, perhaps sad, but I merely reflected the life about me, or maybe my melancholy was tinged by that of the wind, which was always moaning and sighing in my needles.

"Who shall guess my thoughts on lonely winter nights, as I stood guard at the edge

of the forest, when the Pleiades was so cold and glittering that it seemed like a panoply of spear points, and the six points of the great bear might have been six icicles? Who shall guess what things I saw when the prowling fox barked in the cavernous aisles of the snowbound forest, while the weird hooting of an arctic owl woke mysterious echoes in the woods? Who but I knows just how the rabbits play tag of a winter's night, when the moon is at her full, and the crust glints and glistens like a pavement of diamonds?

"Was I lonely as I stood there, druid-like and hoary, with my coverlet of snow and ice, forsaken by the birds and squirrels, and by even the little wood mouse that dwelt beneath my roots?

"Did I long for a sigh of the south wind, and a whisper from the sleeping hepatica, and arbutus; did I yearn for the coming of spring?

"Ah, who shall say. These are the in-

scrutable secrets of nature, that man with all his inquisitiveness cannot find out. Men may hew and hack me, may saw and burn me, may grind me into pulp and make paper of me, but they will never tear this secret from my breast.

"Yon saw that howls like a demon and whose bright teeth are hungry for my heart will make man no wiser. The secret is nature's own, and she guards it well.

"If you will count the rings upon my cross-section from one hundred and five to one hundred and nine, you will find that they come very close together. In fact they almost coincide, and only the very best eyesight can discern them. This too, tells a bit of my history. These contracted rings represent three very cold summers and winters, due to a season of spots upon the sun. During these cold years the plants and trees grew very little, and even what they did grow in the sum-

mer was contracted and dwarfed in the winter.

"How ghastly and sickly my foster father, the sun, looked for these three years. How feeble and unsatisfying his smile, that had usually been so warm and loving.

"He was not like himself at all, and it was a great relief to me when he was again bright and cheerful.

"It was the wind that finally humbled my pride and made me bow my haughty head. I had long thought I was the strongest thing in the world and I had no fear of wind or storm. Once I had been struck by lightning and I still bear the scar, one hundred and forty rings back from my bark, but I soon recovered from that.

"But the wind, that went mad, and tore at the heart of the forest taught me the greatest lesson I ever learned and that was the lesson of humility. Then I under-

stood that no matter how strong one may think himself there is always something stronger, that will some day humble him.

"One afternoon early in August, when I was one hundred and fifty years old, the sky grew suddenly green and a strange calm was over every thing.

"Now for the earth to look green was all right, but for the sky to assume a strange copper colored green was all wrong, so the trees began stirring their leaves restlessly, although there was no wind, and one could not have discovered how it was done.

"Then a green and yellow funnel, edged with pink and saffron, and fringed with black was seen trailing along the earth. When it drew nearer it was seen that there was a mighty commotion at the lower end of this funnel, where there was a churning and rolling and tumbling, with quick flashes of lightning, and fringes of cloud that looked like rain or mist.

"The nearer the funnel-shaped cloud drew to the forest the more incessant became the churning and roaring and the brighter the lightning. The birds and the squirrels scurried to their hiding-places, and the two great fish-hawks that had built their nest in my branches that spring, flew screaming home.

"On came this great seething, maddened funnel of wind and lightning, rain and hail, filled with clouds of dust and sticks. As it drew nearer, trees and all kinds of débris were seen rolling and tumbling, grinding and breaking.

"When the cloud storm dipped down to the forest, great trees bent and broke or were blown over and uprooted. Giants that had withstood the tempests of centuries, went over like ninepins, and for the first time in my life I was afraid.

"At first when it struck me, I stood up proudly. I had never before bowed my head, and why should I now? But it only

took a very few seconds for me to see the folly of such a course. So I bent and swayed, thrashed and writhed, and so far as I could, obeyed the cyclone. It stripped me of many of my branches and bent me down until my back was ready to break. Then with a roar like continuous thunder, and a constant play of lightning, with a torrent of hail and rain, and a blinding cloud of dust and débris of every kind, the cyclone sucked half of my blue green plumes of which I was so proud into the whirling, seething vortex, and swept on, leaving me writhing, twisting, and groaning, torn, bent and bleeding with my bark hanging in long white shreds.

"How humiliated and crushed I felt as I tried to straighten my half broken back and untangle my split and broken limbs, from which many of the green plumes had been blown. I had been so proud but a few minutes before! Sure of my own great strength and thinking that nothing

could make me bow my haughty head.

"That evening when the stars appeared and the soft night winds sighed in my torn plumes, the pale moon beheld not the haughty old sentinel pine, but an humble tree, most of whose symmetry and beauty had departed.

"But time heals all such wounds as these, and as the summers and winters came and went, the green plumes were again luxuriant upon my branches and new limbs appeared, or the old ones spread and branched, to cover up my fine trunk, and again I was symmetrical and beautiful as only a tree can be.

"After this my life went on peacefully and uneventfully for fifty years more. Men came and went in the valley below, crawling slowly like worms and from my great height they seemed like ants. They built their little block houses, and in them lived their lives of joy and sorrow, while I stood guard on the brow of the hill.

Occasionally men came into the woods and hacked and scarred the ancient forest, but I went unscathed.

"The red man no longer camped under my friendly boughs and the deer and the bear, and the tall moose had disappeared from the forest. But I still had the birds and squirrels and all the small creatures whose pitter-patter in the leaves I knew so well.

"The jay and the crow nested in my branches and the red squirrel could make a fair meal upon my cones when he was hungry. But the fish-hawks, who had builded in my branches before the great storm, were gone. Their nests have been blown to bits, and one of the great birds killed in the cyclone.

"Many a little forest warbler also found how good a resting place were my branches. So their love notes mingled in the springtime, with the soft soughing of the wind in my needles.

"When I was about two hundred years old there came such a summer as I hope will never visit the earth again. Day after day the sun rose into a cloudless sky and set in a sea of brass. No soft white cloud cheered the parched earth with promise of rain. No dew fell at eventide and no rain fell for weeks and months. The old mill pond in the valley shrank to a mere pool, and the river that fed it nearly went dry.

"Springs that had not failed in the memory of man dried up, grass and shrubs were burned to a crisp, and dust and a terrible thirst was over all the land. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air seemed ill at ease. Cattle roamed restlessly to and fro, lowing and impatient. The great bald eagle that had made its nest in my top for several years circled about the mountain top screaming when there was nothing to enrage it. Birds twittered uneasily and uttered their

cries of alarm when there was seemingly nothing to alarm them. Some of the wild creatures even seemed to go mad because of the great thirst that had fallen upon the earth, and went snapping and snarling at their fellows. All living things seemed out of joint and well they might.

"One evening just at dusk there appeared a dull red glow that grew rapidly in intensity as the night wore on. Later on in the night it filled the sky with a cloud that obscured the stars and made the moon look like a sickly streak of yellow light.

"The next morning the sun rose in a blood red sky, and there was great activity among the creeping, crawling men down in the valley. Teams were set to work ploughing broad furrows about the home lots and preparing in other ways to keep their homes from the red demon that now mastered the eastern horizon.

"Great clouds of smoke rolled heaven-

ward, obscuring the sun and casting a strange unearthly light over all.

"All things that could, fled before the oncoming demon. The buck and the doe galloped by on the wings of the wind.

"The nimble red fox, belly to earth, followed close behind them. In their wake ran a score of cottontails and gray rabbits, while the skunk and the woodchuck lumbered clumsily after them. Even the turtle brought up the rear, running a desperate race to the old mill pond.

"Great flocks of birds, squawking and calling whirred by. All were fleeing to a place of safety.

"But not so the sentinel pine. My roots were planted deep in the soil of the hillside, and hooked tightly about the solid rocks. I was anchored and unmovable, like the eternal hills. No matter how hot the air grew, or how dense with smoke, I must stay at my post like a good soldier and stand or fall as fate willed it.

"On came the red monster, licking up the grass and the ferns, the underbrush and the tall trees of the forest, with ten thousand red tongues. Its roar was like the roar of the cyclone, and there were undertones and overtones, hissing and snapping, sputtering and cracking.

"The earth was so parched that the flames ran in the grass almost as fast as the deer and the foxes, while the main fire leaped from treetop to treetop over gaps of fifty feet.

"Whenever it came to a tall pine that was dry as tinder it leaped up as though it had caught in a powder mill and the flames shot heavenward two or three hundred feet. One by one I saw my tall neighbors wrapped in flames and I knew that my fate was sealed.

"Despair clutched me and I shivered like a human thing at the thought of what a gigantic funeral torch I would make. Then a rumble of distant thunder and a

strong puff of west wind sent a thrill of hope through me. The rumble was followed by another and yet another, and then a peal of thunder woke the hillside. On came the flames vying with the thunder that now rolled incessantly. The flames in the underbrush reached my trunk and began burning swiftly up. There was sixty good feet to climb, before my branches were reached, but I knew if once my top was kindled nothing could save me. Deeply the flames burned into my side, making a scar that I still carry, while the thunders rolled and the skies piled up angry clouds.

"The mighty sheets of flame that leaped from treetop to treetop, were only a furlong away when the flood gates of heaven were opened and I was saved from a terrible doom.

"Then how the rain fell, drenching the parched earth with great sheets of water that the dust drank up almost before it

touched the earth. In five minutes the flames that had scorched my side for fifteen or twenty feet were out, and torrents of water were running in all the little gullies and every blade of grass was rejoicing in a language all its own.

"Baffled and subdued the flames hissed and sputtered, roared and cracked, but their fury was checked and they finally died out, leaving a long black waste behind them.

"This was the last great tragic event in my life, that is, until I was laid low, just as my sire had been. For fifty years more after the great forest fire, I lived the quiet, peaceful life of a sentinel pine, spreading my plumes to heaven and adorning the brow of the mountain. Grand and majestic, a thing of wonder and beauty, a living, breathing spire of deep blue green, a landmark for the weary traveler for miles around.

"One crisp December morning when I

was something over two hundred and fifty years old, two men came and stood by me and talked and their conversation concerned me.

"One was the grave old gentleman upon whose land I stood and who owned me, the other was a lumber merchant.

" 'It's a noble old tree,' said my owner, passing his hand caressingly over my bark. 'It has stood here as the sentinel pine, looking just as it does now, ever since I can remember. In fact, when I was a boy it looked taller than it does now, but I suppose that was just my boyish fancy. It must be one hundred and twenty-five feet tall, and sixty feet up to the first limb.'

" 'My great grandfather said he could remember when it was much smaller, and his great grandfather remembered when it was not much taller than a man. It seems like sacrilege to sell such a tree.'

" 'Pooh,' said the lumber merchant.

'If it stays here it will some day fall to earth of old age and then it will do no one any good. What is your price for the tree?'

" 'One hundred and fifty dollars,' said my owner, 'and I would not sell it at that price if I didn't need the money. This pine is the most majestic and beautiful thing on the farm and I feel as though I was selling my own great-great-grandfather.'

"The lumber merchant looked up at my straight symmetrical bowl and measured me with his eye. To his matter-of-fact vision I was just so many thousand feet of sawed lumber. It was plain to see that I pleased him, for he rubbed his hands together in a satisfied way and said, 'I'll take it.'

"The next morning two wood choppers came with axes and saws and I said goodbye to the forest and my native mountain, for my hour had come.

"Each time the bright blade of the axe sank into my flesh, there was a nipping, biting pain. Soon I felt a numbness creeping up the side upon which they were cutting. This numbness which was like a strange sleep crept to my first limbs, and then to my very tip-top plume.

"When they had cut in part way, in one side, they began on the other and soon that side too was numb. Gradually, like one who is heavy with sleep, the numbness enfolded me, then the white snow-capped hills and valleys faded from my sight. The sound of the wind died in the tree-tops and I began to waver, like an old man upon his staff.

"Then a few more keen axe strokes severed my heart, and with a rush and a roar that shook the mountain side, I fell and was no longer a tree, but several thousand feet of unsawed timber."

"What a pity that you are dead," said the boy sympathetically.

"I am not exactly dead," said the old butt-log, in its deep rich voice, "but I am wonderfully changed. Nothing is quite dead until it disintegrates, and falls to dust.

"I still have great possibilities ahead. I am too valuable for men to allow me to pass out of existence like a useless thing.

"Who can say just what my future life will be? I am quite curious about it myself. True, yonder howling saw will work havoc with me as a butt-log, but I shall be something else when I am sawed.

"Perhaps I shall travel. Maybe I shall be the finishing stuff of a great ocean liner. Then will I ride the billowing deep and my fiber will sing the ancient song of the sea, where the wind howls in the rigging just as it does in the treetops of the forest.

"Perhaps as the floor stuff of a parlor car I shall travel from seaboard to seaboard, vibrating and thrilling to the song

of thundering car wheels and listening all day to the click of steel rails.

"Maybe in the nursery, little feet shall patter over me and baby tongues shall prattle above me.

"Or, if a higher destiny should happen to be mine, I might be the sounding board in a piano, that the master musician shall play. Then again would I vibrate with the joy of spring and the flush of summer. Or still better, the violin maker may find a piece of wood hundreds of years hence, that was once taken from my fiber. He may fashion a wonderful instrument from it. Then indeed would I again hear the wind in the pine needles and the melancholy dirge of autumn.

"So you see I am not dead, but changed when I am sawed up into boards."

"We want that log, sonny," said the sawyer, who had trundled out the car so quietly that the dreamer on the log had not heard him.

The boy scrambled down from his perch and watched the men roll the great log on to the car and trundle it into the mill. When it had been put into place, he took his position on the car beside the log and rode back and forth while the old log was being sawed.

When the saw was not in motion it was a great silver disk, ragged as hooked and gleaming teeth could make it, but when it was in motion it was a misty blurr round as a cartwheel and without a sign of a tooth upon it.

When the carriage moved forward and it struck the butt-log of the ancient pine, it howled in demoniacal glee and whenever it struck a knot it fairly shrieked.

One by one the white fresh boards were sawed from the great log, until one was reached that arrested the attention of the men at the saw.

In the middle of this board was a panel where the wood was worn away and

polished as white as bone and quite as hard.

"Look at that, Jim," said the sawyer to his helper. "Pretty bad scar, ain't it. What you guess did it?"

"Fire," said the small boy on the carriage, who was watching every board taken from the old log.

"That is right," said the sawyer, "it was a forest fire. Must have happened more than fifty years ago, but how did the kid know?"

The boy blushed and looked ashamed, but said nothing and the sawing went on.

When the mammoth log had been sawed and placed upon another car to be run into the yard and stacked, the sawyer said, "Sixteen hundred feet in one butt-log. Well, that breaks the record!"

"Gracious, sonny," he exclaimed, when he had finished figuring, "seems to me you'll be late to school. Bell must have rung half an hour ago."

"That's so," said the boy, catching up his dinner pail and starting down the gang plank on a run. "I was so interested in the old log I forgot," but all the rest of the way to school he marvelled at the beauty and mystery of the old pine's story and was deeply grateful that he had eyes to see and a heart to understand these things.

HOW THE PORCUPINE GOT HIS QUILLS

Chapter II

How the Porcupine Got His Quills

One day the bear who is quite ignorant himself, thought he discerned signs of growing ignorance in the wood folks, and he ordered that a school be begun the following day, with himself as teacher.

He sent the owl through the woods with the news. This dignified messenger would fly from tree to tree crying, "School, School, School." Then the squirrels and the four-footed folks on the ground would ask when, and the owl would reply with great dignity, "to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow."

Accordingly the following morning the school assembled in a little open spot in the woods where there was an old log for the scholars to sit upon and a convenient

tree for the bear to lean against. There was some grumbling that the bear should be allowed to teach, but there is always grumbling about the teacher, so it was no worse that other schools.

It had to be admitted even by his enemies that the bear made a very stern looking teacher as he sat upright against the tree with his spelling book upon his knees.

Upon his nose he wore a pair of spectacles that he had taken from a hunter whom he had killed the year before; these increased his importance in the eyes of his pupils and made him look almost learned.

The fox, the coon and the woodchuck stood at the head of the class, while the rabbit, the porcupine and the skunk were at the foot, with all the other four-footed creatures in between.

When it was time for the school to begin the fox stepped forward and made a pretty little speech, praising the bear's

thoughtfulness in calling the school, and suggesting that a collection be taken up for him. As no one present had brought his money and all considered it a good joke, it was agreed to with much mirth. So the fox peeled off a piece of birch bark which was flat like a plate, and proceeded to take up the collection.

He excused himself from contributing, by saying that his hide had always been considered as good as gold and that he would leave it to the bear when he was done with it. The bear grunted and said that the fox always was a skin and that he might keep his old hide which was too small for any self-respecting bear.

When the plate was passed to the coon he said that he had four quarters with him, but as they had always been kept in the raccoon family he thought they might better remain there.

Chucky grinned at the sight of the birch bark plate and said if he had any-

thing with him he would-chuck it in, but as he had not, the fox must try the next gent.

The otter sat next to chucky, and the fox told him that he ought to do better than chucky had done.

The otter smoothed down his satin coat, and said that the muskrat and the mink had made a run on the bank just before he came to draw his money, and he could not get it, so the fox smilingly passed on to them, but these sleek little scamps informed him that they had no change with them, as they wore the same garment the whole year round.

The rabbit looked puzzled when the plate was passed to him, but finally managed to stammer that he was always short in arrears, as any one could see if they looked behind him, so he would have to be excused.

Every one grinned when the poor skunk was reached, for they considered

that he had no wit, and could not excuse himself gracefully, but the skunk convulsed the entire school by declaring that he had only a scent with him, and even that was bad.

When the laughter had ceased the bear tore a splinter from the trunk of the tree and pounding on the ground with it, commanded this foolishness to cease. Wait a moment, said the fox politely, we have not heard from our friends in the trees.

"Friend wood duck, do you wish to contribute to the generous collection that we are taking up for the bear?"

"Quack, quack," cried the duck, "I have a green back but I don't want to part with it until I am eaten, then whoever gets me can have it."

"Honk honk," cried the wild goose. "I have a bill but I do not want to break it."

Seeing that nothing was to be obtained from this stingy crowd, the fox dropped

a tumblebug into the birch bark plate, and placed it before the bear. "There, friend," he said, "is a tumblebug, for a humbug." The bear aimed a terrible blow at the fox but that agile fellow escaped to his place at the head of the class and school began.

The fox and the coon carried off all the honors in spelling, and greatly astonished the bear, as well as themselves. There was not a word in the spelling book, that they could not spell. If they did not know the right way to spell a word, they made up a way that sounded very learned, and as the bear was ignorant and a bad speller himself, he did not dare say their way was not right.

But it was different with poor chucky, for when the bear came to him he would put out a hard word and no matter how chucky spelled it, the bear always said with a deep growl that it was wrong. But this did not disturb chucky, for he would grunt and say "That it was not

necessary to know how to spell, if one only had to eat beans and live in a hole."

The rabbit disappointed the school with his bad spelling, as every one knew that he was really very bright. When the bear scolded him roundly for it, he replied that he could spell as well as either the fox or the coon, but if he did his best he would have to be at the head of the class with the fox, and would get eaten up for his pains.

The poor porcupine could not even spell his own name, which was partly the misfortune of having a long one, but aside from that he was really the dunce of the entire class. He was besides a very shy little fellow and not inclined to either claw or bite, and as he had no quills at this time, he was at the mercy of all.

He might always have been the same shy, unprotected little fellow, had not the rabbit discovered the needle peddler asleep beside the road one day and robbed his

pack of several packages of needles. These he took to the bear, and suggested a plan for improving the porcupine's wit.

There was also some malice in the rabbit's plan for the porcupine had shoved him out of his fine hollow log the winter before, and ever since then there had been bad blood between them.

"Friend Bear, worthy teacher," said the rabbit, "I have discovered a way in which we may possibly improve the porcupine's wits."

The bear put on his spectacles and was all attention.

"Notice these packages of fine points," continued the rabbit. "Now my plan is that every time the porcupine misses a word, you stick one of these points into him, that all the woods may know what an ignorant fellow he is."

The bear fairly laughed with delight, and took the points, promising to do as the rabbit had suggested.

The very first day the poor porcupine had six needles stuck into him, to the great amusement of the school. The next day he fared no better, nor did his wits improve, as the number of bristling points in his hide grew.

At the end of a month the needles had all been used and the porcupine was no brighter than the first day, he had grown to be a strange sight, for every portion of his body with the exception of a small strip along his belly, was bristling with needles. But he bore it bravely, while the rest of the wood folks made sport of him, asking him if he had not better start a sewing society.

But all the time the porcupine had been nursing his wrath, and making a plan all his own. When the last needle had been stuck into him, the porcupine declared that he had had enough of the school and was going to quit. He made a very bright little speech on this occasion, in which he

showed that he was not so stupid as they had thought.

"Friends," said the porcupine, standing forth in front of the class that all might see him. "For weeks I have borne your jeers and insults, because of this spiteful joke of the rabbit's. Now we have come to the end of the needles, and of my patience as well; but with all my stupidity I still maintain there are many fine points about me." This sally of the porcupine's brought a ripple of mirth from the school which the bear silenced with a frown.

"Now," continued the porcupine, "I am going down to the brook and sharpen the outer end of each of these needles until it is as sharp as the point that quivers in my flesh. When I have finished I will defy any one of you, even that old humbug the bear, to so much as lay a paw upon me. Henceforth," concluded the porcupine, in his deepest tones, "my motto shall be: 'Nemo me impune lacessit;' a very free

translation of which is, 'Hit me if you dare.' " Then rattling his many quills the porcupine shambled off to the brook to carry out his threat and no one dared molest him.

To this very day he goes up and down in the ancient woods unmindful of his many enemies well guarded by his panoply of spears and his motto still is: "Nemo me impune lacessit" ("Hit me if you dare").

THE STORY OF WILLOW BROOK

CHAPTER III

The Story of Willow Brook

THE boy with a dinner pail sat on the end of a little rustic bridge, dangling his bare feet over the cool water and listening to the pleasant murmur of the stream.

Above, and about him was a canopy of willow and alder bushes, and beneath was a deep trout haunted pool. An occasional sunbeam pierced the green coverlet of alder and willow and fell upon the rippling, dimpling water. Where it slanted down through the green it was a pencil of gold, but where it touched the water it broke into many rainbow hues.

A dragon fly with jewelled eyes and iridescent wings hummed viciously through, under the bridge, causing the boy to draw up his feet quickly. He had

a horror of dragon flies, because he shared with other small boys that queer superstition, about the dragon fly sewing up the ears of those who angered him. The boy was not quite sure whether the bright colored insect really possessed that power or not, but there was just enough mystery about the legend to make it awesome.

A wood thrush perched in the alders almost within hands reach, and poured forth a wonderful song. Further down the stream a catbird mimicked the song exactly and then squawled derisively.

As the boy sat upon the bridge leaning against the post at one end, his cap on the planks beside him, with the sweet smell of fern and flag, and pungent willow in his nostrils, the spirit of the waters touched his ears with a magic reed, and he heard new tones in the song of the stream and at last understood its gurgling and prattling as he had never done before.

At first he understood only a part of

what the rivulet was saying, but finally his heart was opened and the language of the waters was made plain.

"I am willow brook," the little stream began, "and I am older than you can possibly imagine. Many a stream goes dry and is lost because the timber is cut off near its source, or the land is drained, but very few new streams are formed. So the streams are older than anything made by man, older than the oldest trees that have stood for centuries, and almost as old as the wrinkled hills.

"If you would get some idea of how old I am just follow me back by a score of bridges, and as many meadows, by half a dozen mill ponds and as many water wheels, through deep forests and over jagged cliffs, to the place of my beginning, which is far up on the mountain side.

"There you will find a seam in the solid rock from which gush the living waters.

A foot or two below is a basin holding several gallons of water.

"At the time when some upheaval, or perhaps it was the frost, broke the rock open, and I gushed forth, there was no basin to hold my pure stream. I made the basin with my own gentle lapping. If you were to pour water upon a rock for your entire lifetime you probably could not see that you had worn away the rock; but I with my constant dripping have made this deep broad basin. I do not measure time in years and so do not know how long ago the rock opened and I began work upon the basin, but many times the forest about me has fallen beneath the tooth of time while I worked away at my task. Long, long before the white man ever set foot upon this continent the red man used to come to my basin to drink.

"In those days I was called the 'fount of healing.' There were many substances in the rock from which I sprung that had

medicinal qualities, such as sulphur and iron, which purify and renew the blood. Some of these qualities I have lost, as the iron and the sulphur are nearly all washed from the rock, but I am still the living water full of sweet, healing qualities.

"In those old days when the ancient forest was unbroken, and primeval wilderness and grandeur was about me, the doe led her little dapple fawn to the bank and drank of me. The woodcock and the jacksnipe reared their young upon my bank, and bored for worms in the loam that I cast up. The wood duck led forth her fledglings to my bosom, and was not afraid.

"Often the red man came to my deep pools for fish and I gave him plenty, for then the streams swarmed with fish. In those sweet old days I was wild and free, for I had not been dammed and harnessed to do the work of men.

"How well I remember the first dam

that checked my course and how I have drudged ever since at that hateful mill. One day the new, pale faced man who was a stranger in the great woods came to my banks and began felling trees at the lower end of a little valley and almost before I had guessed their design they had entirely checked my course. How angry I was to be stopped in this way. I knew that many pools and waterfalls below would dry up if I tarried, but work away as I would, I could find no escape through this wall that men had placed in my way.

"At first I sought to go under the dam, or through some of the many small cracks that had been left in the structure. But there was no passage under the strong dam, and the holes were soon filled with wash from the stream and I was left fretting in confinement.

"Then I sought to go round the ends of the dam, but man had builded it long and strong and as it is one of the laws of

my being that I cannot flow uphill, I soon found that I could not go round, so I set back upstream, making a broad deep pool and abiding my time. If I was not strong enough to cope with this artifice now I might be later on. But the surface of the pond near the dam was covered with froth for I foamed and fretted at being held.

"I had never before been checked so effectively. Once the beaver had dammed my course, but had finally concluded that my current was too swift and had sought another stream.

"Finally after about a week, I had filled the dam full to the top and I knew that my liberty was near at hand. So one morning without as much as saying, by your leave, I tumbled over the dam with a great roar, and went laughing on my way.

"How glad the pools and the meadows below were to see me. They had thought

I had lost my way, and were nearly dried up with grief. The meadows had lost their greenness and freshness, and many of the shallow pools were nearly dry. The fish had fared hard, and some of my choice clumps of lily-pads were dead. But everything took on a new beauty when I appeared and this helped me to realize how important I was after all. But not all of my water escaped over the top of the dam, for man had fashioned a long dark tunnel underground and part of my flow went through that.

"At the end of this tunnel was a queer round box, into which I rushed, making it go round and round, but I finally escaped, all white and foaming with anger.

"Sometimes the passage leading to the tunnel was shut, but much of the time it was open.

"When I rushed into this queer box and sent it spinning round and round, it turned other round things, and there was

a great humming and roaring in the house above.

"Finally I understood what an important work I was doing in this mill, which ground the grist for many miles around, then I was glad that I could help. Some days I was obliged to turn the wheels all day long, but it made many people glad.

"This was the first of a dozen dams that were built upon my course and finally I was made to do many kinds of work. I not only ground corn and wheat, but sawed logs and turned the loom that made cloth to keep men and women warm. Mine has been a useful life, ever since the rock was cleft and I spouted forth into the light of day.

"After the white man came, the red man, the deer and the great moose soon ceased to frequent my banks.

"Also the geese and ducks became less numerous. But I still possess much that is interesting to one who loves the sound of

running water, and the fragrance of sweet flag and water lilies.

"Every autumn the speckled trout swims far up my winding way to my many branches, to spawn. The male trout scoops out a hole where the female lays her eggs. Then they are covered up and left to hatch, when the spring sun shall warm the water sufficiently.

"In the springtime I am the nursery of many kinds of spawn. The trout and the red fin, the dace and the bullhead. The great green bullfrog and the lizard, and many small crustaceans are all cradled in my current.

"Each mossy stone, and each sandy shallow is a hatchery. Then all my sparkling current teems with life.

"While the rich larvæ, shining like gold, feeds all lower forms of life.

"In the springtime the cowslip unfolds her chalice of gold above me and the sweet flag and the cat-tail again put on their

green. Then water grasses and willows, blossom, and my banks are fragrant and sweet with the glad new life.

"Late in June the water lily unfolds its spotless innocence and makes fragrant my deep pools. Then the wood duck, the sandpiper, the woodcock and the bittern lead forth their young, and my banks are a nursery for the fowls of the air.

"Little children too, love to sport in my shallows, and catch shiners and polly-wogs. Men and boys seek me and dangle their lines in my depths, angling for my speckled trout and the whole countryside for many miles around is glad because they know Willow Brook.

"Many a great lesson of life I teach, if men would only heed my teachings.

"I teach the lesson of purity and cleanliness as no other thing in nature does. To-day you may fill me with unclean things, but to-morrow I will run as sweet and pure as ever. No matter how bright

the stars are they can always find their reflection in my bosom. I teach the lesson of industry, for I am never idle. I turn the mill that feeds the world. I water the meadow, enrich the barren places of earth. I lave and feed the roots of plants and trees and make my world fresh and glad.

"I never go backward as men often do, but my motto is always onward, towards deeper and broader things. I am always stronger to-day than I was yesterday.

"I am not afraid of being lost or forgotten, even though I mingle with larger streams and am seemingly lost. My water drops are still there doing their little part. Even though I at last mingle with the great ocean, with the current of a thousand streams, yet will I return to the cloud, and sing through the meadow again. Again will the cowslip and the lily open their hearts at my touch and the meadow be glad at my coming.

"I cannot linger for longer even under this rustic old bridge, where the willow and the alder greet me and all whisper for me to stay,

" 'But out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.' "

A LITTLE DAPPLE FOOL

Chapter IV

A Little Dapple Fool

The misty morn hung low on the eastern hilltops and the earth waited expectantly for the dawn of day. The first evidence of its coming had been a long low fleecy cloud that hung like a curtain over the hilltops. At first the cloud had been cold like a shroud with not even a suggestion of warmth, but gradually tints of pink and saffron had crept into its centre and the whole had been transfused with a wonderful luminosity that prescienced the morning sunbeams.

Now it vibrated and trembled in the balance, half vapor and half light, like a nicely adjusted scale which would turn in either direction at the slightest touch.

Suddenly, as though by magic, the veil

parted, the pink and saffron grew and deepened in intensity and the rotund smiling face of the sun peeped through the gossamer veil and all the birds in the treetops set up a great chirping and twittering; the squirrels chattered, and all the four-footed creatures became vocal, each after its kind.

This was the morning greeting of the furred and feathered folks to the warm sun whose coming cheered and gladdened them.

An hour before a dainty doe, whose swollen udders proclaimed her a mother, had gone down into the valley, stepping lightly and daintily, as does her kind, in search of her own breakfast.

The little dappled fawn, whom she had left hidden in the top of a fallen tree, pulled upon her, for this was her first year of motherhood, and she was as ravenous as a wolf.

But there was plenty of good feed in

the valley and as the deer were protected by law, there was little danger in her going. So fearless had the deer become of their natural enemy, man, that her mate, the proud, heavy antlered buck, who had lived in and about the mountain for several years, had driven a man out of his own garden that spring and he frequently grazed in the neighboring pastures with the cattle.

The little dapple fawn was asleep when his mother had left, but the lesson necessary to his safety had been faithfully taught him and the instinct of his ancestors was in his veins.

He was concealed in the very thickest part of the treetop and his mother had to make a great jump to reach him without trampling down the boughs and thus betray their whereabouts.

Presently he saw bright pencils of light streaming through his treetop and the birds began singing in the woods about

as though they would split their throats. Then he knew that it was daylight and that his mother would soon be back.

With the coming of the sunbeams the scent of the pine needles was quickened into life, and a dozen wonderful fragrances stirred into being upon the puffs of the fresh morning breeze. All nature seemed new and vital, revived and quickened by the sparkling dewdrops that trembled in the chalice of each wild flower and which gemmed the most obnoxious weed as well.

There was a chink between the foliage of the fallen treetop through which the fawn often amused himself by staring with mild, wide-open eyes. Now, in the absence of his mother, he fell to watching the life about him through his small window in the green plumes of the fallen tree.

Presently, something caught his eye that arrested his attention and held it with a fearful fascination that he could not

shake off. Though it terrified him for some reason to look at what he saw, yet the sight held him, and he could not even shut his eyes.

A few rods down the mountain side a great, gray cat was creeping stealthily through the woods, stopping every now and then, with one paw upraised, to listen and to test the wind.

This cat, like the doe down in the valley, was a wild mother, and the pangs of hunger gnawed at her vitals. Three blind kittens in a hollow fallen basswood were pulling upon her strength, and it needed all her natural cunning to feed herself and incidentally her kittens.

The wind was blowing the scent of the hidden fawn in the treetop straight away from her, but it blew the strong body scent of the cat full in the fawn's widely extended nostrils. He had never smelled anything like it before and some wild instinct told him that it was a fearful scent,

fraught with danger to helpless, hiding things.

A strong impulse was on him to bell wildly for his mother, whom he felt sure, would come running and drive away this fearful prowler. But silence had been one of the lessons his wild mother had enjoined, so he stifled his terror and lay with tense, quivering muscles, while the great cat drew nearer and nearer.

At last, the hunting wildcat crept to within ten paces of the treetop and stood watching and listening, testing the wind, with all her nerves intent upon discovering game. She had not even scented the fawn as the wind, which was strong, blew directly away from her, but she had noticed deer signs and knew that a doe had been that way this morning.

The fawn staring wide-eyed through his chink in the foliage lay as still as death, but his eyes were fastened intently upon the intruder.

The great cat looked doubtfully this way and that but nothing seemed stirring in this quarter. She sat down on her stub of a tail to consider which thicket to hunt next. The heaviness of her night's sleep had not been entirely thrown off for she had just come from her lair, so she opened her great mouth, showing her ferocious visage at its fiercest, and yawned.

To the little watcher peeping through his window in the treetop, this was the last straw. It filled him with uncontrollable terror. With a pitiful bell of fear, he bounded from the treetop and ran wildly down the mountain side, fear lending wings to his hoofs.

Probably a more astonished wildcat never stood on the mountain side than the old huntress. But her flash of astonishment was instantly swept away by her primitive instinct of the hunt.

The fleeing fawn had not taken three jumps when she was after him, springing

twice to his once, and overhauling him rapidly.

Half a dozen rods further down the hillside, in the peaceful aisles of the tranquil woods, where the birds sang and the dew sparkled on the grass, the helpless dappled creature was borne to earth.

With a mighty bound the wildcat landed fairly upon his back and he went down, almost without a struggle, and the cat's powerful jaws soon silenced his pitiful bleating.

A few minutes later she was dragging the lifeless carcass further down the hillside that she might hide it in a deep thicket, where the prowling fox, and the crow, and owls, should not find it.

A trail of broken-down ferns and weeds marked their going, and bloodspots sparkled among the dewdrops.

The little fawn had paid the penalty for disobedience, the price that is always

exacted in the wild. But how natural, when viewed in our light, had been his conduct. He had been overcome by a nameless terror and had fled before it, just as you or I would probably have done. But in the woods, where nearly all creatures hunt and are hunted, there had been no condoning his act. His little life had been the forfeit.

How pitiless and cruel this law would seem among human beings who lived in the light of reason and have intelligence, as well as instinct, to guide them.

Half an hour later when the wild mother returned, something told her from afar that all was not well with her little one. Was it mother love that made her so keen to see danger for her offspring? She came running half fearfully to the treetop and jumped into the fawn's hiding-place as usual, but it was empty.

With a pitiful bell of wounded mother

love, she sprang out again, and ran frantically hither and thither, her terror and frenzy growing each minute.

Into every thicket she peered wild-eyed and helpless.

The great cat heard her running frantically by her lair as she lay licking her chops and purring contentedly over her blind kittens. Her belly was full, her milk would flow freely now and there would be no more hunger in the cat family for several days.

A farmer who was hoeing corn in a distant meadow saw a doe come galloping across the fields, as though all the hounds in the country were after her.

She came up close to him and stretched her head over the fence, asking with great, dumb sorrowing eyes and with a pitiful moan, "have you seen my little one?"

At first, the farmer wondered what it all meant but as he had laid his only child beneath the daisies and buttercups that

year, he understood the look in the doe's eyes.

"It's too durn bad," he said sympathetically. "I know just how you feel, I have been there myself. It must be that beastly bobcat that was tracking about on the late snows last spring. When I get time I will see if I can settle this score with the big, gray cat."

Soon the doe turned and trotted back to the mountain. All day long she wandered to and fro, searching for her lost fawn. Into every thicket and deep dell she penetrated in her vain quest. All night long her pitiful belling could be heard vying with the moaning of the wind in the treetops, in a solemn dirge of misery.

The following day she appeared in the village street, trotting along like a pet lamb or a dog. Her great distress had dulled all her usual sense of fear. The dogs yelped unheeded at her heels and she

feared not the children that flocked about to see her. But of all she asked the same question with her wide-staring, sorrow-smitten eyes.

Often she trotted into the yards and came nosing at doors or windows to see if any trace of her offspring could be found.

Did she miss the butting of the soft muzzle at her udders, and the soft rubbing of the dapple coat against her side? If you had looked into her eyes you would have known.

Up and down, day after day, she went, searching in the deep depths of the tamarack swamp, and among the laurel, and on the high mountain top among the scrub spruces.

The wild bobcat noted her wanderings and licked her chops contentedly. This anxiety would make the doe heedless of herself, and some night she would drop on

her back from an overhanging limb and there would be another tragedy on the mountain side.

At last in sheer desperation the doe went boldly into a pasture and tried to adopt a small calf that was running with its mother, but the spotted heifer would not part with it. With lowered horns she drove the deer, again and again from the pasture. It was not until the despairing wild mother saw that this was useless that she desisted.

Down in the valley was a long, smooth road leading away and away through unknown fields. It was very straight for a road and the course was marked by two horizontal sticks with short cross sticks at regular intervals. The sorrow-haunted doe discovered it one day in her wanderings, and followed it feverishly. Ordinarily she would have shunned it as one of the dangerous devices of man, but

now when all natural search had failed, she chose an artificial pathway and followed it unceasingly.

For half an hour it led through fields and woods which were familiar to the doe, but finally it struck off into the mountains often making deep cuts, to save climbing the foothills.

She was in the middle of one of these deep cuts, trotting hopelessly, yet untiringly along when the hilltops became vocal with a hoarse, wild cry. It was louder than the baying of many hounds.

At first, the half-dazed creature thought it came from in front, so she turned and fled back along the way that she had come. But soon a deep rumbling, like the voice of thunder, came from that direction, and she turned and retraced her steps.

Then the hilltops began shrieking and reverberating again, and the deep thunder seemed to come from all about her—even

the ground under her hoofs quaked with fear.

The bewildered doe sought to spring up the side of the deep path and flee in a new direction, just as she would have doubled with the hounds upon her track, but her spring was not equal to the great height, and she fell back upon her haunches.

Suddenly, from around a bend in the trail, there rushed a great, roaring, thundering, shrieking monster, many times larger than a moose and its breath was like a great cloud, and white as the breath of a deer in winter. It shrieked and thundered, rumbled and roared, clanged and hissed, and all the time rushed forward like the hurricane when the winds go mad.

Half paralyzed with fear, but with the law of self-preservation still strong within her, the doe fled in front of this monstrosity, but she was weak from many days' fasting, for she had not touched browse since the loss of her fawn. Nearer and

nearer came this mountain of fire and steam. She could now feel its breath upon her straining flanks. So she doubled and again sprang up the side of the cut. Again she fell back impotently, and the train passed over her hind quarters amputating both legs just above the gambrel joints.

The train slowed down and stopped, and the conductor, the brakemen and one passenger went back to see what damage had been done.

They found the wounded doe lying half across the track with blood streaming from her amputated members. She was moaning and panting like a human creature, and great tears of anguish were coursing down her cheeks.

"We must kill her," said the passenger decidedly.

"We can't," replied the conductor. "There is a fine of one hundred dollars for killing a deer. I will leave word at

the next station for the game warden to come back and attend to it."

"And leave the poor thing here panting and gasping in anguish all that time?" cried the passenger hotly.

"That's the only thing to do," replied the brakeman.

"We can't stay here all day," exclaimed the conductor. "We have already lost five minutes. Come, Jim," he said to the brakeman, "we must hurry."

The two started back to the train on a run, but the passenger still stood over the mortally wounded doe.

"Aren't you coming?" called the conductor as he swung on the rear platform and motioned the engineer to pull out.

The passenger paid no attention to this summons, but still watched the wild mother who lay gasping out her life at his feet.

The engineer drew the throttle, and a cloud of steam belched from the smoke-stack, and the wheels began to turn. The

train had barely got under way when a pistol shot rang out through the deep cut and a thick cloud of blue smoke curled up and was lost in the distance.

"There," said the passenger, as he watched the doe stretch out in death, while the look of distress died out in her eyes and tranquillity came in its place, "I have done one good job to-day, though I have lost my train, and it may cost me one hundred dollars; but I do not think that any judge would be fool enough to fine me for a deed like this."

THE FAMILY OF BOB-WHITE

CHAPTER V

The Family of Bob-White

BLITHE, cheerful little Bob-White sat on the top of a barpost whistling his merry call, "bob-white, bob, bob-bob-white, bob-white, bob, bob-white."

Bob-White was very well satisfied with the whole world that spring morning, and with his own lot in particular, for something told him in the plainest kind of language that spring had come. In fact all the birds that he had seen this morning had been talking about it, and Bob-White knew just enough of their language to understand. What else did blue bird mean by his sweet "cheerily, cheerily," and Cock Robin, by his lusty "cheerup, cheerup." Still more convincing than either of these, was a great noisy harrow

of wild geese that swung rapidly across the tender spring sky, flinging afar to the brown earth their strong clear water slogan of "honk, honk, honk."

Bob-White, like the rest of the quail in the vicinity, had just passed through a very severe winter, so was it any wonder that he whistled his merriest tune this balmy morning?

Each time when he stopped whistling he hopped down on the top bar of the gateway and strutted back and forth like a veritable turkey cock. First, he would extend one wing to its full sweep, then the other, and finally spreading both wings and his comical short tail he would strut up and down saying in his every motion, "now if you want to see a fine bird just look at me."

He was not a showy bird, although his suit was neat and quite jaunty. His back and shoulders were a combination of brown and gray, while his undersides were

lighter. The feathers on the top of his head were rather inclined to stand up like a pompadour, and under his throat was a white necktie. The most that could be said for such a dress was, that it was not conspicuous, and so was not calculated to attract the eyes of any of Bob-White's enemies, such as hawks, owls, or men.

But Bob-White was whistling for something else beside good spirits this morning. He was whistling for a wife.

Presently from down across the fields as though in answer to his calling came a clear, "white, white, white," or if you had been in a more romantic frame of mind you might have thought that the clear low whistling said, "here, here, here."

Bob-White heard it, and was pleased with the effect of his own musical voice, so he redoubled his calls of "bob-white, bob-white," and listened at regular intervals for the musical "white, white, white," that came in return.

When this calling and answering had gone on for some time Bob-White flew away to investigate, and his wings made such a whirring and struck so fast that this fact alone proclaimed him a member of the partridge family. He is the smallest of all the partridges, and is known in parts of the south as the Virginia partridge.

While Bob-White is making love to a shy lady quail down in the thicket, let us briefly consider his short life up to this morning, that you may know why he was so glad spring had come, and why the answering call from the thicket had been so sweet to his ears.

The latter part of May, the previous spring, Bob-White had been merely one of fifteen eggs lying cunningly concealed in a nest made on the ground under a brush fence.

About the middle of June all of these fifteen eggs had begun to manifest signs

of life, and in about fifteen minutes after the first tiny bill appeared, the whole brood was hatched.

They were no featherless, hairless, gawky fledglings, but bright, alert chicks fairly well clad, and as smart as crickets.

In a few hours they were following their mother about picking up their living just as though they had done nothing else for years.

But an evil fate had pursued the brood from the very day of hatching. When they were a week old a weasel happened upon them in the night, and before their vigilant little mother had been able to scatter and hide them, he sucked the blood of three, and the family was reduced to an even dozen.

A grub or louse had claimed two more within another week, and the family was down to ten. The next thief to come among them was the sparrow-hawk, who took one in each claw at a single swoop,

leaving but eight; these eight, however, lived until the hunting season opened in the autumn, when four of them went into a game bag before they even thought of scattering and thus diminishing their peril.

After that ominous day they never knew just when the deafening banging would begin, and they were not left in peace for many days at a time.

When the season finally closed, there were two chicks and one of the old birds left. Only three out of seventeen, the original family.

In addition to such bad luck as this the following winter had been exceptionally hard. The scattered grain, and the weed-seeds had been covered by the first snow-storm, and they did not appear again until the warm spring rains uncovered the brown earth, so the quail had to depend entirely upon the winter berries and buds for sustenance.

The bright red berries of the sumac, the bitter-sweet, and the purple berries of the Virginia creeper, had stood them in good stead. Also juniper and poison ivy berries had furnished them many a meal.

When these were all gone they went into the deep woods and scratched about fallen logs for partridge berries or occasionally discovered a wind-swept knoll where checkerberries could be found.

With such scant food as this, and with seed obtained from an occasional tall weed, that stuck its friendly head above the snow they had managed to live until February, but finally even this supply gave out, and they resorted to their last hope, and visited a farmyard in the vicinity.

Each day they went to the barnyard, and scratched in the dung-heap for particles of grain. It was while feeding in this manner that the house-cat took one, and the quail family was reduced to a pair.

But they still came to the farmyard, as they could do nothing else.

Bob-White and his sister clung very closely to one another now they were all that was left of the large quail family, but one night while they were sleeping side by side in a tangle of bitter-sweet and fir tree, a great owl reached in his strong talons and took one, and Bob-White was left alone in the great world.

But this had happened only two or three weeks before the time when our story begins, and Bob-White had found food in plenty shortly after the owl had deprived him of his companion.

At first, Bob-White could not locate the shy little lady quail who had been calling to him from the thicket; but he finally discovered her picking away for dear life at weed-seed, just as though breakfast was much more to her taste than love making.

For a long time she would take no

notice of him but he strutted up and down so persistently that she finally looked up. Even then, her manner plainly said, "Why, where in the world did you come from; I did not suppose there was a bob-white anywhere in this region?" Little by little, Bob-White gained her goodwill until at last she would let him help her scratch for weed-seeds. They spent a very pleasant forenoon together and the thing was as good as settled.

The following morning, Bob-White was again perched on his barpost whistling his cheery call-note, but when the answer came up clear from the thicket, "white, white, white," and he flew down to meet his intended, sad to relate, another bob-white was helping her hunt for weed-seed.

Then her own particular Bob-White flew at his rival and a cock fight began which would have been most comical had not the combatants been so deadly in earnest. They lowered their heads and

came at each other in true game-cock style, striking with beak and wing and sometimes even buffeting one another over.

But our own Bob-White was fighting for his rights, for the admiration and affection of his mate and the nest they intended to build, while the other was merely an intruder; so, having right on his side, he soon punished his rival severely and he flew away discomfited.

When the field was clear and Bob-White had been left conqueror, he went up to his fickle wife and gave her a savage peck on the head as much as to say, "You faithless hussy, if it had not been for you, I should not have had all this trouble."

Only once more did a rival dare to make love to Mrs. Bob-White, and then the intruder was driven away as before and the wife punished for her faithlessness.

This honey-moon lasted for about ten days and then Mr. and Mrs. Bob-White

selected a place for their nest. It was under the edge of an old fallen log, well screened from view and sheltered from the rain. Each day for about two weeks Mrs. Bob-White deposited an egg in the nest, until the number was sixteen, then began her arduous task of incubation.

Two or three times during that long three weeks Mr. Bob-White took his turn upon the eggs for half an hour while his wife went for a dust bath.

There are ornithologists who accuse Bob-White of being a bigamist, but I do not believe that he ever woos the second wife until after the first chicks have hatched, and that might be called a lawful second marriage. I do not doubt, however, but that he would flirt with a coquettish lady quail even while his own faithful wife was sitting on the eggs if chance offered.

About the twentieth of June Mrs. Bob-White appeared, closely followed by four-

teen quail chicks. She was clucking and bristling like the good little mother partridge that she is, and each of the tiny chicks was spry as a cricket. It had not been necessary for the old birds to carry food to these nestlings. After the first tiny little creature had picked his way through the shell, his lusty peep had set all the others to work and in half an hour the whole brood had arrived. Then, when they had dried and had a little time in which to gain strength, they were ready for the world.

Forth they all came, the mother clucking and bristling and the chicks scampering this way and that, pecking at almost invisible plantlice and bugs and feeding themselves within the same hour that they came from the nest.

For two or three nights Mrs. Bob-White led them back to the old nest, but after that, it was given up and they never returned to it.

One night when they were about a week old Mrs. Bob-White led them to sleep in a little hollow under an over-hanging rock. During the night there was a terrible downpour of rain and the hollow filled rapidly. Before the young mother could conduct her chicks to higher and dryer ground, three were drowned in the puddle.

After this, there were no fatalities in the quail family for nearly two months. For the first two weeks Bob-White hovered about his family trying to protect them and giving his wife much good advice about bringing up children; but she finally told him that she could get along quite well without him, and he took her at her word.

The August moon hung large and luminous above the eastern hills. There was the smell of ripening fruit and maize on the summer night air and the cricket and the katy-did were singing in the

grass. Sweet corn was already in the milk, but the field corn was not yet ripe enough for the palate of the fastidious raccoon.

Down from the deep woods came Mr. Raccoon shuffling and shambling like the real little bear that he is. About his eyes were two black circles looking like spectacles and around the tip of his nose was a white ring. His tail also was ringed. There is not another such suit as his in the entire wilderness east of the rocky mountains. Out of the woods he came and across the pasture he shuffled, eager, alert, and watchful, often stopping to test the air and poke his inquisitive nose under a log or flat stone.

Soon a fresh puff of night wind brought him a most exciting scent. He knew it quite well. It was that of a bevy of quail in hiding. The old raccoon knew just how they stood in that circular bunch with their tails all together and their heads

looking outward, that they might face in every direction.

He flattened himself to the ground and crept forward on his belly almost as still as a cat. He was no longer the clumsy little bear but the cautious hunter. Once he heard the bevy stirring uneasily in their sleep as though they had knowledge of coming danger. Then he lay very still and waited until the mother bird's "creets" and the soft peeps of the chickens had ceased. He now crept forward again. Nearer and nearer he drew, going more cautiously with each succeeding step, until at last he was within springing distance. He then flattened himself out on the ground, intensified all his muscles until they were like steel and with a sudden motion sprang full in the midst of the sleeping bevy.

Click, click, click, went his jaws, snapping like lightning in every direction.

There was the sudden whirr of many

wings and a chorus of squeaks, peeps, and squawks from a dozen birds and in three seconds' time the bevy were gone with the exception of two wounded birds who fluttered feebly in the grass. But a bite apiece from Mr. Raccoon soon stopped their fluttering. Then the hunter lay down where, a few minutes before, the quail family had slept and made his supper of quail, without toast.

August and September came and went and the quail family grew plump upon grain and weed-seed but the loss of grain to the farmer was more than off-set by the weed-seed they destroyed.*

October with its corn in the shock and golden pumpkins and harvested grain and fruit was with us when another hunter came down from the great wood in quest of warm blood. This hunter did not

* It has been estimated by the agricultural department of the United States that the quail in Maryland and Virginia annually destroy two hundred and fifty tons of weed-seed.

shuffle as the old raccoon had done, but his gait was a steady trot. When the night wind stirred, bearing the delicious fragrance of witch-hazel, one might have noticed a musky, pungent odor from the night prowler. It was Red-Fox, the wise and the witty, and a much more successful hunter than the old raccoon.

He, too, got a scent of quail down in the pasture and followed it eagerly. His step was swift and sure and his nose was keen. Swiftly like a dark shadow he advanced until he located the sleeping quail under an old brush fence. Then he crept forward foot by foot until he was almost upon them, when with a sudden spring he darted into their midst.

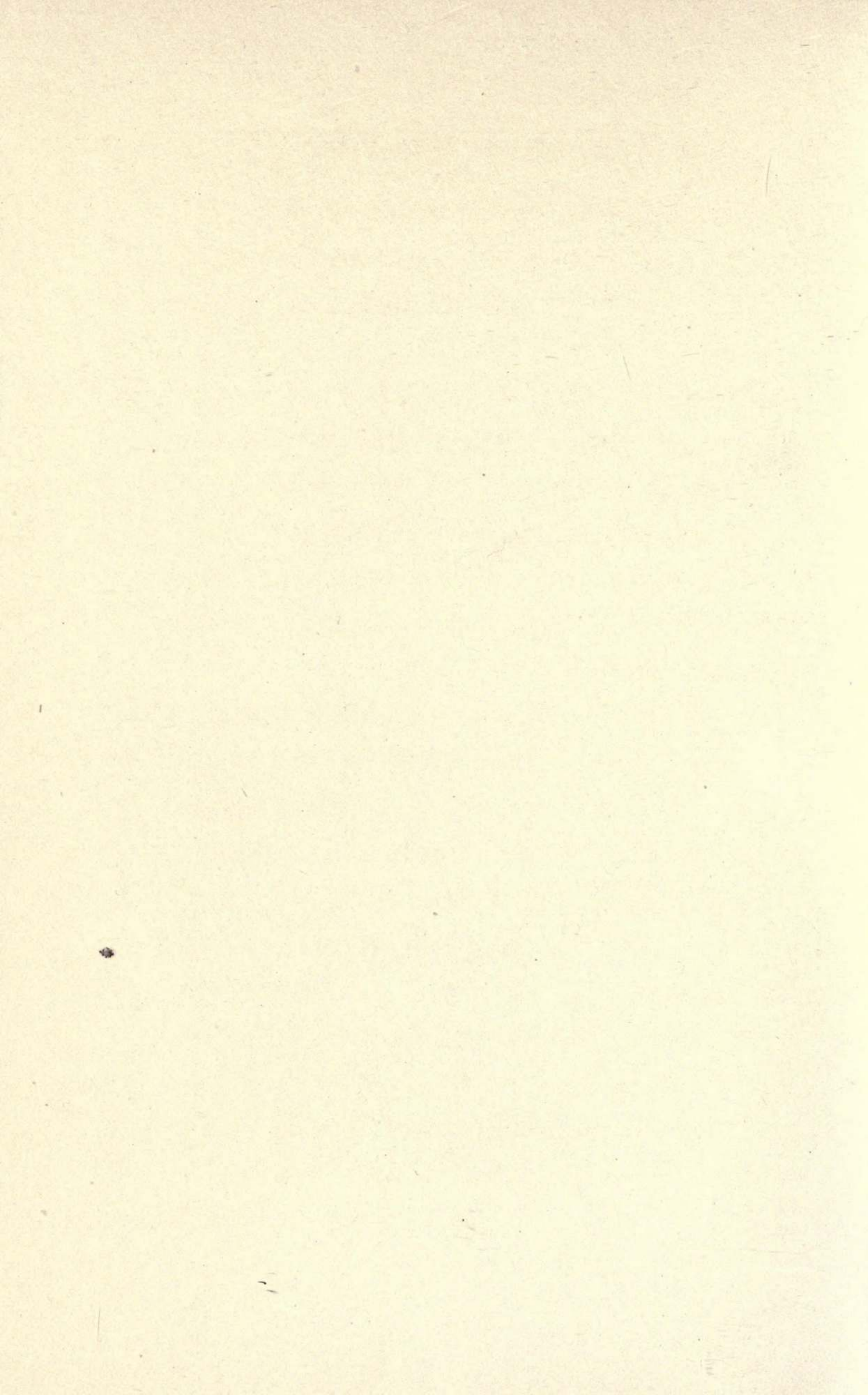
Again, there was the sudden whirr of many wings and cries of fear and pain, mingled with the rapid click, click, of the fox's jaws. When the bevy was gone and Mr. Fox nosed about under the fence he found he also had bagged a pair of quail.

No more misfortunes befell the quail family until the first day of the open season. Then a party of sportsmen with dogs and guns drove them from cover to cover, while the guns cracked merrily. It was a cold, raw day of scudding clouds and biting winds that plainly told of coming winter. This, added to the incessant roar of fire arms made that day like the crack of doom to the family of Bob-White.

Towards night, a biting sleet and rain storm set in and the hunting ceased, but the quail family had been scattered in every direction and their friends at the farmhouse wondered if any had survived, so the old man and small boy went out into the storm to look for the quail. The old man went ahead with a long, swinging stride while the small boy trotted after him.

How cheerless was the sound of the hail rattling upon the dead leaves and grass,

HE *crept forward foot by foot until he was almost upon him*



and the moaning of the winds in the tree-tops! All the joy and gladness seemed to have departed from the naked, forsaken earth.

These two had followed the fortunes of the quail family from the very first. They had discovered the nest under the old log and had visited it several times during incubation. They had fished the three water soaked chicks out of the puddle after the rainstorm where the folly of their mother had been only too apparent.

They had also happened upon the remains of the old raccoon's supper, scattered about near that circle of footprints. The depredations of Red Fox they had likewise discovered while repairing the brush fence. They had also seen the quail many times in neighboring grain fields and had heard their cheery "more-wet" before each rainstorm; so was it any wonder that their hearts were heavy to-night?

The old man vaulted lightly over the barway into the pasture while the boy crawled between the bars. They went on for fifteen or twenty rods and then crawled under a clump of small spruces and sat down where the leaves were still dry.

Suddenly, from their very midst, came a clear shrill whistle, pure and sweet as the note of a piccolo, "bob-white, bob-white, bob-bob-white."

"They are right here in the bush, Ben," exclaimed the boy in an eager whisper, pulling excitedly at his companion's sleeve.

The old man chuckled and laughed softly. "That was me," he whispered. "I had my hand over my mouth so you could not tell where the sound came from." Again he repeated the musical call and both waited and listened. Then, faint and far across the pasture land, like an echo, came the reply, "bob-white, bob-white, bob-bob-white."

"That's him," whispered Ben. "Now keep perfectly still and you will hear something worth while."

Presently the two watchers under the little spruces heard the well-known whirr of short, fast beating wings, and a second later Bob-White himself plumped down under the cover within two yards of them. He shook the wet from his wings, preened his feathers for a moment and then swelling out his breast, uttered his sweet call-note. It was useless for the old man to call now that the real Bob-White had sounded his roll call so they waited, and listened.

Again came the low whistle from far away in the pasture land but this time it was only, "white, white, white." Soon the swift whirr of beating wings was heard and a moment later the second quail alighted under the scrub spruce.

"Cureet, cureee, cur-r, cure-e-e," cried Bob-White in soft, quail words of love and

welcome. "Peep, pure-e-, e-e, e-e," replied the chicken.

The greeting and response were scarcely over when another quail whirred under the bush and another, and still another.

"Cureet, cure-e-e, cur-r, cure-e-e," was the salutation of Bob-White to each newcomer as they huddled together and rejoiced in bird language that they had found one another again. After a few minutes they quieted down and the listeners knew that they had formed themselves into the well-known bunch and fallen asleep, so they stole quietly away, leaving them dry and comfortable under the spruce, but it was only part of the family, Bob-White and four of his chicks, the little hen and the other four had gone away in the hunter's game bag.

December and January came and went and the leafless, flowerless world was in the clutch of midwinter. Day after day

the snow fell and the cold was so intense that sometimes in the deep woods the stout heart of maple or birch was cracked asunder.

One morning, when the small boy who had gone to the pasture that night with Old Ben to search for the quail awoke, he found the world ice-clad and snow-bound and in the clutch of a terrible freeze. The windows were so clouded with frost that he could not see out until he had melted it with his breath, but when the frost had been melted, the boy cried out with grief, for there upon the window-sill huddled close to the glass was the stiff, stark form of his Bob-White.

He had died with his breast to the window pane with only a sixteenth of an inch of transparent something between him and the warmth that would have saved him. As pitilessly as the glacier grinds the pebble to sand the great freeze had pressed him against the window until his

stout little heart was still, and then, as though ashamed of what she had done, nature had shrouded him in a white mantle of snow.

With difficulty the boy raised the window and took the dead quail in his hands. Carefully he brushed the snow from his gray brown coat and smoothed out his ruffled feathers.

It was a far cry from that warm spring morning, when he had first seen him on the old barpost whistling his cheery call, to this snow-bound frozen world that seemed more dead than alive. Poor little Bob-White; he had eluded the hawk, the owl and the weasel, the fox, the raccoon and the hunter, but the great freeze had caught him, so near and yet so far from cover. With a sigh the boy put him back in the little snow grave on the window-sill and shut the window. There he would let him lie in his soft coverlet of ermine until the great storm was over.

THE BUSY BEE

Chapter VI

The Busy Bee

THERE is no more pleasant recollection of boyhood and its pleasures than that of bee hunting. I never visit the country in July or August even now without getting the old fever to take a bee box and try my luck again in tracking the honey-bee through the blue sky to his honey laden tree.

City bred people may often have wondered about the phrase "a bee line," but they never would had they lined fugitive bees to their tree. Once the bee has filled her honey stomach a shaft of light is not more straight than the line she makes for the tree.

How full of bird song and sunlight, of dew laden grass, and perfume of flowers

and shrubs are these memories of bee hunting.

In boyhood days, bare brown feet brushed the dew, sparkling like diamonds, from the grass. If the man goes bee hunting he must wear shoes and thus lose half the fun.

What excitement there was, once we got a line on the tree. Over fences and stone walls we raced, through swamps and brooks. No hill was too steep, and no thicket too dense to be penetrated, as long as we kept the fugitive bee in sight, or at least kept the line upon the tree.

To most of the readers of this book the privilege and education of bee hunting will be denied, but many of you can avail yourselves of a very good substitute, and that is the study of the bee hive, even though it be the back yard of your city home. I know many a man who keeps bees with both profit and pleasure within the city limits of some large metropolis. So

if you can not go bee hunting, study the hive, and you can learn most of the secrets that the country boy learns following the bee line to the honey laden tree.

One has merely to take his stand near the hive on some warm summer day, when the honey flow is at its height, at about noon to realize fully how true is the old proverbial phrase, "as busy as a bee."

"Hum, hum, zip, zip, hum." They come like bullets in a lively skirmish, a steady stream, all laden with the sweet of every honey flower that blooms within a radius of three miles. It matters not whether the hive is composed of black native, hybrids, golden banded Carniolas, or pure Italians, the story is just the same, "hum, hum, zip, zip, hum." All bringing home some of that delicious sweet which the wonderful chemistry of sun and rain, dew and mould have distilled.

But no idler gains entrance to the hive, for if the honey stomach which is just in

front of the real stomach, is not well filled, it fares hard with the lazy one.

No military camp was ever guarded more rigidly against the intrusion of the enemy, than is the hive against the laggard, and against thieves from other hives.

From a dozen to a score of good soldiers stand guard all day, with spears in readiness. Each bee who enters has to possess the password of a well filled honey sack, or the odor of her own particular hive, or she will never gain entrance.

If fifty hives were set up in a row, and each hive contained from twenty-five to fifty thousand bees, that rule of every bee to her own hive would be as rigidly enforced as though there were only two hives instead of fifty. Does each hive have a password so that its inhabitants are known from those of several hundred other hives, or does each bee possess physiological characteristics, that differentiate her from all

the others? These, and other explanations have been proposed by naturalists, from time to time, but all such explanations have been rejected as visionary and impractical.

Naturalists are now agreed that the sentinels at the entrance to the hive recognize their own by the sense of smell alone. Even so, how keen must be that sense, when a hundred hives are to be discriminated between. Truly these little folks who gather sweets for us, put our simple notions of biology to a severe test, when we undertake to explain some of the simplest things about the hive.

"Hum, hum, zip, zip, hum, hum." From how far afield does this colony come, and which are its most favored flowers?

All through the winter the swarm was dormant, huddling together in a conical shaped mass. By constantly changing their position, so that the bees on the inside of the mass came to the outside, while

those outside got inside they kept warm. On warm days when the thermometer touched forty, there was uneasiness in the bunch, and occasionally a bee more active than her fellows crawled out to see how the winter was progressing. The sugar maker occasionally fishes a bee out of a pail of sap, or he will see one on the trunk of a maple tree, sucking sweet from a crevice from which oozes sap, that is frozen at night and turned into honey-like syrup.

The honey-bee always finds the first pussy-willow from which she takes pollen and the first spring wild flowers. Her keen sense of smell probably takes her far afield in the early spring before flowering has really begun. The lilac, and all the cultivated flowers she spies out, but it is not until the new grass is a few inches high, and the heads of the white clover appear that the honey flow can be said to have begun.

From then on, the honey-bee is a freebooter. All the floral world is hers, and she claims her own wherever she finds it. Disturb this robber and sacker of your orchards and fields if you dare. She will defend her right to all trees, shrubs and plants that bloom and you will not long dispute titles with her.

If the honey-bee could only gather honey from the red clover! This is the bee-keeper's zenith of hope, but the long heads of the red clover, which contain much more of the delicious sweet than do the shorter heads of the white, are not for the honey-bee. Nature has made her with too short a tongue to reach this treasure, so the bumble-bee and the butterfly feed on it, while their more useful cousin goes unfed.

On about every head of every stalk in the buckwheat field you can see one of these golden-banded robbers. Away in the deep woods in the creamy flowers of

the basswood, they are humming and tonguing the stamens for the hidden sweet. All through the summer days, and well into the autumn, the golden-rod will pay toll to the hive. No roadside flower, that contains sweet is too mean or insignificant to escape the notice of this industrious honey-getter. While men idle she works, taught by some marvelous intuition that soon the flowers will fade, and snow cover the ground and that if the honey-bees would not perish like the bumble-bee, they must be storing up food for winter.

A great many erroneous ideas are held by the general public as to the position of the queen-bee in the colony. In the minds of many she is the master mind, and a queen of absolute power. But this is not so, while she is a royal queen, and her kingdom is a veritable empire in which, in a certain sense, she is supreme, yet it is a limited monarchy, and her powers are

more like those of a limited monarch, than those of a despot.

The colony would even go so far as to kill their queen if they didn't like her, or thought she was not serving the best interests of the hive, quite as the human family have disposed of royalty that had become obnoxious.

Although the hive can do almost nothing without the presence and assistance of the queen, yet she is not its whole power. This is located in the body politic, just as it is in a limited monarchy.

In many ways the hive can be controlled through its queen. For instance, if the hive swarms, and a part of its members leave and take up quarters on the limb of an adjacent tree, they ascertain if the queen has come with them, and if she is not discovered in the cluster, they at once return to the hive. So when the beekeeper does not wish to have the hive swarm, he keeps what is called a drone-

trap over the front door of the hive. This enables the workers to go and come as they wish but the queen and drones cannot leave the hive until the trap is removed.

Swarming is a wise provision of nature by means of which the hive is kept from becoming congested, and it is an unwritten law in beedom that the queen goes with the swarming bees. This leaves the old hive without a queen and consequently without means of keeping its numbers good, for you must remember that the life of a bee, is only about sixty days, so if a hive is left for any length of time without a queen to lay eggs and hatch out new members, the entire colony dies, and the bee-keeper loses a hive. But this rarely happens, for these little people are very ingenious. Much more so than man, in fact, and can supply any existing want in their small but most active house.

When the old hive is left without a queen and none is ready to hatch, the colony may set to work and make a queen to order, as you might say.

In our human government we have often created new royal families, but we have never actually created new queens, as the bees have done.

Several queen cells containing eggs, that have previously been laid by the absconding queen, are now sealed up and allowed to hatch, and the first new queen hatched, crawls forth to receive the homage of her subjects which is hers in full measure once she has mated. But she at once takes a precaution against usurpers that our human royalty have often employed, for she kills all the unhatched or partially developed queens and thus insures her sovereignty.

This act done, her admiring subjects crowd around her and do homage, feeding her prepared food from their small

tongues, and looking for all the world, as they cluster about her, like a large daisy, with its golden queenly center.

It is a time of perturbation when the new queen flies forth to mate. She is at once missed and clouds of bees pour forth from the hive in search of her. This confusion often alarms the novice into thinking that the hive is about to swarm.

But the mating queen cares not for the alarm of her subjects, she has more important business on hand this morning.

Up, up she soars in a graceful spiral, searching the upper air for her mate. As every hive contains several hundred drones who were hatched for this express purpose and for this alone, the queen is usually successful the first morning of her quest.

In the one-hundredth part of a second, while flying like bullets, the virgin queen and her mate make possible the laying of from five hundred to seven hundred thou-

sand fertile eggs which may produce in time, two or three dozen new hives of honey gatherers.

But the poor drone forfeits his life in the act. His generative organs are torn from his body and carried back by the queen to the hive, while the drone flutters to earth and dies having served his end in the economy of nature.

After the mating season is past the drones are either driven from the hive, or killed, so that it shall contain only the queen and her workers.

Each hive of bees that is carrying its full complement of individuals contains the following:

First and foremost there is the queen, the gentle ruler of this wonderful kingdom, capable of laying from two to three thousand eggs a day in the laying season, and upon whose fertility the life of the hive depends. But she is not the only egg layer in the hive, for the workers are

females as well, some of them capable of laying eggs, but the great difference between the eggs of these two egg-layers, is that the queen's eggs may hatch queens, workers or drones, while the eggs of the worker will only hatch drones.

The drones are of course the males, whose only excuse for living is to fertilize the queen.

They never gather honey, and feed greedily at the store inside the hive. But their day is only a short one, although they live upon the sweets of the land, without having to toil for it while they exist.

Briefly considered the inner life of the hive is as follows:

All through the cold months, from late in November up to nearly the first of May the hive is dormant. During this time its members, which are now all workers, hang in a large conical cluster in the hive. But there is a constant move-

ment of the individuals in the cluster, which keeps it warm.

From time to time they feed upon the honey that has been stored up for that purpose, but they are not as hungry as they would be if more active. If the winter supply of honey runs low, the beekeeper feeds them upon sugar melted to a thin syrup.

On an exceptionally warm day in April the swarm begins to warm up, and as soon as any of the earliest wild flowers blossom the bees are on hand to take toll.

So it will be seen they are no laggards and they tread very close upon the heels of the tardy spring.

I do not think any one knows just the chemistry of wax making. It, of course, comes from plants and flowers, but just what ones, and just how it is prepared only the reticent bee knows.

As soon as the honey flow begins in the spring the colony set to work to draw out

the cells in which to store the golden nectar. Soon in each of the little sections which are made to hold a pound of honey, a wax curtain is started beginning at the top and working down. On each side of this curtain are plainly stamped the hexagonal cells which, when they have been drawn out laterally, will be the fully developed cells. It is a marvel of workmanship this golden cellular mass, each cell symmetrical and nicely sealed. But each honey gatherer has a tri-square on the end of his nose, his proboscis being triangular, and six of these triangles placed side by side, and point to point give him the perfect hexagon. This cell when completed is about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter and about three-quarters of an inch deep.

It is a wonderful sight to peep into the observation hive when the honey flow is at its height, and see these thousands and tens of thousands of industrious lit-

tle folks coming and going, swarming in and out from the partly filled cells, each upon his mission of good to man.

Upon particularly hot days if you put your hand close to the hive you can sometimes feel a cold current of air not strong but very perceptible.

Inside a hundred cold air fans are going, keeping the temperature of the hive at a normal pitch and also thickening the honey. This is done by the wings which will fan away ceaselessly for hours.

The hive is always kept scrupulously clean, for the honey-makers appreciate the fact that any foreign substance would taint the honey.

Each spring the hive is carefully cleaned and all small cracks are sealed up with wax, so that it is as nearly impervious to moisture and dust as possible.

Sometimes when the honey flow is heavy the bee-keeper places a hive upon the scales, and it occasionally registers five

or six pounds in a single day, but this is much above the average.

There are many kinds of honey, varying according to the flora of the vicinity in which the bees are kept. Golden-rod, bass wood, white clover and buckwheat being among the best known. Alfalfa is also a great honey plant, and the flow from this source is great and bee keeping in the alfalfa country is most lucrative.

There is no subject in the entire range of natural history more fascinating than that of bee study with the possible exception of the ants, who are about as much of a mystery to man as are the bees.

It is a biting satire upon the wisdom and ingenuity of men, that long before God placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden the bees and the ants had perfected man's two principal forms of government, upon which he is still laboring, namely, the kingdom and the republic.

One cannot study either the ant-hill or

the bee-hive for long and keep his conceit and self-confidence, as the particular capstone of creation, and the impersonation of all wisdom.

Who taught the bees the art of government, which they possess to such a marked degree? Who gave them their moral code, and their nice distinction between the fit and the unfit? Who told them that the heart of the rose and the lily were sweet, and that the sweet could be gathered upon that subtle tongue? Who taught them to predigest this food and to so nicely prepare it for man? How and where did they learn that half of the year was biting cold and that the flowers were all asleep for many months? Who told them that they must provide for this lapse in the bounty of nature?

What governs the instinct of swarming? Which are the master minds who lead the way to the new bee tree? Where in that small brain is located the sense of

direction, that will lead the little wanderers as straight home, as a shaft of light would travel? Why do not the bees who stay in the hive swarm, and those who swarm stay at home?

These and a thousand others are the queries that daily and hourly confront the keeper of bees, and he has never yet satisfactorily answered any of them.

DOWNSTREAM IN A CANOE

CHAPTER VII

Downstream in a Canoe

ALL through my boyhood I had dreamed of the wilderness beyond the pale of civilization. The home of the bear and the moose, the deer and the beaver, and wondered vainly if I would ever be fortunate enough to visit this wonderland, the "Big Woods."

The little brook in the meadow my boyish fancy had transformed into a wonderful stream in the Maine woods, and going for the cows had been translated into moose calling by the same magic.

But now my dreams had all come true. I no longer had to play that the meadow brook was a wilderness stream, for such a river was at the very moment slipping beneath the keel of my canoe, and as for

moose calling, why our guide the evening before had fashioned a birch bark horn that he said would call all the bull moose in the State of Maine right into our very camp.

It was twilight of a wonderful autumnal day, late in October. The funeral piles of leaf and frond blazed high upon the hilltops, and glowed with rich deep red, low down in the quiet valley. Along all the smaller water courses the sumac and soft maple glowed like living coals, while the bright berries of the mountain ash occasionally showed among the duller reds, as though the flames had found a substance peculiarly to their liking.

A little later all this brilliant color would fade. The leaves would first turn to yellows and browns, then to grays, and finally they would return to dust, making way for the new buds that had really then started weeks before.

All day long we had been drifting down

the swift current of a wonderful stream in northern Maine. Perhaps this stream was no more wonderful than a thousand others throughout the world, but it seemed wonderful to me at the time, for I was going with it on its impetuous errand, and I fell into all its moods. When it ran swift and turbulent, my own blood pulsed more freely. When it was deep and placid, my own mood became contemplative. How often I thought, during that cruise, of the passage of the "living waters." It seemed to me that all waters that foamed and gleamed, bubbled and gurgled, roared and leapt, were living.

That noon we had stopped at the mouth of a limpid stream, clear as crystal, and as cold as icewater. I knew the moment I saw this pure little brook that it contained trout. The trout is in some ways a very particular fish, and he is especially fussy about his abode.

A trout cannot tolerate muddy, slug-

gish water. The brook that he inhabits must leap and sparkle. The trout is a leaping, sparkling fish, and his stream must match his own character. There must be no moss on the stones in his brook, and no frog spittle.

So the little brook being limpid and pure had provided our dinner in the form of a dozen handsome trout. After the fish were dressed, a thin strip of pork had been put inside each, and then they had been put in the ashes. How the smooth, rich particles of these trout melted in the mouth and made a boy of me again! Again I dreamed, dangling my feet from the old bridge. Again I heard the living water gushing from beneath the old water wheel that turned the ancient mill, where I took the grist when a boy. Dear delicious days of boyhood! How some familiar sound or scent, or taste will set the care-haunted heart to beating again with the old joy and the old longing

It was not often that the boyhood recollections came floating back as they did that day, but the taste of trout had done it.

There were only two occupants of the light canoe that felt the slightest stroke of the paddle so quickly. That day, two was company, and I am afraid that three would have been a crowd. The guide merely watched the current and the nose of the canoe, occasionally dipping the paddle into the water to steady her, or to change her course. In long stretches of quiet, deep water, he was obliged to paddle, but for most of the way, Nature was working for us, and that mystic something that was calling to the waters was speeding our canoe swiftly downstream.

There were plenty of sights and sounds in this Maine wilderness to keep one watching and guessing. Little birds peeped curiously at us from the thickets, and many an empty nest, that had been

cunningly hidden months before, now showed plainly as the green mantle that had shielded it became more transparent. The great fish-hawk occasionally soared majestically by, or stooped to the stream and picked up a chub, almost under our noses. The kingfisher rattled and chattered and clattered, whenever we came upon him, and made it quite plain to us that we had invaded his domain. The bittern uttered his strange cry, and then flopped slowly away. Crows screamed at us from the treetops, and the jay squalled derisively, and then flew away to tell all the dwellers in the forest that a strange fish was swimming the stream, and that the fearful creature, man, had something to do with it, so the whole affair was to be shunned.

That noisy, gleeful imp, the red squirrel, also scolded and barked, whenever we went ashore, and he did not always let us pass unchallenged, when we kept to the

water. Trout leaped in the deep pools at dusk and dawn, when we always sought to take some for breakfast and supper. But there were other fishermen besides ourselves. Besides the kingfisher and the fish-hawk, the otter and the mink also took fish, while Bruin, clumsy as he seems, makes many a good meal upon trout.

We held the canoe anchored to the shore, by some bushes, for an hour one twilight, while we watched Bruin fishing. He took his fish just as a raccoon would, crouching above the pool, with his paw in readiness, until some luckless trout swam to the surface for a fly or miller. The stroke was so quick that we did not see it, but we did see the trout that went spinning into the bushes, and we also saw the smile on the bear's face, as he lumbered off with his prize. The guide told me that many of the big cats fish in the same manner.

JACKING AND MOOSE-CALLING

Chapter VIII

Jacking and Moose-calling

There is a strange fascination to most wild animals in the gleam of firelight, especially at night. Nearly all of them fear the bright mysterious something, that leaps and dances, flickers and fades so magically.

Most wild creatures are of two minds, half fearful and half fascinated, and love to linger on the outskirts of the light, where they can see and not be seen.

Probably the instinctive fear of fire that wild animals have springs from their sad experiences with forest fires. It is no wonder that they fear this power which they cannot understand, this demon that will, in a few fearful hours, lay waste their deep fastnesses, turning cool sweet shade

into an inferno, and the sweet air into a stifling, choking, strangling nightmare, from which so many of them find it impossible to escape. No sight is more majestic or terrible than that of a forest fire, especially when the winds fan the flames, which leap from treetop to treetop, crowning the forest with a wreath of brass, while its denizens flee to lakes and streams for shelter, some going slowly, but others on the wings of the wind.

The part that fire has played in the relations of man and beast is most important. Many an unfortunate traveller has defended himself effectually from wolves, with a few bright flames, when powder and ball have failed.

One evening after supper, we lighted our jack, and pushed off in a canoe to try what magic there was in fire.

The night was wonderfully still, just as it frequently is in autumn, when the constellations are bright, and the Hunter's

Moon is at its full. There were plenty of night sounds, such as the unearthly laughing of a loon, or the hooting of an owl, but when the wilderness had again lapsed into silence, it seemed even stiller for the night voices that had spoken.

For half an hour, we drifted silently downstream seeing and hearing small creatures that were attracted by our jack. Presently there was a slight sound in the underbrush, which seemed to keep just so far from the stream, and to be following parallel with our course. Once, when a dry twig snapped with a sharp report, the guide whispered, "deer." A twig never crunches under the sharp, cutting hoof of a deer, but always pops. After the sounds in the bushes had followed parallel to the stream for a few rods, they became plainer, as though the forest stranger was overcoming his timidity, or getting more curious about us. Just ahead was a sharp turn in the stream, and a point that

ran out into the water. Here the guide worked the boat carefully in towards the shore, where he held it stationary, by thrusting a paddle into the sand. There we waited and listened, my nerves tingling with excitement. Then presently the sounds of breaking twigs, and the swish of parting bushes drew nearer, and a dark form crossed a patch of moonlight about fifty feet away. A second later it came out into the outer edge of light cast by the jack, and stood erect and alert. There was no mistaking that proud figure, with its graceful outline, and slim, arching neck, even if there had not been a magnificent crown of horns, probably a five pointer, and two large luminous eyes, that were wide with fear and wonder. A moment later a second head was thrust into the aureole of light, and a doe, also wide-eyed and wondering, stood beside her lord, and gazed fearfully, yet fascinated at this strange will-o'-the-wisp, that

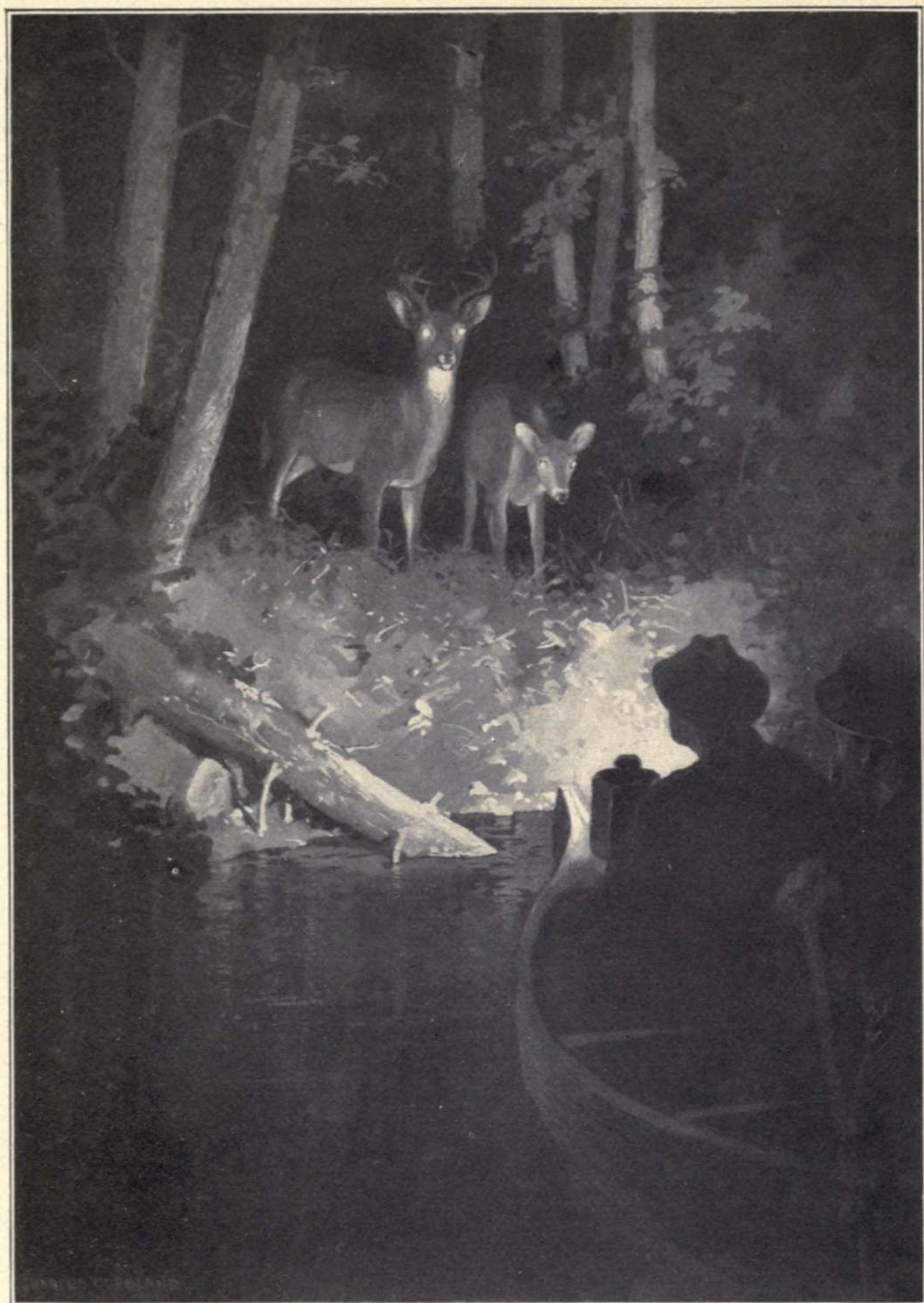
danced on the river. It was as pretty a wilderness picture as ever delighted the eye of woodsman, but it was all too brief, for a telltale breath of wind came dancing over the stream and blew our hot body scent full in their distended, quivering nostrils. There was a loud snort, a whistle, and the pair went crashing through the woods, just as though it had been daylight instead of semi-darkness, and the path had been smooth, instead of laid with a score of pitfalls and every step filled with neckbreaking obstacles.

We had had our fun for that night, so paddled leisurely back to camp, well pleased with the experience.

Another allurement that we tried, which was equally interesting, was moose-calling. For this, my companion first made a moose call. This was done by stripping a yellow birch of a section of its bark, about three feet long, which was rolled into a rude megaphone.

This call was also used on a moonlight night, when the witchery of the Hunter's Moon was on the forest, and we went in the canoe, as before. This is a favorite manner of stalking game, as one can go so much stiller than on foot. It must not be imagined that we had any response to our entreaties the first night or the second. In fact, it was nearly a week before our patience was rewarded.

We were lying in a little cove, which was an arm of a wonderful forest lake. The canoe was held stationary by a paddle that was thrust in the mud. My companion rested the larger end of the moose call on the bow of the canoe, took a deep breath, puffed out his cheek like the unfortunate man who plays the bass tuba in the band, and a deep chested bellow echoed across the lake. First, it was low keyed and uncertain, like the rumble of distant thunder, but as the sound rose in



IT was as pretty a wilderness picture as ever delighted the eyes of a woodsman

pitch it swelled in volume, filling the forest and echoing along the lake. Finally, it died away in an uncertain wail, like the bellow of a cow who is calling for the calf that the man in the blue frock has just loaded into the wagon and driven away with.

We waited and listened, but only the cries of night birds reached our ears. Again the guide flung this deep chested bellow, that I do not see how human lungs can produce, across the lake, and we waited and listened. This time it was answered, faint and far, but still it was an answering call, and that was more than we had heard before.

Again the guide called, this time putting more of defiance than of entreaty into the sound. This, too, was answered, and the answering call was defiant as well. Then there was silence for two or three minutes, while we waited for our rival to

make the next move. Soon we were rewarded for our patience by a third call, this time much plainer.

"He's coming round the lake," whispered the guide, and he sent back a defiant bellow. Then there was silence again while the night winds sighed in the treetops, and the ripples on the water softly licked the sides of the canoe, and murmured on the pebbly beach.

In the course of five minutes, we could hear him coming, thrashing the bushes with his antlers, and occasionally stopping as though uncertain.

Each time his thundering challenge rolled across the lake, we responded with an equally defiant bellow. At last we could hear him thrashing the bushes with his antlers, and the guide reached over with a paddle and thrashed with the paddle upon some bushes that grew along the shore. Then he blew a short, defiant bellow, that plainly said, "Come on, my fine

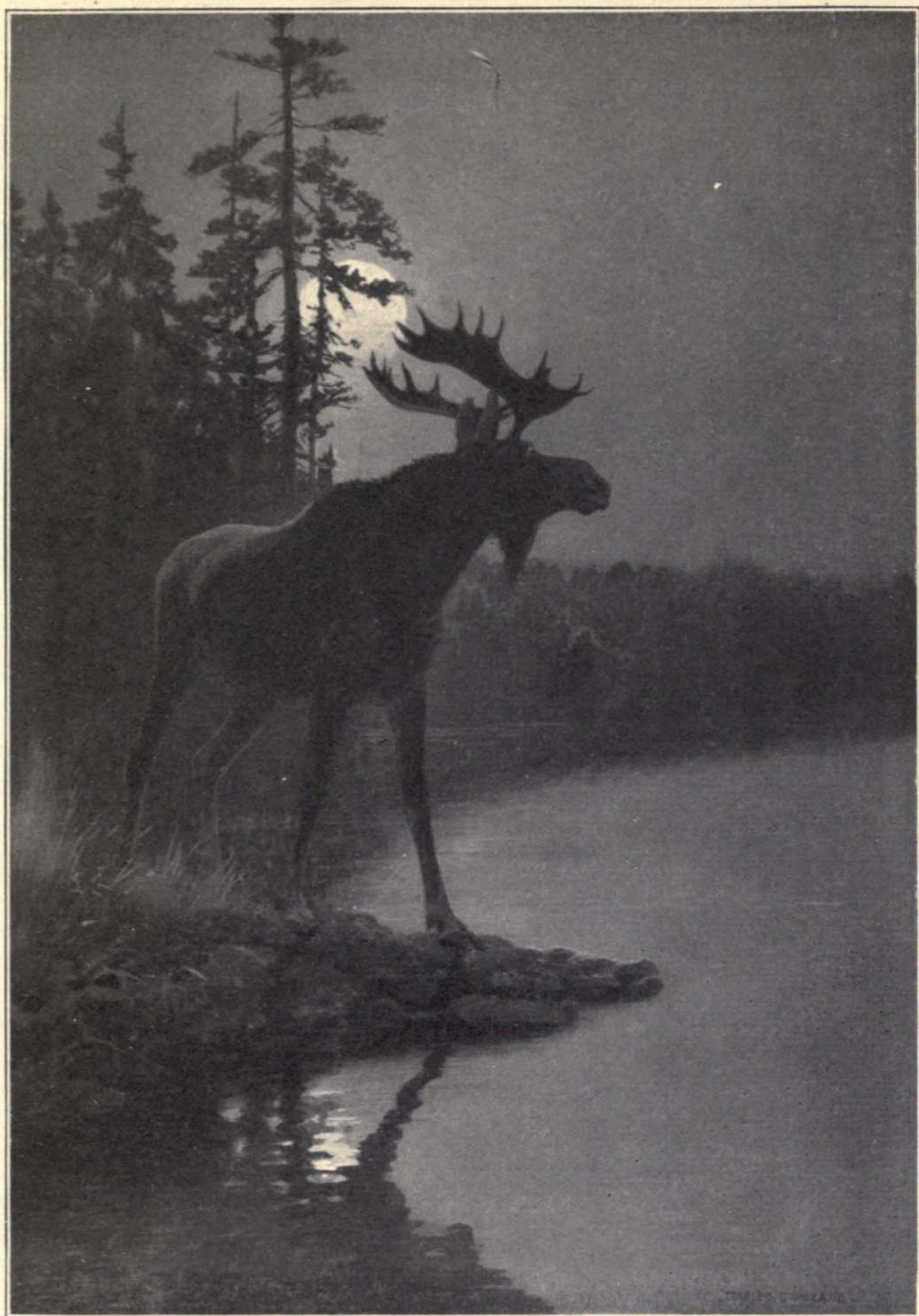
fellow, and I will give you a terrible thrashing."

This was more than the uncertain bull could stand. He had been challenged, his courage had been questioned, his reputation was at stake, so with a short bellow of rage, and a snort of defiance, he tore through the underbrush, bending down small saplings as he came.

We could now plainly hear his hoofs clack, as he came, like huge castanets. Then he burst out into the open, his head erect, his nostrils distended, his eyes blazing, his whole attitude belligerent.

He was a magnificent picture as he stood there in the full moonlight, clearly outlined against the forest. The broad spread of his antlers, his massive head, his deep chest, and his great height, all proclaimed him a king. The rightful king of the forest whose denizens should honor and whom man should admire as one of God's splendid creatures.

Whether he would have come still nearer and finally either scented or actually seen us, I do not know. These striking scenes in the woods are usually fleeting, seen for a few seconds and then they vanish and leave one wondering whether his senses have not played him false after all. He had not stood in full view five seconds when the telltale, warning cry of a loon echoed across the lake and with a snort of alarm he thundered into the depths from which he came and we saw him no more, although, we could hear his noisy progress through the deep woods for several minutes. When the last sound of breaking underbrush had ceased we paddled back to camp, well pleased with the night's moose calling.



HE was a magnificent picture as he stood there in the full moonlight

IN BEAVER-LAND

Chapter IX

In Beaver-Land

One afternoon about two weeks later, when the splendor of the autumnal forest had begun to pale, and grays and browns had partially taken the place of saffron and gold and flaming red, we floated down into the pleasant valley that I call beaver-land.

For three or four miles above the first of the chain of five lakes, there were plenty of signs that beaver dwelt not far distant. The first intimation that we had of being near the colony, was the stumps of hundreds of poplars and maples. These stumps were conical in shape and where the tree had not yet quite succumbed to these active rodents, it was shaped like an hourglass. The largest

of these trees were two or two and a half feet in diameter, but the guide told me that he had occasionally seen trees three or four feet in diameter that had fallen beneath the teeth of these ambitious woodsmen.

Further on down the valley we occasionally saw a log that had lodged against some root or projection in the bank. This log was on its way to the dam perhaps, where it would be worked into that structure, or may be it was intended for food and would be stored under the ice, for use during the long winter.

As we drifted further and further into beaver-land, the wonder of it all grew upon me. It did not seem so wonderful that a beaver should fell one tree, or half a dozen, but when I saw acres of timber nearly stripped by these wonderful animals my respect for all four-footed creatures grew, although it had been considerable before.

The five lakes that comprised beaver-land were like a series of locks in a canal, each lake setting back to the dam of the one above. My companion told me that beaver dams were usually in pairs one above the other. He said it was hard to tell why the beaver built in this way, but his own theory was that the wise builder kept the upper lake as a reservoir, for he always built his house in the lower lake, with this second lake at his command, if the first dam sprung a-leak and the water fell so as to expose the beaver houses to attack, the beaver could repair the leak in the dam, and immediately fill the lower lake from the upper, without waiting for it to fill in the natural way. If this is the real secret for these double lakes, it looks very much as though the beavers were capable of planning on their own account. When we saw cords and cords of poplar and maple wood, cut into pieces about three feet in length piled up in

front of each dam, we were again forced to believe that the beaver is a planner.

Some of the beaver houses which were old were so overgrown with water grasses that they looked like small hillocks in the lake, while others were smooth and symmetrical, as though they were fresh from the mason's trowel. Another thing that looked much as though the beaver could plan for himself, were certain breakwaters running out into the stream above the upper lake. They were alternated, and the guide said they were to break the force of the ice during the high water in springtime and to keep it from rushing down upon the dams and demolishing them. Another clever piece of work in beaverland is a channel that is sometimes cut around the end of a dam, so that the water may flow off in a waste-water, and not wash the dam by its continual flow.

The beavers caused us four hard port-

ages around their dams that day, but by twilight we camped upon the lower of the five lakes close to the dam. The same evening after we had eaten our supper of broiled fish, biscuit and coffee, we drew our canoe up on the bank of the lake and prepared to watch the operation of dam building, which, from the newly cut logs and fresh mud that we saw upon the dam, we knew was going on.

We tried the old ruse of displacing some logs and sods, in hopes that the little builders would discover the leak and come forth to repair the damage. I felt quite mean when I saw the rent that we had made in the structure, and was half inclined to repair the damage myself and trust to luck to see the beavers at work but I was most desirous of seeing the little builders on the spot and so suffered the precious water to stream through the break.

We took a commanding position in a

tall pine near the dam from which we could see far up the lake and across the low lying valley in every direction. It was rather tedious waiting, holding on to an uncertain perch forty or fifty feet up in the pine. We soon got cramped and stiff, but the game for which we were out was an exciting one, and our anticipation helped while away the two solid hours that passed before we saw much that interested us.

How still it was between the night cries that came to our ears from the distant forest. There was always the low gurgling glee of the water as it slipped through the hole that we had made in the dam, but when the hooting of an owl or the barking of a fox had died away and we had only the soft sighing of the wind in the pines, and the murmur of the water, the wilderness seemed like some enchanted land upon which there had been laid a spell of silence, deep and abiding.

The heavens were so studded with stars that it seemed as though there was not room for another, while the milky-way glowed white and luminous. The Hunter's Moon was at its full and flooded the distant vistas of the forest with a light almost as bright as day. Every star in heaven and the great luminous moon were reflected in the lake, which shimmered and sparkled almost phosphorescently. It was a scene to make one draw long deep breaths, and the pulse to beat fast and strong.

Some distance upstream, probably a mile away, we heard a tree fall, with a thundering crash, which echoed across the lake again and again. From the sound we knew that a tree not less than two feet had been laid low.

We had concluded that the energies of the colony were all employed in tree cutting for that night and were about to descend, when we noticed several short

logs floating down towards the dam, they seemed to be floating much faster than the current would naturally carry them and we were at first unable to account for it, but when the logs got nearer to the dam we made out the dark head of a beaver floating behind each log and the rapidity with which the logs had floated was explained. Each was being pushed by an energetic log driver.

When within about a hundred feet of the dam the beavers evidently discovered the damage that we had done, for they left their logs and swam hurriedly to the break. One climbed into the crevasse and tried to pull the ends of projecting sticks together. All seemed much excited, for they swam to and fro, now disappearing under the water, as though they had dove to the bottom to see how far down the break extended, and then reappearing in the break. We thought we counted half a dozen, but they disappeared so suddenly and reap-

peared in such unexpected places that we were not sure of their number.

Finally all swam away upstream where they were gone about twenty minutes. But they soon returned pushing alder and willow bushes before them in the water. These they stuck into the foundation of the dam, filling the gap with a row of stakes or pickets. So far they had set to work just as a farmer would mend a brush fence. Then they went away upstream again and reappeared in about the same time that they had before. This time they brought more brush, which they wove between the stakes, laterally. This was evidently the backbone, for they soon brought sods, which they floated in the water just as they had the sticks, and laid them in front of the brush fence that they had already built. The current carried the sods into all the crevasses and the flow of water was lessened but it was not until they had carried sods and mud for an hour

that the break was entirely filled. In a day or two when the mud and sod had dried, the repairs on the dam would not be noticed.

Several times that night we heard the thunderous crash of falling trees and as stray logs occasionally floated down and lodged against the dam, we concluded that quite a gang were engaged in wood-cutting further up the lake.

After we had descended the old pine and returned to camp, the guide told me many interesting things about the beaver. As we spent several days in beaver-land, fishing and investigating the dwellings and other workmanship of these marvelous rodents, our conversations often turned upon beaver pelts and their wearers and the guide told me of the old days when it had been profitable to trap beaver for the Hudson Bay Company, even as far south as our beaver valley, where they are now protected.

Ever since the year 1680 the Hudson Bay Company has been doing a thriving business in fur, especially in the sleek coat of the beaver.

It seems almost incredible that this Company should have been in the field so soon after Plymouth and Jamestown, but it is a matter of history. When the Company was first organized in London it was looked upon as a very wild venture. The Company had to send out supplies a year ahead. These consisted of traps, guns, knives, blankets, and provisions which were given to scores of trappers, who went away into the wilderness and were not seen again by the Factors at the different posts, for six or eight months, or until the fur season was over.

Those who had scoffed at the Hudson Bay Company were thunderstruck, when that Company paid seventy-five per cent. on all invested stock, the first year. Ever since that time, or for about two hundred

and twenty-five years, this Company has done an astounding business, and due to certain land grants that it early received from the British government, it is a wonderfully rich company to-day, still doing a large business, with its headquarters at Winnipeg.

But how fared it with the poor beaver all this time?

His story is a sad one, and parallels that of the red man in nearly every instance. Like the red man, he died hard, holding tenaciously to his rivers and lakes until his numbers became decimated, and he was finally obliged to seek a home in other climes, or be exterminated. When the fur trade was at high water mark the Hudson Bay Company, the French North West Company, and the Netherlands Company together exported a quarter of a million beaver skins per annum. Of course these little animals could not long withstand such inroads and to-

day they are nearly extinct in the United States.

The beaver seems to be a very social fellow, living in communities. His family life also seems to be very pleasant, for sometimes there will be fifteen or even twenty beavers living in the very largest lodges.

A family always comprises the old beavers, the babies, the yearlings, and the two year olds, but when they reach that age they are shoved out into the world to make room for the new babies. But this home-leaving is probably no hardship for them, for the mating instinct is by that time asserting itself, and they seek out mates and make homes for themselves.

The dam building instinct of the beaver is one of the most remarkable instincts in the animal kingdom.

It enables its possessors to build dams of wonderful symmetry and size; structures that it would seem impossible for

such small creatures to build. One observer saw a dam that was three hundred feet long, and into which he estimated that there had been rolled no less than thirty-six thousand logs.

The beaver's dam is built for protection, to make a little Venice where he shall be secure from his enemies. Just as the feudal lords of old surrounded their castles with moats, he surrounds his lodge with a broad lake, so that his enemies cannot get at him as easily as they otherwise would. The entrance to his house is always under water, and to protect himself against low water, which would sometimes be felt in a stream, he dams the stream, and thus makes sure of keeping the water above his underground passage. The lake also serves as a place of storage for the beaver's great supply of wood, which is his food in winter. If it were not for his dam, the wood would probably be swept downstream, and the beaver, who is locked

under the ice in winter would have to go hungry.

In France the beavers are nearly all bank beavers, and do not build houses. Probably, because the streams are deep and sluggish, and the water is of a uniform depth for the entire year, but in America nearly all the beavers are house-builders. Once in a while a bank beaver is found in this country. He makes his home in a borough in the bank, as the otter does, but his life is not as well ordered as that of the house beaver.

The wood-cutting habit of the beaver is as remarkable as his dam-building instinct. When we see trees three or four feet in diameter laid low, by these industrious rodents, we cannot deny that they have patience, and pluck. A traveller up the Missouri river tells of seeing a cotton wood tree nine feet in diameter more than half cut down.

In cutting down trees the beaver stands

upon his hind legs, balancing himself on his broad flat tail, and nips a girdle about the tree. He then cuts another girdle above the first, and pulls out the chip between. This process is repeated until the forest monarch falls. Usually, however, they confine themselves to trees a foot or less in diameter, as these logs are more easily handled, both in dam building and as food.

"As busy as a beaver" is a proverb, but like many another proverb, it is only partly true. For two or three months in the year the beaver is a very busy fellow, but the rest of the year, he is one of the laziest inhabitants of woods and waters. All through the winter, from the time that the first thick ice locks him under the water, until it breaks up in the spring, he sleeps in his lodge. When hungry he nibbles away at his store of bark and if he wants exercise he goes for a swim in the lake to keep up his muscle. Then when

the spring rains unlock the ice door above him, and he is free again, the male beaver who is over three years of age, goes on his annual pilgrimage, through lakes and streams.

He does not care much where he goes, as long as he can find plenty of water with timber or brush near by.

All through the summer months he wanders, living a day or a week in a place, as the humor seizes him.

When the first frost touches the soft maples along the waterways, he turns his nose homeward.

Meanwhile the female beavers have been rearing the young, and looking after the yearlings and the two year olds.

Once the males return to the colony the scene changes and from being an indolent happy-go-lucky community is become a village of industry, for the dam must be repaired and all the mud houses made ready for winter. There is also the winter

supply of bark to cut, and in a large colony this means cords.

Then on starlight nights when the Hunter's Moon is at its full, and the autumn wind whispers in the treetops, you will hear the trees falling with a thunderous crash, that echoes away and away through the silent forest, and across the peaceful beaver lake.

Then you will see hundreds and probably thousands of small logs about three feet in length, floating downstream to the lake. The beaver has the same provident instinct as the bee, when he prods the white clover and the golden-rod, and even the late fall asters bringing home their sweets, and storing it up against the time of dearth. Does this not look as though there was a calendar in the animal and insect world?

What is more picturesque or pleasing in the many happy surprises of the wilder-

ness than a beaver dam, holding in its strong arm a beautiful woodland lake?

It does not look like a thing that was made by hands, or teeth or feet either, for that matter, but just as though it grew here, and was a part of nature. The ends of the logs are so ragged, and the whole structure is so overgrown with lichens and moss, and perhaps willows or alders that it seems part and parcel of nature's handiwork.

But as you fall to studying it and see how well it was placed, how that great boulder was made to brace the dam in the middle of the stream, or a tree made to hold one end, or how the natural features of the landscape were made to serve the beaver's ends, you wonder at his cunning and his marvelous builder's instinct. Then when you see his device for keeping the water from wearing the dam by constant overflow, which is nothing more or

less than a waste-water dug about one end of the dam, you are still more deeply impressed with his sagacity.

The beaver might have learned his house-building habit of the Indian, or perhaps the Adobe house builders so closely has he followed their plan. But he is wiser than they for his front door is always locked.

How can we deny the wonder and the mystery of this life in the beaver colony? The village with its sages and wise men, the household with its heads and its babes and youngsters the strong wall or bulwark built about the city for the mutual protection of all. The supplies that have been stored up against the time of dearth and the ingenious mind or instinct if you like the word better that meets and overcomes all these adverse conditions?

This is the true test of man or beast, whether it be in the wilderness or the city,

to meet and overcome adverse conditions and to make the desert bloom like the rose.

END.

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