Recent Rambles

Charles Conrad Abbott

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RECENT RAMBLES

or

In Touch with NATURE

BY CHARLES C. ABBOTT, M.D.

AUTHOR OF

*"A Naturalist's Rambles about Home," "Waste-
land Wanderings," "Outings at Odd Times," Etc.*

Drink in a goodly draught of the
morning breeze, and keep in touch
with Nature.

ILLUSTRATED

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Preface.

WHENEVER opportunity occurs I take an outing, and the following pages are the outcome of two years of rambling. Whether the main incident of these days out of doors proves grave or gay matters little, if it recalls some pleasant adventure to graybeard readers or spurs the ambition of my youthful friends. Succeeding in this, I am well rewarded.

When out, on pleasure bent, it is not to be supposed that life's shady side will never be turned towards you. Happily, though, the tragedies are one-act, as a rule, while the comedies scarcely know an ending. Even sunshine, however, can be too continuous, and the longest day of summer

is not necessarily the jolliest. To be many-sided ourselves, we must know all that Nature has to tell. With the sky only above us, we are among quickly-shifting scenes and should be blind to none.

Sunshine and clouds tell the whole story; but without the flight of the shadow over the landscape, without hearing the scream of the victim as well as the exultant cry of the victor, we can never know the world aright,—never keep in touch with Nature.

C. C. A.

BRISTOL, PENNSYLVANIA, June 1, 1892.

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In Touch with Nature.

WE carry too much with us when we go into the woods. I had rather dine upon a handful of wild strawberries than gorge myself with canned apricots. Doing the former, one is ready to realize what is transpiring; the latter, and the chances are you will feel like a fool. Eat, as a matter of necessity, when in the field; but do not poison the fresh air of a wilderness with the fumes from a frying-pan. It is a woful error to carry the city in a grip-sack whenever we take to wild life. It forces the thoughts of civilization to the front, and we are simply out of place, while anxious to be in touch with nature. Town trumpery in the woods is mental poison. Twist a broad oak-leaf into a funnel, and you have a goblet worthy of pure spring water; and if a mussel-shell, reflecting all the hues of a sunset sky, is not a spoon to

suit you, keep out of the woods. The shady side of a village street is all you need.

There were high hills behind the tent, a broad river in front, and in mid-stream two beautiful islands. The latter were evidently one island originally, although the oldest inhabitant denies it. Whether or not, I shall call them one, for the separating cross-flow of water does not prevent wading from the upper to the lower section. The interest here is threefold,—its natural history, its archæology, and its colonial history. When we find so much worthy of contemplation, and so little of man's destructive interference, it is well to be in touch with our surroundings. Merely catching a glimpse from the car-window of the river and its double island, one would little suspect how much has transpired in this quiet nook, and how very much remains of truly olden times. Moss had gathered on the walls of more than one house before the Revolution was dreamed of, and on that island once lived that sturdy hunter that walked (?) sixty odd miles in a day and a half, in the interests of the brothers Penn.

This man, Edward Marshall, has passed into

history, and tales of his exploits in Indian warfare are endless throughout the neighborhood. I sat for a while, one morning, on the porch of his brother's house, holding the doughty Edward's rifle in my lap, the while listening to the strange adventures, as tradition has them, wherein this rifle played a most important part. With it, one story goes, Marshall killed ninety-nine Indians, and his sole regret at dying was, that he had not had opportunity to make it an even hundred. It is true the Indians had killed his wife, but this is overmuch revenge for one who claimed to be a Quaker. Doubtless many a fanciful touch has been added to the family traditions in the last century, but that he was a man of unusual parts is certain. A few words concerning Indians credited to him indicates this: "When I discover an Indian I shut one eye and we never meet again."

But let us to weightier matters: awake at dawn, but not responding with commendable promptness to the call of a red-bird perched upon the high rocks behind us, I allowed myself to indulge in that dearest of the day's occupations, matutinal reveries,—too often "dear" in every sense of the

word. There was endless work to do, but who can resist the golden chains that birds bind about us? There was a Carolina wren within a stone's throw of the tent, and when it sang, I was down the river fifty miles or more, and rusty barns replaced the rugged mountains. It is not advocating laziness to lie abed, if life's pleasure comes by so doing, and our time is not another's. To insure being in touch with nature this day, I had the birds rouse me very gradually, and my proper business was to do wholly as I pleased.

The sun was well above the Jersey hills when the river was crossed and we stood on the island. I confess to our method being too cold-blooded and business-like. It had been told us that Indians once lived here; it was left to us to prove it. Nothing would come amiss, whether bones or stone weapons. It was our purpose to explore, but with the first arrow-head found, I was surfeited; kicked over the traces and made for the woods. The others labored; I loafed. Shut in by a goodly company of ancient trees, there was opportunity to reduce loafing to a fine art. I did not offer to take the trees by the hand, but every one patted

me upon the back. There was no stereotyped murmur of the wind high overhead, but, instead, a gentle crooning of every tree and shrub: a communing among themselves that my presence did not disturb. I was welcome to all they had to tell, but alas! who has lived that can report the secrets of a forest? It is idle to attempt it, but none the less is the Rambler repaid who can unaffectedly think of trees as his friends.

While walking thus aimlessly along, profiting, I trust, through unconscious cerebration, I chanced upon a dark pool that might from appearance have been bottomless, but doubtless was extremely shallow. Probably it would not be remembered now, but for a turtle that proved a physicist, if not a philosopher. It was sunning itself or taking an airing, for the sunshine was limited to very uncertain flashes, and resting on a bit of wood more than sufficient for its own needs, but not enough for a neighbor. This latter fact was doubtless well impressed upon its mind, and when presently another turtle popped its head above the surface of the water near the raft and attempted to climb on board, the turtle in possession objected and

pushed the intruder back. Again and again the swimming turtle tried, but without success. Brute force failing, the persistent fellow sunk out of sight and was gone perhaps a minute, when it suddenly reappeared in the rear of the one on the raft, and, giving it a quick blow with its snout from below upward, sent it sprawling into the water; then the tricky fellow climbed quickly on board and looked about, oh, so innocently. It was the modern political game of the "ins" and the "outs." It showed, too, that a ready wit counts for a great deal, even among turtles.

But now, although little past noontide, the woods began to grow dark; the pleasant murmur ceased, and a forbidding muttering came from the clustered giants of the wood. The lofty tulip-trees were violently moved; the older oaks protested sullenly: a moment of absolute silence, and then the pelting rain. It proved but a passing cloud, and there is no merrier music than tinkling rain-drops rolling from leaf to leaf, splashing and sparkling in the fitful sunbeams. Every bird, too, was ready to sing the song of the shower. Better, I thought, living woods than dead Indians, as I

re-entered the open country: a conclusion that led to discussion when I saw my campmate's grand discovery. He had laid bare a one-time village site, and brought to light many a long-buried secret.

In suggestive array were the simple weapons with which they hunted and fought; the devices with which they fished; the simpler tools with which they tilled the ground; their corn-mills, cooking utensils and dishes; and, more striking than all else, a cache of more than one hundred beautifully-clipped stone knives that, from the day when the cunning artisan hid them safely until now, had been lying in the ground. They had been closely packed in a small circular hole, so closely that but little sand had sifted between the blades. This was a discovery well worth making, and he is but a sluggish lump of laziness who cannot enthuse under such circumstances. Writes William Strachey, in his "History of Travaile in Virginia," more than two centuries ago: "Their corne and (indeed) their copper, hatchetts, howses (hoes), beades, perle and most things with them of value according to their estymacion, they hide, one from knowledge of another, in the ground within

the woods and so keep them all the yeare, or until they have fit use for them."

Seeing all these things, as I stood on that lonely island, my companion was an Indian: so was I. The whole country was, in very truth, a wilderness, and the owner of this unearthed treasure might well have rushed upon us out of the fast-gathering darkness. A shadowy Indian stalked at my elbow as we crossed over to the main shore; he stood by the flickering camp-fire while supper was prepared; nor left us in peace until the moon rose above the mountain and flooded the valley with a searching, silvery light. What volumes of history there may be in a fragment of broken stone!

No mouldering potsherd from the dusty fields,
No battered axe but speaks of ancient glory;
No point of arrow that the way-side yields
But tells a winsome story.

All night I dreamed of a dual existence: that of a loafer and of a relic-hunter, the merits of which battled for supremacy. A red-bird aroused me before sunrise with the question still unanswered, but not so torn by conflicting emotions but that I remained still in touch with Nature.

A Winter Cat-Bird.

IT is not down in the books. Dr. Warren's "Birds of Pennsylvania," even, does not mention it; and the learned ornithologists of elsewhere pronounce it a myth. But there are those who have seen it, nevertheless, and not merely once but often; have seen lively, healthy, chattering cat-birds in mid-winter, strong enough of wing to have migrated had they so desired. Occasionally there is but one, more frequently there are two, and scarcely less often four or five together, as though a family had elected to remain, even if they must brave a typical old-style winter. Had they known about it, many a migratory bird might have stayed over from autumn until spring, a year ago. There was no dearth of green grass then, nor of active insect life, even in January; but not so now: to-day the river is a broad field of ice, and scarcely a leaf

lingers in the sheltered nooks. The greenbrier is a forbidding tangle, offering no shelter from the keen winds that whistle through it; the tall grasses have long been levelled; the bare trees stand stiff and stark against a cold gray sky. It is truly a stout-hearted intruder that dares venture now along the river shore, yet such brave creatures are seldom wanting. No winter's blustering ever daunted the chickadee, nor driving snow-storm frightened the crested tit. Less courageous sparrows and the cardinal red-bird will seek the south-side shelters, and you may ramble for miles and hear not even the twitter of a tree-creeper; but let the next day be warmer, the wind come from the south, and all is changed. Then no nook is too exposed, and we shall have not only birds a-plenty, but bird music. At such a time one may look for January cat-birds. They are no stay-at-homes when the valley is filled with winter sunshine. Their dreary dens in the dark cedars are promptly vacated.

I did not think of over-staying summer birds to-day. It was enough to have the nuthatch make merry as it rattled the loose bark of the

birches; and a hint of May-days brightened the outlook as pine-finches twittered in the tops of the tall riverside oaks. And then it was a single bird wrought almost a miracle. A cat-bird threaded the tangled maze of underbrush, perched upon a

pebble at the water's edge, intently eyed the frost-bound ripple that it could not reach, flirted its tail impatiently, and uttered its old-time summer plaint, suggestive of many a long-gone August noontide. A moment more and the bird was gone; but how

different that whole day, from the instant of the bird's appearance! It needs but a tiny twig to ripple the flow of placid waters; and but for this casual glimpse of a cat-bird, how monotonous might have proved the current of my thought, rambling on such a day! No, not rambling. It is truer to say, we walk in winter, and ramble in spring; just as one is given to loafing in summer and to taking the world meditatively during autumn's dreamy days.

But walking does not forbid a searching glance, as we leave trees, rocks, and frozen river behind. Even from a car window the world may be seen suggestively. Turning, by mere chance, at the proper moment, I once saw a prong-horned antelope bounding over the prairie, while the train was speeding through Colorado; and again, in Arizona, saw the ground cuckoo or chaparral cock running from the train as rapidly as we were moving from it; yet in neither case did so simple an incident fail to bring back many a bright picture and page after page of many a well-thumbed volume. To walk successfully, every step should give our wits as well as our bodies an impetus. My winter cat-

bird, that came and went so quickly, tinged with rosy light the dulllest of dull-gray, leaden days. That dreary aspect for which we are prepared at the outset of a walk in winter vanishes into thin air when unlooked-for phenomena become prominent. It becomes a matter now of changed conditions merely, and not the repellent outlook of a dead past; while in ourselves a constant longing for a return of better things gives way to eager anticipation. Pleased with what is, we cease to dwell moodily upon what has been. So it proved with the frozen river. The blue waters glittering in golden sunshine, the rippling shallows hid by the encroaching grass, the trembling shadows of overarching trees,—these we held dear while summer lasted, but have we nothing left us? The sun shines fitfully to-day, but when the drifting clouds break from his path, how daintily the ice-gorged shore is tinted! Never a bow so brilliant in the sky above as the roseate masses of uplifted ice that bind the river. If in the bright blossoms of early June we see only color, we have it here again: the valley and the river offer us not merely the ruins of more genial seasons, but one that

teems with merit of its own. Not even the broad expanse of ice, forbidding as this may seem, is shunned; a white gull even now is searching for open water, and a crow, perched upon drift-wood, calls to his kind that have gathered in the trees along the shore. How wondrously clear is his meaning cry, floating in frosty air! and does it revive, among other birds, the memory of other days? It had scarcely died away before the cat-bird reappeared and murmured in his old-time way; the gathering finches chirped far more cheerily than before; the tit whistled to the passing wind a clearly defiant note. Call this winter if you choose; shudder at every blast of the cold west wind, and seek the nearest shelter; but in all fairness use no disparaging adjectives.

I have said there was no green thing in my path. True, for a mile or more, but one may turn homeward too soon. It is easy to fail, by a single step, of reaching the great prize of a long day's ramble, but I was not so unfortunate. Beneath the oaks, where the crisp leaves carpeted the frozen turf, prince's-pine grew rankly, and no luster growth greets the eager botanist even in May.

Its pearly-striped and dark-green leaves had all the freshness of a flower, and I plucked them quite as eagerly.

There is nothing strange in seeing much, even when Nature seems to close the doors upon you. Even if so disposed, she cannot hide all her treasures. And, after all, is it not a misconception upon our part to suppose her back is ever turned, or that she really closes a door upon you? Can the world be dead or sleeping where there are birds, and living, growing plants? Plunge but the tip of your finger in the icy waters and you will realize how chill they are; yet, overturning a little stone, some strange creature darted away and took refuge beneath another sheltering pebble. Even there, where ice-crystals replaced the lush grasses of the past summer, strange forms of life found Nature open-handed; and if such should spurn to hibernate, why should not we be brave enough to laugh at winter even when he frowns?

It is easy to catalogue the doings of a day, and even less laborious to list the objects that, in a brief walk, we pass by; but if they are in nowise suggestive, have we really seen them? About the

withered stem should ever linger the ghost of the brilliant blossom. The leafless tree should still cast that shade where in the long June days we were wont to linger. If nothing of this comes of a winter's walk, we have walked in vain. Our limbs may have been exercised, it is true, but what of our wits? He who sees a winter cat-bird, as I saw one to-day, will not be roused to enthusiasm if the bird is but a mere accident, an overstaying thrush, foolhardy rather than wise. As a mere curiosity, the bird is a flat failure; but in the meagre sunshine, that touched with gold the ice-bound river, this same bird, by its mere presence, clothed every tree with its full complement of leaves; restored the dead grass to a living green; unfolded blossoms upon every shrub. While the bird tarried, the swift flight of the winter wind that rocked the oaks and swept through the valley gave forth no dolorous note; it was but the breath of summer, laden with the melody of many minstrels.

Intimations.

THE first expanded blossom on the tree at once calls up a vision of the perfect fruit. The cherries of June and peaches of August and all that they mean are enjoyed in anticipation, because of the fluttering white or pink blossom that dots the still dreary landscape.

How far the realization will fill the crowded picture of our spring-tide fancy it boots not to consider. It is the end of winter now, and let what joy comes of the thought be unalloyed. Of itself, the present time is not alluring, but precious by reason of its promises. Doubt is out of place if pleasure is our aim, and to seek for intimations that come to the front, even while yet ice and snow prevail, may happily fill the short hours of a winter ramble.

The drooping branches of the leafless larch, as I see it from afar, are dreary beyond words. Every

twig is of so dull and rusty a hue that one can think only of decay and death. But, drawing nearer, a faint blush overspreads it all, and when I stand beneath the tree, every twig bears a roseate blossom that has no lovelier rival in the bowers of June. We stand too far aloof and wait until the new birth is quite accomplished. There has been a potent but unobtrusive force long at work, unsuspected because unheralded by blare of trumpets; and we, shutting ourselves from Nature, cry "dreary, dreary," because of lack of knowledge and lack of faith.

Where the rocks shelter from the wind, and catch the mid-day sunbeams, I turn the heaped-up leaves that have lain since autumn and find green growths are everywhere. Pale spring-beauties are even now in bud, and the purple myrtle offers us its simple flowers as a proof that winter has ceased to kill. The rank leaf-growth of the sassafras is of fresher tint than a month ago, and prince's-pine flourishes even in the shadow of a snow-bank. In the swamps, at the very name of which so many shudder, the skunk-cabbage is well above the ground, and far above them, where there is no

shelter from the cutting north wind, the buds of the brave maples are ruddy. Even the chilly waters are not without promise, and that dainty, crimson-decked creature, the fairy shrimp, lights up the shady pool with flashes of brilliant color. We have but to look and listen. Many a wood-bird has abundant faith, and far off among the cedars I hear the love-call of the black-cap, and that sweetest of all sounds, the anticipatory warble of the bluebird. To hear this is to be well repaid, whatever you may have undergone. It soothes the smart of every pricking thorn. What fairy structure will not rise at the mind's bidding and shape itself a thing of beauty to the bluebird's song! Nature, here where I stand, is in truth repulsively brutal; the margin of the swamp is but scattered ruins of last winter's storms; but how the jagged edges round off and meet their neighbors! how green the dead rushes grow! how quickly the naked branches of a lone tree bend to the little arbor of my early home, while that song of songs fills all the upper air! The song of the bluebird works a greater miracle than any magician's wand.

The river is near by, and across the meadows and beyond the wood I see, floating high overhead and darkly limned against the leaden sky, restless gulls that have wandered from the sea. The naturalist has not yet shown that they have aught to do with any change, but they are oftener seen now than when all signs of winter have disappeared. This of late years; but it was not always so. In the long ago of colonial days, and when the Dutch even were the only white people on the Delaware, gulls were as frequent here as swallows in midsummer. But something closer in touch with intimations is near at hand: a flock of red-winged blackbirds. Their keen senses have detected the whispered promise, and we may well believe with them that spring is not afar off. True, the north winds may come again, laden with snow and ice, but their fury will be in vain; no material damage will be wrought, and in the contest between frost and fire, the sun will come off more than conqueror.

It is a strange habit that the rambler falls into, this of merely cataloguing. Signs of spring! These I came to look for, but why not rest content

when they have been found? Is not one flower and one song enough? In such a matter, having one swallow, you can make the summer. The merit of this, the last day of February, is that it is inexpressibly dismal. A chilling northeast storm prevails. The woods moan; the marsh is wrapped in fog; over the river race the white-capped waves; the scream of the gulls and cry of despairing crows cause me to shudder,—but for a moment. Safe by a lordly oak, I can laugh at the storm, and did laugh when, in its sheltered nook, a song-sparrow saw or felt or heard the promise of spring-tide's milder sway, and sang his sweetest of sweet summer songs.

Not a creature of all the varied forms of wild life but may have its own almanac and unwritten rules of forecasting the weather. Many a bird or beast or fish but may be our superior in this, and it is little of merit to be only our equal.

If there be—and who can doubt it—pleasure in anticipation, likewise there is in seeking out an intimation in these matters of nature, and, securing it, spend the hours in contemplation. This is a subtle form of fancy that defies description. A

plaguing "what of it?" thrusts itself forward at every discovery you make, and the predetermined wish to be a poet whenever a flower was found or bird sang vanishes. Wrapped in a stout coat, behind a grand old oak, and not weary from long tramping, the outlook seems favorable for indulging in some grand flight; but no, the flower would not lead me, nor the bird's song suggest a single thought. It was vexing at first, but should not have been. I had my pleasant thoughts as I wandered, and what more could I ask? It is too soon to discuss even the promises of the coming year; far too soon to consider the fruit thereof. It was but an intimation that was offered when I ventured into the field, and this is too delicate to be dissected; and, to do it justice, we must dream of it, not wrangle over it.

The day draws to a close, but not the storm; yet I have not lost faith. The flower is still mine, and the songs of the brave birds still linger. Surely spring is near at hand when Nature, that so often laughs at our puny efforts to force her to speak out, comes unasked from hidden haunts and vouchsafes us intimations.

A week later: It is not wise to expect much of March, for then every slight favor she grants will be appreciated the more. Such a favor was the seventh of the month. It brought a bee to the flowering whitlow-grass, and at sunrise a wasp was battering against the window-pane. The sky was blue-black and with not a cloud visible. This was sufficient of an invitation to survey the ruin wrought by the still lingering but now listless winter. Before the town was actively astir I was beyond its limits. The maples were more ruddy than a week ago, and daffodils were up. Even a stray spring-beauty dared look out. Better than all else, the blackbirds were prospecting; and over the swamp and along the river red-wings and grakles were holding a convention. No, not this, but rather, informally, discussing the outlook. The crows only, I take it, are so far methodical as to hold a convention. This they are known to do annually, and, so far as practicable, in the same places and at the same times. Such a gathering is well worth witnessing. Godman has given us, in his "Rambles of a Naturalist," a vivid account of the crows of ninety years ago, and what he

found to say then is applicable now, except in the matter of numbers. He speaks of millions of crows near Bristol, Pennsylvania, but I have never seen so many as one thousand gathered together since living here. Now, to see more than one hundred on the marshes at low tide is an unusual sight. He accords them a considerable degree of intelligence, and we can read between the lines that he wished to use stronger terms than he did. He need not have feared contradiction. Admiring their cunning, and convinced of their advanced mental power as compared to other birds, he, strangely enough, felt he was doing the world a service in stooping to be their murderer. At least, where love of nature and wild life in all its phases is strongly developed, we might suppose the insane desire to kill would be effectually restrained.

Crows talk, it is true, in an unknown tongue, but their gestures are translatable. The energy with which the leaders lay down the law, or, if arguing, make telling speeches, is unmistakable, and the acquiescence or disapproval of the audience, as the case may be, cannot be misconstrued. Whoever has been at a large political meeting and heard

the half-whispered "that's so" that fills the room when the orator makes a hit, will readily recognize the subdued *cā-ā-ā* that is simultaneously uttered by the whole assembly when a more than usually emphatic *caw caw!* rings through the tree-tops. Such a crow convention is said to be a sign of spring, and on such a day as this one can well accept it as such. But here an ugly fact crops out that robs the saying of its poetry: the convention is much more regular than the season, and when, as sometimes happens, we have no spring, the crows convene just the same.

There were crows to-day, but only about the river, where, by reason it may be of unconscious imitation, they rose and fell, swooped and curved with all the grace of the gulls, with which they associated. But the blackbirds were the feature of the day, and a chorus from a thousand throats should, as it did, draw the sting of winter from the air. Bird music will warm the chilliest of days, because of our ever associating it only with spring or summer. Not that we should do so, for there are scores of winter birds that make the dreary way-sides ring with gladness. Like the crows,

they did not only sing but chatted volubly, doubtless discussing the weather, and so showing, by the bye, that men and birds have one mental trait in common. A general knowledge of prearranged plans as a flock was surely a common possession; for when they moved, it was no uncertain, aimless drifting from point to point. Presumably a signal was given, for they took wing almost as one creature, and, without breaking ranks, crossed the river to the pines that loomed up black and gloomy on the Jersey shore. Do these flocks have leaders? It is a fair question. Many of their movements suggest it, but the ornithologist is yet to be born who can point out the chosen bird or any of his lieutenants. If not guided by some one or more of their numbers, then there would appear to be a phase of animal intelligence unlike anything human. Certainly a thousand men, or half that number, could not move together without clashing, except they be controlled by acknowledged leaders.

What I hoped for was to witness an upward spiral flight of the principal flock. This is a rare occurrence, I judge, and does not appear to have

been commented upon. Imagine a gigantic screw, some five hundred feet in length and of proportionate diameter, standing on its head, and half a thousand blackbirds, in a long and narrow band, starting from the ground and following the thread of the screw. Occasionally a line of dense white smoke will describe much the same figure. When the maximum height is reached a circular course is followed until the birds are all upon the same plane, when, as a huge black blanket, the flock returns to the ground.

Whatever may be said of blackbirds now, the north-bound geese have their leaders, and if their sonorous *honking* reaches our ears, one does not think of the bitterness of wild March mornings. This is one of those thoroughly thrilling sounds that quickens the pulse and leads us a long way towards realizing what the world about us really means. When the river was wild and wild men only dwelt about it, this call of the geese was a familiar sound, and one that makes me envious of early colonial days. Think of it! Nils Gustafson, a Swede, above ninety years of age, assured Peter Kalm, in 1748, that he had killed twenty-three

ducks at a shot ; but now (in 1748) you were forced to ramble about all day and perhaps not see but three or four. It is marvellous that a duck ever appears on the Delaware now, and yet there are often very many to be seen, and he who is awake early or out late can hear the over-flying geese, and possibly see them, when fog-bound on the river. Wildness is not yet quite an unknown element, even though man, for two centuries, has been trying to rub it out.

Much is missed by those who value a bird merely because of its fine song or bright feathers. Here, in the valley of the Delaware, such birds are in the minority ; but the great host of songless and plainly-dressed birds have compensating merits. Many a bird is cunning to a degree, and needs but to be watched a little closely to be appreciated for its winsome ways. There is now a merry flock of tree-sparrows in the cedars that do little but chatter in matters vocal, and offer only a color-study of blended browns and black ; but see these birds when at leisure, playing bo-peep in the dead grasses on the meadow ; see them flutter and scold the venturesome meadow-mice as they dart

along their run-ways, and a whole chapter of delightful bird-life is opened up to you. The nut-hatch can only fret and scold, so it would seem; but when it ventures to peep into the nest of a gray squirrel, and darts back, startled by the wide-awake occupant, it can chatter so glibly that we know it has something like a sense of humor.

Watch, too, the wondering kinglets that are half frightened when the white-footed mouse peeps from his bush-nest or threads his way daintily along the tangled maze of greenbrier. This dainty creature, the prettiest of all our mammals, is nocturnal in habit, yet not even the brightest sunshine blinds it, and when it does venture abroad in daylight there is apt to be great excitement among the gatherings of our smaller winter birds, and these little kinglets in particular, that love their sun-bath so dearly, are more than roused to energy by the animal's appearance. Their softly-uttered song—for they sing only to themselves—gives way to emphasis strongly suggestive of the little house-wren's well-known profanity.

Clearly, even in March, bright days may be

over-full; and yet often we fancy much is lacking. We continually make unjust demands. To-day the river did not look chilly and so repellent; more than one water-plant was growing thriftily, and by the pebbly beach was a faint suspicion of the spice-wood's golden bloom; but where were the frogs? I listened in vain, and, at last, to make good my want, rattled the shaggy bark of an old oak with my cane, and fancied I heard the first frogs of the season. How true it is, the shortest journey a man can take is when in search of a fool! Turning from the tree to the river, I saw my face reflected on its quiet surface.

Whether we see many sights or few; hear the rejoicings of every wild-wood bird, or but the song of a single warbler, if that winged centenarian, with his scythe and hour-glass, old Father Time, would only take a rest such a day as this, the world would be the gainer.

Still later:

The intimations of February become substantial promises long before the close of March, but how human are they! The chances are good that every promise will be broken. The big snow-

storm of the season came last night, and, by the almanac, spring commences to-morrow. It will begin terribly handicapped; but mankind seems more disturbed than the birds, for on the maples there are song-sparrows that sing their May-day melodies, and from the upper air comes the hopeful whistle of the robin. This is well, so far as it goes; but the snow is a set-back, do what we will. It is a contradiction; a confusing of familiar things; a condition that is repugnant, in spite of novelty, to dig your spring flowers from a snow-bank; but this was the only way, on and after March 18.

March skies, March atmosphere, midwinter earth: these the conditions now; and no wonder that my companion asked, "What have you to say of intimations of spring to-day?" Everywhere endless acres of snow-clad fields, huge drifts by the river-shore, and, beyond, that glittering, steel-blue water that is far colder than any ice. I looked about for maple blossoms, but they were tightly closed and brown. The larch had hidden its promises of spring-tide, and there was nothing to be said. The world had rolled backward many a

week and left its champion confounded. Not a syllable could be uttered in defence of such conditions. March may play fast and loose as it chooses, but a murrain seize its black art that can call midwinter back. Nevertheless, must the Rambler sit down in despair because of all this? We made for the river-shore in spite of the free scope of the cutting wind, for if life was astir at all it was likelier here than on the fields. It proved so. My companion's question, "What's that?" and my exclamation of "A seal!" were uttered at the same instant, and straightway the bad weather was forgiven and forgotten.

To have this creature twice lift its head above the water and then disappear proved the "presto, change!" of the wonder-workers when I was young. I could have welcomed the north pole then and there. It is a matter of a single seal, and at long intervals now,—thousands crowding every rock and raft of ice a few thousands of years ago. To-day, a civilized man gazing in wonder at a solitary creature,—formerly here roamed savage men that largely fed upon their oily carcasses. Who can fathom the meaning of these changes of

the centuries: these gains and losses of a half-score of millenniums? Man mightier, wiser, happier, it may be; and yet the March winds stir the lingering trace of savagery in us all, and we are, for the moment, wild as the flashing waves that hurry by. What a change! Now but a single seal; but time was when not only seals, but the walrus, roamed the ancient river, and the mastodon and reindeer, moose and musk-ox, lingered upon its shores.

The effect of sudden changes of the weather upon animal life is one of the few subjects that have not been written to death, possibly because they have not been closely studied; and to add to the difficulty, these changes are often quite as sudden and short-lived as the conditions that produced them. It would certainly seem so in the case of migratory birds, and more prominently so in that of occasional visitors. No one, I venture to assert, has been so fortunate as to see a snow-bunting, the northern white snow-finch, during the past winter; yet a whole host of them suddenly appeared at the close of the storm, and disappeared quite as quickly as they came. Not once

this year have I seen a cross-bill when peering into the thick-set cedars or watching the myriads of small birds that frequent the pines; yet a dead one was picked up in a lane near by. Where did they come from? Just beyond the outskirts of every region there are novelties that only the favored few who never rest from rambling occasionally see. How quickly the Canadian fauna can overlap its bounds and make, literally, a flying visit to Carolinian territory and return is one of those features of bird-life not of importance in itself, but as certain to excite wonderment as its occurrence gives pleasure to those who witness it.

Why, then, complain at this return of winter? It quickens the pulse, and that, too, of every bird that braves its rigors. This is a soothing thought. It is worth wading knee-deep through a snow-bank to hear the cardinal red-bird whistle. There is one now perched near the river-bank, and his clear notes float even across the wide waters, and that faint melody that the wind brings from the opposite shore is, I fancy, the answering call of another of his kind.

Fill, then, the river valley with music, and what matters it if the fields are frozen, the trees droop with frost, and the winds struggle to drown the exulting songs of wild life defiant?

A River View.

WHERE the long reach of gravel and stranded rocks stay their shoreward progress, the ceaseless breaking of the wind-tossed waves is fitting music, while it is yet winter. Such sound was truly out

of tune and harsh, for nature everywhere was rugged, and, by the river-shore, the plash of troubled water its only proper spokesman. It has

not been long since the stream was ice-bound ; when not the narrowest line of bright blue water glinted in the fitful sunlight of a half-cloudy day. The river then seemed dreaming of by-gone centuries, when the plaything of a glacier ; but to-day all was glitter, or black as forbidding night, save where the short-lived waves with downy crests stood a brief moment in the golden sunshine,—waves of marvellous beauty that brightened the bleak world about them, albeit dying at their birth.

It is never well to be influenced by such a thought as that the world was made for man,—an idea that forges to the front when Nature appears to seek you out and, thrusting aside the doors of her cabinet, gives generous opportunity to view her gems. Here, where the sloping bank shuts out the chill west wind and a smooth niche in a convenient boulder proved fitted to my reclining person, the suggestion naturally welled to the surface that something beyond mere chance added the noble outlook. But glacial floods and time's succeeding touch considered only their own whims, and it is well to rest content with the bare fact : it

so happened we rambled this far, and, resting, voted time and place a full realization of a lazy man's outing. Let the field and forest behind us entertain those who remained at home; the river alone concerns us.

It is not a forced expression to say that the wind plays with the water. How else adequately describe the changeful surface? A mile away, this is as a mirror breathed upon; while nearer, the rippled flow is dark, a broken band of polished purple steel, or glittering and bright, as shimmering silver. Nowhere is there fixity of light and shade. Not an instant but there is a change of place: the blue-black waters now here, now there; the rippled silver gone ere you can trace it. Let the wind play what pranks it may, the ever-shifting scene is not perplexing; there is enough deliberation to give us chance to follow; and then there is that delightful uncertainty which twits us, and we fall to guessing what the next freak will be.

It is reasonable to ask if water-birds realize these constant variations of light-effects upon the surface of a broad stream. They are comparatively safe

at such a time, as one wary wild duck proved to be to-day. It was a brightly-plumaged bird, with a great preponderance of white, set off with black upon the wings, neck, head, and shoulders; a trim bird, at home alike in the air or on the water; one that has no dread of distance; here to-day, in a foreign land to-morrow.

Although gracefully floating near by, this pretty duck often seemed quite in mid-stream, and constantly disappeared, yet without diving. Now flashing into view upon the black water, now standing out in ebon contrast to the white, silvery glitter of a wide waste of water, it never quite took proper shape, but ever left us with a lingering doubt as to its identity. Had not happy chance rewarded our patience, it would still be a matter of uncertainty; but no, it was truly a wild duck, and not a fancy. But the point lies here: Might there not have been at least a companion, if, indeed, not many? Because space only confronts you, count not the landscape empty. Unseen activities are real. A counter-blast, it may be, checked the breeze, and the stilled water gave up its secret. Such a chance—one in ten thou-

sand—clothed in flesh, a trembling speck on the troubled waters; be not over-sure you are alone, even though the coast is very clear. Later, the puff! puff! of a steamboat was heard, and, as the unsightly craft rounded a wooded point, my lone duck was alive to man's proximity at once, and how it had multiplied! A hundred, and not one, rose in the clear air, moved by a common impulse, and, fringing the low line of snowy clouds that marked the horizon, sped northward. Think of it! here in the valley of the Delaware to-day; to-morrow, finding shelter in the rock-bound coves of the New England coast, and at home everywhere.

Were the clouds envious? Rolling in huge masses from the grim, gray east, they filled and chilled the valley at a stroke. How quickly the river responded! There was left but the stern reality of flowing water. If, before, the waves laughed and were boisterous when they kissed the shore, they sobbed now. Inanimate, of course, but happily we need not hold it so; and cannot, indeed, when a mere cloud so strangely checks its merriment. This same river, that laughed and

frowned at storm and tempest before man's creation, now seemed cowardly to slink away, as though rebuked and ashamed. The final change from life to death was typified.

However it may be with the more philosophical rambler, the lazy man, when on his outing, has no desire to encounter gloom. The restful couch that the chance boulder has proved for so long began to grow irksome; the sloping bank sank to the level of the fields; the chill west wind came on apace; there was no longer a sprightly river view, but a mere view of a languid river. Less and less the niched boulder is a bed of down, and as we shift our aching bones, hoping against hope that the waters will again grow glad, a mist slowly arises to meet the overhanging cloud. At first in curling lines, as though the Indians' camp-fires were not yet quenched; and then with a filmy shroud, enwrapping river, valley, and the distant hills beyond. Why tarry? There is no river-view in the outlook now. The muffled murmur of the changing tide alone assures us that the earth itself has not passed away and left us perched upon a rock in chaos. But is chaos

worth acquaintance? That depends. It has never yet had firm hold here; why now? The day is not yet done, and there are to-morrows yet to be. If the river is shut out in spite, let us out-sit the imp that mocks us. Even now, while our thoughts are still with what has been, there is a rift in the clouds; the mist rolls slowly back from whence it came. A ripple of golden light ventures along the shore,—a mighty flood of mellow sunshine fills the valley. There is not a wave but leaps to catch the life-giving glow, as though it would hold it henceforth forever. Why despair? That which has so long abided shall not fail us; the river was a living friend when we came in the morning, and now, in the evening, greets us as heartily. Well may it glow with all its old-time ardor, for the light of every trembling star above it is gathered to its bosom.

So ended our outing by the river. I say "our," for I had a companion, as I supposed; but for hours he has been quite forgotten, and long ago he left me.

In the Serpents' Path.

NO month offers less than does March to attract the rambler, and for that reason it is, perhaps, the best month to be out of doors. To see little, and that thoroughly, leaves a more lasting impression than a bewildering multitude of Nature's riches.

Not long since I turned from a wide expanse of wind-tossed waters to an inviting cove, and then, letting the boat drift where it might, I peered into the depths of a forest that reached to the water's edge. One tall, towering pine, blasted by the storms, pierced the upper air, and dark, tapering cedars on either side shut from view the neighboring hills; while beneath the lesser growth of birches, rhododendron, and tangled shrubs hid the huge rocks among which they grew. The outlook was grand but gloomy. I was both attracted and repelled. Even the shallow waters were black, lifeless, and unfathomable. No rambler, eager for Nature at her best, could have asked for

more, and yet my enthusiasm was not aroused.
The winds that rioted on the lake dared not venture here.

“ There was no motion in the dumb, dead air
Not any song of bird or sound of rill ;
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still
As that wide forest ;”

where

“Over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted ;
Which said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted.”

Then, as the sun dashed through a fleecy cloud, the spell was broken. A sluggish snake rolled from a jutting rock, and following the trail of that serpent came the weird glory of a bright March day.

Guiding my boat to the rocky shore, I drew it from the water, and ventured to explore the dark, dank wood before me. Between loose rocks that threatened to topple over as I passed, I threaded “the sombre boscape,” not wholly at ease, and longing for other evidence of life; for, although death has claimed the lion’s share of my treasure, I still love the living world. Happily, there was soon a rustling of dead leaves near by, and then a strange, indefinite shape approached. The path was too narrow for me to step aside, and I had neither time nor room to turn back and reach my boat. Nearer it came, hugging the stony path, a writhing, squirming, tangled knot of serpents, and I must prove the barrier to its progress. As well

be a fool outright as cursed with a tardy wit. Had every snake been venomous, I should have been safe only by standing immovably, but personal safety crowded all saner thought, and I clutched and scrambled vainly against the wall-like rocks. Of course in vain, and then the snakes were upon me. It was a strange sight. Ankle-deep in garter-snakes! Let the timid folk think of it. Only to a slight extent did I stay their progress, and before all had passed I sat down and gathered as many as I could hold. They were very cold, sluggish, and many, I think, were blind. The languid darting of their forked tongues was very funny; as if they felt compelled to keep up the custom, but were terribly bored by it. How often have I known human tongues to wag in just that way!

For an hour I toyed with a score of pretty snakes, but they could neither be teased nor warmed to activity. I despaired of learning anything from them, until the thought came to me as to their destination, and why they should seek the icy waters of the lake. Tangles of snakes, in the meadows at home, are not common, although, like

many another feature of the fauna of that spot, they can generally be found, when earnestly looked for. There were nothing but crayfish in a meadow-brook when a friend came for the single purpose of studying them; and how abundant were the rare Muhlenberg turtles when the herpetologist happened along! The rambler, on the other hand, indulges in hap-hazard observation, and unavoidably so. To be constantly on the alert for certain forms of life is to become a specialist, and this means *work*, that most dreaded of all combinations of the alphabet. But the snakes at home: they wait until April sunshine warms them into activity, and away they go until the first ditch is reached, when each individual bids his fellows farewell; but here, in a mountain-lake, it all seemed different. It is March, and as wintry on the hill-tops as a month ago, and these snakes are taking a brief outing, or some hidden cause has sent them, out of season. This, too, is an occurrence I have known. Huge water-snakes occasionally appear in the fields during warm days in February, coiled into circular mats, and too lazy to uncoil when picked up. Where they

come from is a mystery, unless they have been sleeping in some spring-hole near by.

Still retaining a half-dozen large specimens, I went to the water, but the snakes had not plunged in. Instead, they were basking on the sunny rock. Returning to the spot where I met them, I liberated my pets, but they had lost all recollection of their original intention, and crawled off in any and every direction. I leave to others to determine how a vast number of snakes, coiled in some hidden, dark cave among heaped-up rocks, could know that the sun was shining brightly; that the warmth of spring bathed the lake shore; that the world was ready for their active lives. And again, why do they so closely cling to each other until every doubt has disappeared? We see a single snake in summer, and know it only as a timid creature, or one that vainly hopes to turn you from its path by idle threats; but, looking longer, if an unjust repugnance can be overcome, we will find there is more credit due a snake than it usually receives. It has a hard time of it at best, and success is proportionate to its cunning in the ever-present struggle for existence. And what is cunning?

Possibly everybody knows and all are familiar with basking snakes, and have traced their going and coming for years; but where is all this recorded? A species-monger, the value of whose writings consists in his wealth of quotations, complains that what any tyro knows has too often been proclaimed as a discovery. This is false, to be sure, but is notwithstanding a suggestive statement; for what of the world of not even tyros, the thousands without an inkling of zoologic lore? They constitute a considerable proportion of the civilized world,—savages, I take it, are necessarily naturalists, in the happier sense of that term,—and to say to them that all birds cannot fly, and that one kind of fish can climb a tree, is to announce a novel fact, if not to proclaim a discovery. But to come back to the subject of an animal's habits: there is probably not a creature, whether furred, feathered, or scaled, that does not contradict you sooner or later. The farmer, fisherman, or trapper is the man to whom we had better go for information on special points. Their facts are more readily separated from a fancy than the professional's from a theory. These men will stagger you with the list

of surprises that have been theirs. Perhaps fish are so far methodical that they may be unmistakably reported. Sunfish always make nests in the sand, to the best of my knowledge; but do not be over-confident; next summer you may find a pair of them doing otherwise. This was written in 1889, and now the novelty is at hand: a pair of sunfish took up their quarters in an old shoe, and kept their offspring in it until August. This was not a forced matter, but voluntary choice. There was a half-acre of available nesting-ground on both sides of them, and nothing to explain their decision, unless they foresaw its security against spawn-eating and fry-eating fishes. The fish stories hardest to believe are the true ones. My old grandmother, that knew the birds in her garden for fifty years, I hold a better authority than the collector, however professionally he collects; yet my grandmother did not know that a cat-bird was a thrush. But she knew the birds of the garden as so many individuals, and realized what wealth of common sense was squeezed into their little brains.

Poor snakes, you have been quite forgotten; but

here is to your health and headway! May the day of many serpents soon return. Every one knows a snake, but how few know anything about them! Generally, too, they care less, and think only of the advisability of bringing down a crushing heel. It is to be hoped that this villainous practice of teaching children to dread snakes will end some day. It is not an inborn dread, for I have given children snakes to play with, time without number, and have never found them otherwise than amused. It is only after silly stories are told them that the fear becomes established. It is funny to think that there are school-teachers who shudder over a dead snake and forbid the scholars bringing living ones to the class-room. There is no herpetology to be taught outside of the text-books, and the fewer illustrations the better.

The mowing-meadows at home were the snakes' paradise; and long before the introduction of the mowing-machine what wonderful black-snakes were to be encountered! They were bold enough, so the mowers averred, to attack you, but none ever did. The champion mower of his day, who

always cut the grass in the devil's kitchen, as one sunny nook was known, had no end of adventures there with snakes. His strangest tale was not far from the truth, for, as my grandfather said, they were not all "strictly correct." Hercules started to mow the corner, but the snakes rebelled. A dozen, he claimed, stood upon their tail-tips and defied him. He was about to drop his scythe and run, when the idea of being twitted as a coward held him back, and he made a bold strike forward, as if there was nothing there but waving grass. The largest snake was ready for this movement and dashed at the scythe, *swallowing the blade and six inches of the sneed*. So Hercules said when, weak with terror, he reached the house. My grandfather found that he had struck the snake in the mouth and cut the body so that it covered the end of the blade. This is about the proportion of fact and fiction in modern snake stories. That was fifty years ago, and now the devil's kitchen has to content itself with little garter-snakes. The world grows better, backward, in some respects.

Leaving the shores, with all their wildness and

wonders, I returned to the boat, picking my way among the basking snakes that even now scarce deigned to look at me; and as I faced the rising wind that more than ruffled the wide reach of waters, I thought of my recent adventure, and wondered, and still wonder, if the wind, turning from its path and sweeping that sunny ledge of rocks, drove again to their home in the forest that writhing, squirming, crawling tangle of pretty snakes.

A Victim of Thoreau.

WHO ventures to say that length of years bringeth wisdom? And yet who has ever met an octogenarian whom he did not look upon as wise? One hears so much about gaining wisdom through experience that it seems impossible not to hold him as very knowing who has reached fourscore years. It is very proper to look up to our elders, but it does not follow that the only course to pursue is that pointed out by them. May it not seem ungracious to say so, but there are many aged men living who cannot be accounted wise. Even in those things pertaining peculiarly to their own sphere they are lacking. I met a curious character lately: an old man who professed to be a victim of Thoreau.

The day was fitting for such a meeting. Although in March, there was a wealth of summer

sunshine, an abundance of green grass, of singing birds, of piping frogs, and, here and there, scattered dandelions and violets. The day teemed with life, and yet mankind was not astir. No

farmer was ploughing, and the highway was deserted. This added zest to my stroll, for such solitude gives one the feeling of a world to himself. I walked a mile or more alone, and then,

where the road turned that a brook and noble elm might remain as nature placed them, I met an old man. He was sitting at the foot of the tree and gazing steadily at the rippling waters before him. It was a pretty picture, and I stopped to study it. Then, with a woman's curiosity, I ventured to speak. To have merely said "good-morning" and passed on would not have sufficed. Strangely enough, I was disposed to talk. Although the question was absurd, "Fishing?" I asked.

"No; frogging, after a fashion," he replied, with an assuring smile.

Then I drew nearer, and, resting against the tree, waited for an explanation of his ambiguous remark.

"I have been sitting here for hours watching that frog," and he pointed to one squatted upon a stone immediately before him. "It takes the world easy, it seems to me, and, as this same world provides its wants, why should not I do the same,—sit still and let the world supply me?"

I thought I had met with some wanderer from the poor-house, or the grandfather of some one of my neighbors; but instead, here was a new phase of humanity,—a mild type of philosophical tramp.

"Do you live near by?" I asked, ignoring his remarks.

"My home, if you can call it so, is the range of my rambling; but why are you curious about me? Such a corner as this ought to be no man's land, except his who rests for a time here, on his way to nowhere."

"I'm sure I have no claim to your cozy seat, and am only too glad to have met you. You are a stranger about here, I take it?" I remarked, without any definite reason for speaking at all.

"Yes, I am," and, turning towards me, he said, in most inviting tones, "and yet not altogether. I was here sixty years ago, and sat under this same tree, and again thirty-five years ago, when I read a book that turned my head, and I've been wondering where the mistake was ever since."

I was thoroughly interested in the old man now, and could scarcely wait until he had finished speaking to ask what book had so marred his fortunes.

"Thoreau's 'Walden,'" he replied; "there are pages of it I can repeat, and often do so, wondering all the time where's the hitch in his phi-

losophy. Did you ever read the book?" he asked, abruptly, eying me closely as he put the question.

"I have, several times," I replied.

"And what do you think of it?" he asked.

"All that I understand I like extremely; the rest I let go unheeded," I told him.

"It's all easy enough to understand; but what puzzles me is why his philosophy won't work. I have been trying it, and the contemplation and study of nature, and all that, came easy enough, but I could not get bread from my bean-field."

"Did you plant one?" I asked.

"No; but I helped myself to others' beans, here a little and there a little; but never in a whole neighborhood could I gather enough to trade for bread enough."

"Was that Thoreau's plan?" I asked.

"Not exactly; but mine had the advantage of allowing more time for study and contemplation. Still, it didn't work. His philosophy is at fault, and mine, which is an improvement, has never worked; and yet why I do not see;" and here the

old man thrust his cane at the frog before him, sending it spinning into the brook.

"May I ask who you are and where you come from?" I asked, with some impatience, for the old fellow thoroughly puzzled me.

"Not who I am," he replied, "nor where from; but I will venture this far with you, stranger, to tell you how I live. Nine months in the year I'm like the frog I stirred up just now. I squat where it suits me, and stick until some fellow-creature comes along with a cane and sends me afloat to squat on the nearest flat stone I come to. There's that frog, a yard or two farther down the brook, and there he'll stick until forced to get up, I suppose; and so it's been with me. I've never found a seat that the world did not force me to quit; and I've never been able to see why I am not one of the world as well as the crowd that jostles me."

"How do you expect to get food and clothing if you sit still all day?"

"I can get them as easily as did the savages from whom we all came; but there, too, at every turn I'm headed off. Some one claims the wild

berries I gather, as if God labelled them, 'These berries grew for John,' and so James must not touch them,—not even if John is disposed to let them rot. And if I make cloth out of birch-bark and am suited, why not? But if I do, I am landed in the mad-house."

"I cannot see why you blame your ill luck on Thoreau; the fact is, you've been too lazy to work."

"You simply talk like all the rest," he replied, with no trace of ill humor. "I have had only myself to consult, and tried the Walden plan, with improvements, and the result was, as you see, a failure. I was told I must do as the world was doing; must drift with the human tide or strand and rot. The world was right, and yet is not right. Should there not be a little more personal liberty? Why cannot a man break away from this tyranny of established custom? Of course, it is useless to try; but then comes up the old question, Where's the hitch in independent philosophy, as I call it?"

"It lies in the fact, perhaps, that man is a social and gregarious animal, and in communities the

good of all must be considered as well as the comfort of one's self. Life is a game of give and take. Give your energy to the community, and take what pay you can."

"And if the world, young man," he remarked, quietly, as he stood up, "has elbow-room to spare, as it has, for would-be hermits and contemplative rambles, why should they be molested? I tried Thoreau's plan, as I understood it, and liked it; but every man I meet has some harsh criticism. And one thing more before I go; here's my summing up of the whole matter: there's a screw loose somewhere in the world's ways when a man—without detriment to his fellows—cannot do as he pleases. If I prefer the sky to any other roof, I am held a nuisance. Why is it?"

And the old man, slinging a small bundle over his shoulder, walked down the road, leaving me to wonder who he was. Truly there is an endless series of strange human freaks, yet none so odd, in my experience, as this self-styled victim of Thoreau. Who would not walk in the country to see such strange men?

Animals as Barometers.

ALIKE when we listen to our unlettered neighbors, or study the collected folk-lore of any people, it will be seen that animals, both wild and domesticated, enter largely into every community's weather-wisdom; nor can we wonder, considering how every creature we meet, whether in the woods or open fields, is influenced by the condition of the weather prevailing at the time. There is, as many know, a vast difference between a bird's actions, for instance, during a bright May morning and perhaps the next day, when a chilly north-east storm prevails. Here, however, we have a change in the bird, subsequent to an altered condition of the weather, which is quite natural and of little significance, and so our interest centres in the suggestion that centuries ago arose in the minds of men,—Are the animals about us, of

whatever grade in the zoological scale, weather-prophets? Do they realize the coming of a storm so far in advance of its actual appearance that, if man could correctly interpret the animal's acts, the creature would be to him a reliable barometer? Certainly, for a long time man has proceeded upon this assumption, and not until the rationality of so doing has been questioned, in the light of biological science, has it occurred to any one that these same animals were a poor dependence. I have in times past maintained that no animal could be held of barometric value. Possibly this was going too far, but my later studies have not led me to a change of base.

An aside here, not to be spoken in a stage-whisper. I have touched upon this subject more than once before, but it bears repeating. It needs a deal of hammering to beat the truth into half the heads you meet. One class, I hold, merit ignoring: those apes that ask a question of a naturalist, and then, assuming an air of wisdom, toss their heads and remark, "Oh, I cannot think so." Of course they cannot. Born without thinking power, and yet refuse to be led; perhaps

they deserve pity. The trouble is, such folk are not to be recognized at first sight; but once known, let them be shunned as a pestilence. I am at outs with people whom I have sworn at, but my happiness is not curtailed. As years roll by you free yourself of the dross, and the pure gold of humanity makes life worth living, though you have nothing else than their friendship to call your own.

To return: there are, it would seem, two distinct and not necessarily connected propositions to be considered. First. Do the lower animals recognize, sooner than does man, coming weather changes? Second. How far are we able to interpret a lower animal's acts?

Let us consider these questions separately.

If animals possessed, as is often claimed, meteorological foreknowledge, then it should appear that little suffering and less loss of life should result from sudden changes. But does not even an ordinary thunder-gust drown creeping creatures, maim vigorous birds, and flood the snug galleries of burrowing mammals? It needs but a short ramble in the woods or fields, after such a summer

shower, to see how painfully destructive are moderate wind and rain when they rush across the country hand-in-hand. There is no more touching sight in all nature than the lowly-murmured plaint of nesting-birds as they contemplate, after a shower, their ruined home and drowned fledglings. It is not a common occurrence, it is true, but frequent enough to make it an open question whether or not diabolism, in this world, has the upper hand. To credit a bird with weather-wisdom, and yet with no power to guard against probable danger, is to assume that it leads the terrible life of one in constant fear,—a mental condition the bird's daily life flatly contradicts. I lay stress upon birds rather than mammals, because of the two classes of animals the former are much more at the mercy of storms or even vicissitudes of temperature. Of the two, wet feathers are likely to lead to more serious consequences than wet fur. Again, of the two groups, mammals and birds, that have been exposed to persecution by man for centuries, the birds have acquired greater cunning, and we naturally look to them for the more marked evidences of intelligence; and,

taking a comprehensive glance at bird-life, it is evident that, while they know, in a general way, what the meteorological conditions are to be, they have as yet failed to provide for the more pronounced features of our weather. The truth is, the one thought uppermost in their minds is that of a food-supply, and concerning all else they trust to luck, and, so trusting, are often victims of their helplessness. If, so long ago as the close of the glacial period, birds began to recognize the fore-runings of a storm, then evolution, which has not yet failed the world, should have made them weather-prophets by this time; but it has not.

A good barometer gives us abundant warning of coming changes, but what the mercury recognizes is beyond man's ken. Never does the world look brighter than a few hours before some great change. The familiar but senseless term "weather-breeder," applied to an exceptionally clear day, is evidence of this, and certainly animal life has little thought for the future when the skies are without a cloud. Never are birds more merry, mammals more full of play; yet the impending storm means mischief that to some extent might be averted

had these happy creatures but an inkling of what was coming.

Were animals in any sense weather-wise, there would be unmistakable evidences of anticipatory preparation; and it is unquestionable that vast numbers of animals are destroyed by storms which might easily have saved themselves by a little foreknowledge. Thus, the feathers of birds often become so soaked as to render flight impracticable, and so the birds fall victims to carnivorous mammals. My attention was called to this fact during the past autumn, when, after a sudden dash of rain, I found a number of warblers that were too wet to fly. Their fluttering did not prevent my catching one, and directly after I saw a redstart in the clutches of a red squirrel. I could not see the captor and captive as plainly as I wished, but still sufficiently distinctly to recognize both the mammal and the bird.

John Burroughs thinks I made a hasty inference in the matter of rain-soaked warblers. He says, "There is no more danger of a well bird being disabled by a storm of rain than there is of a squirrel being disabled. The robin will some-

times get slightly bedraggled, especially about the tail, during a prolonged rain, but never enough to seriously impair its power of flight. Indeed, it is always a surprise to one to see how dry and clean the birds keep during long storms. The swallows will keep on the wing during quite a rain, with plumage apparently as untouched as if they steered between the drops. Both birds and animals seem to wear some charm against wet. I once saw a little meadow-mouse swimming across a lake in the woods. I rowed out and gave him a lift over in my boat, which service, however, he did not need. He was as dry as I was, except upon his extremities."

My friend is all at sea. It was not a matter where any inference could be drawn. The birds were soaked, and that is all there is of it. The hasty inference is to suppose feathers cannot be wetted. I have had the matter in mind all summer, and have seen the same condition due to another cause. Time and again I have studied bathing birds, and put them to their wit's ends too, as they emerged from their baths. Every time I drift by the pebbly shore of the river, if it

be not too late in the day, I see many birds sporting in knee-deep water. They dip and splash and pirouette in the daintiest fashion, and this for no other reason than to get wet. As a proof of it, I have startled them when in the water, and their efforts to fly were always painful and sometimes unsuccessful. Again, watching them closely, I found that, on leaving the water, they most vigorously shook themselves, but only after preening their wings was the normal flight-power restored. A most favorable opportunity to study a bathing bird occurred recently. In the yard is a half-barrel, in which is growing a water-lily, the leaves of which nearly cover the upper surface. A red-eyed vireo, that whistles twelve hours a day in the village street for many days, came here to bathe about noon. The water wet its feathers, I am sure. It evidently anticipated this, and seemed prepared for the temporary disablement. It was well aware of being at a disadvantage when wet, and its half-scared chirp, as it beat its way to a low perch, was extremely amusing. This bird more than once dived rather than plunged into the water. The movement was full of grace, the

head and shoulders of the bird going quite beneath the surface, but the tail appeared then and at other times to be dry, and invariably was spread slightly when the bird took an upward flight. I had others to watch the bird that my own conclusions might be disputed or verified, but all agreed that bathing for a short time actually wet the feathers, curtailed flight power, and from two to five minutes at least jeopardized the bird's life to a certain extent.

When it is raining, a bird can readily fly any distance and yet keep dry, if it faces the wind, but not otherwise. The pelting rain-drops, striking the bird's feathers the "right way," will roll off as the water rushes over the shingles of a roof. But let us consider a fitful east wind, a driving rain, and birds in a wood. Here there is no possibility of always facing the wind, and the bewildered birds are subjected to not only the rude buffeting of contrary winds, but the ruffling of their feathers coincident with a dash of rain. This it is that disables the weak-winged warblers: their feathers are wet, and they can scarcely fly.

It seems never to have occurred to those people

of by-gone years who attributed weather-wisdom to animals that possibly the peculiar act of a mammal or bird, or insect even, and the quickly-following change of weather were mere coincidences ; and this is what they are in almost every instance. It matters little what "saying" you select, it needs but a six weeks' drought to demonstrate that rain does not follow any particular action of an animal ; and, strangely enough, there appear to be no "sayings" referring to these protracted spells of rainless weather. It is a logical inference, were weather-wisdom reliable, that animal life during a drought should be peculiarly monotonous and undemonstrative, but this is not true.

A drought, however, will cause a change of base, and this is a matter the out-door naturalist should never overlook ; for the habits of an animal will not remain essentially the one thing wherever they are. Birds generally love the water. The chicken that delights in a dust-bath walks with evident satisfaction to the pool that it may drink, and in times of a drought the upland fields will be practically deserted and the low meadows overcrowded. At such places, and at

such a time, I have heard strange concerts. The spotted sand-pipers and marsh-wrens had not the watery world to themselves, and the birds of the field, in their novel surroundings, were never seemingly out of place. I once saw a humming-bird perched upon a bending spray of wild rice with only a wide waste of waters about it, but it was quite at home; and the house-wrens, that should be nowhere but in an old-time garden, thread the mazes of uprooted trees along the river as if they had never known another and far different home. We think of crows and black-birds as tenants in common with the farmer, of the cultivated fields, but the former is a devoted beach-rover, and the blackbirds dip down to the water and snatch up floating tidbits so gracefully that we may call them inland gulls.

All this reminds me of an instance of natural history gone mad, but really not more absurd than the average chatter about weather-changes. An old fisherman remarked to me, "It is not so that fish bite better when it rains. They seem to me to go in out of the wet, just as we do, when a shower comes up."

A Recent Ramble.

IN April, as the world grows green apace, the disposition to ramble becomes daily more pronounced, and a fitting aim is to browse among bright meadows, culling here and there a thought-quickenng blossom, and at times chancing suddenly upon a startling novelty that spurs our flagging fancy. Turning my back upon the town to-day, the river literally flashed into view and, imperiously demanding undivided attention, led me a willing captive. There is no feeling of self-debasement in being thus held helpless by a great natural force. If a river is not so powerful, as a whole, as mankind, it is none the less a commanding feature of the world at large, and worthy of high rank in leadership. Though it may speak in a foreign tongue, its orders are not to be misunderstood, and obedience thereto is ever well

rewarded. In such a frame, drifting in my little boat, the river toyed with me, as it did with the little sand-pipers that played bo-peep with the waves. What marvellous variety crowds the little beach! Where I stranded, upon a long and narrow island, there was gold in abundance; yet gold that passes current only among nature's lovers. It was only the clustered bloom of caltha and the gilded spikes of orontium, but what did this matter? A coin would have been lost to view here and exchangeable for nothing.

When, in 1684, one William Watson, yeoman, of Nottinghamshire, England, ventured up the river in search of a home, he landed not far away and left recorded: "Here is not only a pleasant spot for a home, where toil will be rewarded, but a goodly spot wherein to rest." It is true, he might have had in mind a proper place in which to be buried, as under some one of the old oaks that overshadowed the river's winding shores, but I do not believe it. Give him credit for thinking of the closing hours of such April days as these, when the evening hymn of the thrush and plaint of drowsy finches should prove restful as sleep;

at least it is a more pleasing fancy to think so. And now it would be charming to know if there is left a single feature of the river upon which his eyes rested. It is scarcely probable; but, in the thankful spirit that moved Thoreau to be glad that man could not cut down the clouds, I am grateful that the same river gladdens the landscape in these later days.

Wheresoever we wander on land, nature, as the Indian knew it, must be sought after; here, on the river, we have the same sky above and waters beneath us. The bateau has replaced the canoe, but this is not a disturbing fact, and, whether we peer into the waves or gaze upward at the fleecy clouds, we have nature pure and undefiled. And, better, many a sweet sound that floats from the distant shores is the same that held old William Watson when on his homestead quest, and charmed, I hope, even the stolid Indian when on mischief bent. Warblers throng the willows; teetering sand-pipers call to their mates afar off; the thrush and blackbird whistle in wild glee; the weird cry of the unseen spirit duck trembles in the breeze; the air is filled with music.

Before a day's outing has well advanced, nature, as a whole, proves bewildering. It cannot be long continued in its entirety without fatigue, and the mind soon sinks to the level of specific observation. It is first a matter of choice, and then follows the exquisite pleasure of deciphering the purport of a single object. It was by mere chance, but, when again afloat, a spotted sand-piper passed very near and turned to look at me as it crossed the boat's bow. I caught the gay creature's bright and beady eye, and nodded in friendly recognition. I followed its course until lost in the glitter of distant ripples, and gave thought then only to these familiar birds as seen to-day and in years gone by. They are here now ahead of time. Ten days of summer weather and a waxing moon have wooed them northward, and, while May is almost a week off, they are hunting in their old-time haunts and threading the green pastures where they nested a year ago. It is strange that this bird is so little appreciated. There are even human fiends who eat them. Because they are not noisy like robins, or do not chatter and scold like Jenny Wren, the world gives them the go-by.

Hearing these sand-pipers everywhere along shore, I landed by a huge uprooted tree, and watched them as they came and went. How aptly they have caught the motion of the rippling water, and never venture more than to wet their feet! Their teetering motion is clearly protective here, where the pebbles are large and nowhere is the sand free from rubbish. Scan the shore as closely as one may, these birds are part and parcel of the little waves, and only at long intervals stand out in bold relief; appearing so suddenly that only emergence from the water seemed possible, as spring-tide swallows were supposed to do in olden time,—a belief, by the bye, not yet extinct.

It needs but a few minutes for sand-pipers to gain confidence, and soon they came within a few feet of the boat. Their eyes had all the merry glitter of the sunlit river. If they do not laugh, these birds do sing, for their clear voices are melodious by merit of the happiness that prompts each utterance. There was not to-day, and never is, a trace of ill humor about them, and they bow and bob even more when two or three are gathered

together than when alone. Neither wind nor wave troubles them, their slender, sword-like wings cutting the thin air and bearing them to distant shores without a trace of languor. I have never seen them wearied or morose, as many a land-bird is apt to be. They touch the smooth sand so lightly as to leave scarcely a footprint, or perch upon a pebble so daintily that not thistle-down is readier to respond to the passing breeze than they to follow the whim that moves them. And, withal, they sing; a song of but two notes, it is true, but who that has heard it above the plash of waves, the sullen murmur of the pines, and the sighing of the gathering storm in the lofty tree-tops, but longs to hear it again,—a voice of sweet content and child-like confidence?

Unlike the great majority of the family of wading birds, to which it belongs, the spotted sand-piper is equally at home in the uplands, where the most commonplace of ponds and little way-side pools content it; and even by these its pretty nest is often placed. This, to be sure, is but a shallow depression in sandy ground, with scarcely enough grass to line it thoroughly; still, it is

pretty, for the creamy eggs, with purple-brown blotches, stand out in bold relief, and are sure to attract attention, whether found by accident or as the result of nest-hunting. But all this pales to nothing in comparison to the newly-hatched young. These are the funniest little fellows extant. Not ludicrous because awkward, which is true of most young birds, but because of knowingness. They are quicker-witted than young quails, and ready to meet emergencies when scarcely more than a day old. I have knowledge of one cunning youngster that ran from tangled grass, as if fearing it might be trodden upon, into the water, and, using its mites of wings to guide it, swam for perhaps two yards, and then held on to the weeds with its feet. It was taken out by my informant's hand, after a submergence of several seconds, and came to the surface dry as a powder-horn. It would be well to know how often these birds take refuge from pursuing foes in this manner, and how long they can remain beneath the surface. Be it for a few seconds or a few minutes, it is interesting as bearing upon the fact that the ouzel has acquired the habit of hunting over the beds of

brooks, and it has been held that such a habit must have been given when the bird was created, and not that either bird or habit could have gradually come upon the scene. The little sand-pipers are a step in that direction, and he who objects to evolution now butts against a stone wall.

The while I have been wandering in mind, my body has travelled half a mile up stream. The tide, rising, lifted the boat and bore it away while my thoughts lingered on the shore among the sand-pipers, or flitted to other scenes and other days. There are now no birds in view, but their voices from the far-off shore still bear me company, and, bending to the oar against wind and tide, as the last glimmer of the setting sun gilds the waves, I speed homeward to cut another notch in the tally-stick of my memory of days out of doors.

A FOREST PATH.

May-Day out of Town.

“ Now hark ! how blithe the throstle sings !

He, too, is no mean preacher ;

Come forth into the light of things,

Let Nature be your teacher.”

MAY-DAY! It is a sluggish heart that does not give a livelier bound at the very mention of the word. May-day ; and never a brighter and breezier one than this of 1890. Even the caged canary knew the time, and by dawn was offering a ringing welcome to the advancing sun. I fancied there was music even in the alien sparrow's chirp ; but, without stopping to determine, hurried along the almost silent streets, eager for the fields, the woods, the meadow, and the misty river-shore. Beyond the city's bounds the whole world was at its best ; green grass, bright foliage,

a pale-blue sky, and north-bound warblers everywhere.

Birds are not given to consult the almanac, but it is fitting that the myriad songsters that we have missed for months should appear in force upon this magic date, May 1; and so it was this year. Seldom have I seen so many at one time. A long-neglected field was the first spot at which a halt was made, and it was a happy thought to linger in and about the tall weeds, remnants of last year's growth, and the sturdy bushes that filled the angles of an old worm-fence. Here were sparrows in abundance. Not the unfortunate importations, but our native ones. Song-sparrows were ecstatic, field-sparrows exultant, white-throats demonstrative, and the delightful chippers joyous. It was a competitive concert, each claiming my undivided attention and admiration, and the contestants receiving my impartial approbation. No other thought than that of making merry seemed to enter the busy brains of any bird, so how could I do otherwise than say each was perfect, and so was each. It appeared as if none could be omitted without marring the effect. As a concert it was

perfect, and would have repaid the rambler had silence for the whole day succeeded it. But this was not to be. Pausing for a moment, as if by common consent, the brief interval was seized by a rose-breasted grosbeak that perched upon the slender top of a tapering cedar and gave himself up to song. Every feather trembled, and, bowing and bending to the world below, melody poured from his brilliant throat and flooded earth and air. It was a happy thought on the part of the bird, for scarcely had he ceased when the first level rays of the rising sun smote his gorgeous breast. Truly, May-day had had an auspicious opening.

What a suggestive spot to others than those on natural history bent is an old field; the scene of busy husbandry when our grandfathers were young: now an open common, a bare, bold, half-deserted tract, its sad fate to become a town-lot! Soon to be cut and carved until beyond recognition. Once a forest, and so truly grand; then a field, and but little less impressive; now, as a common, little better than a desert; the last step, a heap of dirt!

There are traces yet of the last furrows that

were turned, and the broken ridges in the sod are not all hidden by the straggling weeds that have succeeded the corn. As I trace the old headland, where for a century the brier-embowered fence had stood, I find the sturdy growths of poison-ivy still lingering, but with no support but the ground, except where, these many years, a battered apple-tree has withstood the assaults of whole troops of boys.

To find every trace of fruitfulness gone, and a poisonous weed representing it, is a depressing experience, one that dims even a brilliant May-day; yet why should it? Is it not too commonplace an occurrence to excite comment? Whether an old farm or an old friend, it is too often a matter of poison-ivy at last.

The grass is still glistening with the morning dew, but the bees are astir, humming—can it be contentedly?—over such poor pasture. Mean beyond compare are the flowers of this one-time field, and but a single buttercup is within sight. There are weeds, though, that thrive upon ill treatment, and shrubs so hardy they withstand neglect. The village cows cannot tramp all bloom

out of existence, and a bit of chickweed or a mat of whitlow-grass here and there star the stunted grass. But where is the honey for the patient bees? Surely not in such flowers as these, and their beauty alone is not an attraction; beauty that needs a magnifier that man may see it. Is it an inherited instinct that brings the bees? Scarcely that; but the day was when the blooming clover tempted the whole hive.

Everywhere there is ruin nature cannot wholly conceal. The old apple-tree is the last vestige of an orchard, and beyond it, where the ground slightly rises, are the scattered stones of a foundation-wall. Better than these, even, to recall the past, there grows a dwarfed lilac-bush hard by, with no other evidence of life than a few half-expanded leaves. Wild life, save the few birds and omnipresent insects, has long since disappeared, and this it makes the song of every sparrow heard to-day sad, when we pause to think of what has been. The sparrow now perched on the lone lilac sings sweetly as ever, but what of the merry host that thronged the vanished lilac hedge and dreamed of no better world than the

cottage garden of nigh a century ago? Then the morning songs of merry birds fell not upon deaf ears here, where the farmer lived far from the town, and his fields on every side were weighted with the award of toil. But we must bow to the inevitable. The growing town is inexorable, and to mourn a dismantled farm is mawkish sentimentality. Another May-day will be celebrated here, not by the songs of birds, but by the grating of saws and thud of the hammer. New habitations will arise upon the ruins of the old, and still longer become the town-dweller's tramp ere he reaches the open country. The naturalist's last chance at this spot will then be when the earth is upturned and a cellar dug; when, perchance, relics of the Indians, or bones of the animals the dusky hunters slew, will hold him for the day; or some local historian may air his knowledge over the belongings of other days,—a rusty ploughshare or a well-worn coin. As I now stand listening to the songs of birds,—their farewell concert it may be,—I fancy that I see a troop of graybeards hobbling hither to watch the building of a new house, and, gathering about some trivial trace of other days,

hear their leader say, "Here was my father's farm some fifty years ago."

And now to the near woods. Not even the glorious grosbeak's matchless song could hold me, and the sun gilded the sorrow of the lonely field. I feared that I might fall to serious thinking, even on a May-day, when I would shout and sing. There were other pastures in which to browse, and from them I would cull sweets free from the slightest trace of bitterness.

With eager steps, brushing the dew from buttercups, a few scattered oaks were soon reached that as yet but hinted of their bright, broad leaves. Not so the densely-clustered trees beyond. These already shut from the mossy paths beneath the sun's rays, leaving in cool, gray light the snowy blossoms of dentaria, pale-blue houstonia, and pink spring-beauty. The change from field to forest was not abrupt, and yet was startling. All had appealed to the ear before, now nature appealed only to the eye. Not birds and blossoms, as the rambler would ever have it, but from birds to blossoms,—from tuneful to silent beauty. It is doubtful if nature in America presents a more

charming spectacle than the fresh green foliage of a forest. The shadows beneath it are not harshly defined ; the straggling sunbeams light up the crooked paths, even to the winter run-ways of the mice and rabbits ; there is no hint of gloom, as in midsummer. Nor is the wood but an expanse of mottled green. The snowy dog-wood, the blooming cherry, and violet-mantled knolls give that variety we crave when we look at nature as a whole rather than single features of it.

But the woods were not deserted. Scarcely a tree was without its attendant warblers. These are essentially May-day birds. There are many that remain throughout the summer, more than one that is with us during winter ; but now the great host are upon us, the greater number bound northward to Maine, Canada, and beyond. These birds are widely different, yet the family likeness running through all is very marked. To-day they were abroad in full force, and such marvellous energy and unceasing motion are not seen elsewhere in the bird-world. Swallows may be more swift, the humming-bird outspeed them ; but with the warblers it is not mere flight, but the gymnastic

climbing and somersaulting, over and above every twig of every tree, that shows how absolutely tireless these birds are. Nor are they silent. Faint, but not listless, melody ripples from their breasts, whether in mid-air, seeking new hunting-grounds, or busy with the food their sharp eyes have spied out in the crannies of rough bark. Not all keep to the tree-tops. There is one, the Maryland yellow-throat, that loves the swampy ground, with its rank growth of symplocarpus and arum, and few finer song-birds have we than this, if we judge bird music by its associations.

It is hard to choose among them, but I hold in high regard the bay-breasted warblers that come and go with such delightful uncertainty. It was not May-day, but nearly three weeks later, that I chanced in these woods a year ago. It might well have been called Warbler-day, so abundant were these dainty birds. To watch them was bewildering, to single out any one well-nigh impossible. As I stood by a group of four large tulip-trees, that towered above the surrounding oaks, I heard a merry twitter that sounded from above, and, while clear and distinct, was distant. It came

from the tall trees, and there, sure enough, were a host of these beauties, fly-catching on the outskirts of creation. In the clear sunlight their contrasted colors showed well, but the moment they entered the shade each was black as ebony. Not one would come near me; none came within thirty or forty feet from the ground. So far, a most commonplace occurrence; but, with that abruptness that bewilders the on-looker, these warblers suddenly disappeared. Not a trace of them anywhere, though I searched most diligently: for aught I knew, they had dissolved into the thin air in which they had been sporting.

Merely a coincidence, doubtless, but this is a foundation we all build upon. Late in the evening of that day, while sitting before a film of smoke that half hid the andirons, there came a tapping at the window, loud enough to suggest Poe's raven, and, when the sash was raised, in came a bay-breasted warbler. There was no bust of Pallas for it; and, after flitting aimlessly in the dim light, it rested on the head of a stuffed owl. The yielding feathers offered no foothold, and it perched next upon my table, twittered as if half afraid, and

then darted back into the night. Did it come with a message from its fellows and forget or fear to deliver it? We will never know, but I hold them now above other warblers and await their communication. How many secrets do the birds withhold? Is there one that we can fully comprehend? This bay-breasted fairy is a lover of tall trees, and seldom deigns to descend even to the lower branches; yet I have twice had them peer into my face since one entered my study. There is a bond between us, yet of its import I know nothing. None the less does it bind me, and I have an inkling now of the mystery of superstition. Such trivial coincidences as I have mentioned have affected my whole life, and why not others? To injure a bay-breasted warbler would be murder on my part.

Beyond the woods were the river-skirting meadows. There is much in a name, after all. Meadow and May-day fit well together, and he who now sees the low-lying reaches of green pasture and treacherous marsh, perhaps sees them at their best. Possibly this has been said of these same meadows seen at other seasons, but something must be allowed for May-day enthusiasm. We are under

a new order of things now, and abrupt changes always lead to extravagant expressions. Spring has been relegated to mythology; is a pretty play-

thing for the folk-lore student. It is a long time since we have had a real winter, and April of this year was once white with snow, and wore a frosty mantle oftener than did March; but to-day, May-

day, it is summer. If there is any meaning in temperature, in the condition of vegetation, in the activity of animal life, then summer reached us during the past night. She came with the whip-poorwill, as, according to the Indians, she always does. What could have given rise to the idea of a whole season sandwiched between winter and summer?

As so often happens, the reckless profusion of attractions was bewildering, and every one with merit worthy of undivided attention. It is well to be a specialist in such a place. He is the happier botanist who never hears a bird sing. This morning, in and about the marshes, little and great frogs vied with each other in shouting the merits of May-day. The shrill, fife-like notes of some, the rattling click of others, and the deep bass of batrachian patriarchs proved a mighty chorus, that impressed if it did not charm. Think of frogs, perhaps tens of thousands to an acre, and each screeching, roaring, whistling at its best! These creatures have an object in all this, but what? The naturalists say these sounds are love-calls; but what of affection as violent as their cacophony

nous announcement of it? What if the tender human swain proposed through a fog-horn, and his lady replied with a steam-whistle? But in an instant the meadows were silent. Not a frog whimpered. In wonderment I looked about, and saw nothing amiss but the shadow of a cloud; and this, doubtless, had been the cause. Could it have been associated in their minds with the shadows cast by passing birds, as the herons and bittern, their greatest enemies? This is giving the frogs credit for considerable wit, but not more than is their due.

Soon the great roaring recommenced, and again as suddenly ceased. No shadow of a cloud disturbed them then, but a gentle breeze, that swept over the water with great speed, leaving a chill behind it. It would seem as if the day's outing must abruptly close. With folded arms, and back resting against a sturdy oak, it was not so doleful an incident after all, even on May-day, to look across the meadows while it rained. The swallows were in ecstasies; the hawks screamed with delight; robins replied to the distant thunder; and now, as if assured that no danger threatened

them, the frogs joined in their mighty chorus once again. Surely for many minutes the lovers of Wagnerian music would have been entranced.

The shower was of short duration, and a happy incident, for beauty emerging from a bath is ever engaging. While waiting for this the time sped happily. The huge oak that sheltered me has no history, it is true, being a growth of this quiet Indian and staid Quaker country, but no tree needs such fortuitous aid to render it an object of admiration. Here on the meadows oaks replace rocks, and are scarcely less an evidence of the world's stability. The rocks have their history plainly written upon them; but what of the chafed and gnarly branches of the primeval oaks? what of the murmuring breezes that I now hear, and the scream of the winters' storms that has been so often sounded? Truly, the autobiography of an oak would be rare reading. And yet, so strongly implanted is our belief in man's transcendent importance that trees with a human history outvie all others. Let us be sure that a tragedy—even a disgusting one—was enacted beneath its branches, and the gaping crowd will be

blind to all else the forest contains. What boots it that some truly great man stood here two centuries ago, if his coming was a necessity and not a sentiment? He who follows, not merely in another's footsteps, but breaks his own path to do homage to an aged tree, is the greater man. Tree-worship is as old as religion itself, and a worthier phase of it than hero-worship.

It still rains, and I recall another May-day outing when colonial history gave zest to the ramble at the outset, but soon faded before the teeming wealth of natural history. With a companion I followed the general trend of the Towsissink Creek, where yet stands a remnant of the primeval forest, and came suddenly to a shallow basin where bubbles many a sparkling spring, the whole overshadowed by the out-spreading branches of a single tree. A nobler temple was never reared than a white-oak in its prime, and here was one without a blemish; a tree five feet in diameter and more than one hundred in the spread of its branches. But there are other and larger oaks nearer home, so why come so far to visit this? It is a tree with a history; one that was blazed

with P when the boundary of Penn's first purchase was marked, from the spruce upon the bank of the Delaware westward to the Neshaminy. Armed with his note-book and compass, my companion studied the tree as an ancient deed-mark, and left me to drift wheresoever fancy might determine. I scarcely moved and had no desire to wander. It was my most happy fate to be held by the mute eloquence of the imperious oak, and I long rested upon a grassy bed, looked upward at the tree's strange gestures, and marked the continuous stream of life that, as if to consult an oracle, suddenly appeared and as speedily departed. I was the only slave, perhaps, but ready to kiss my chains. There was little to commend and much to deplore when my companion reappeared and snapped them. Probably nowhere, in the same space, could life in such varied forms be found as in, on, and about such an oak as this. It was alike the home or resting-place of the extremes of bird-life, the eagle and the humming-bird. The raccoon, squirrel, and mice of two kinds made it a home or temporary refuge; snakes were among its branches and about its roots; the lizard and

the tortoise were here alike at home, and the pool where gathered the waters of the springs so closely nestled by the tree that the two were one; and here were lithe salamanders and dainty fishes. The teeming millions of insect-life I pass by. Is it strange, then, to have forgotten that here was the tree singled by Penn as one of his landmarks, and one that every Indian must recognize when he hunted in the surrounding forest or planted his corn-field in the clearings?

But what of the meadows again? for it has ceased raining. Doubtless there might be much discovered if one had the pluck to plunge *in medias res*, but walking through wet weeds is not attractive. Man's ancestor was an aquatic creature so very long ago that his love of water has not remained equal to such a task. I skirted the low grounds, where the cow-path offered a fair footing, and played bo-peep with a bull-frog. He was a monstrous fellow of his kind, and took my intrusion testily. There was a trace of fire in his great, watery eyes, and defiance, I fancied, in the grunt that heralded every leap. Was this really meant as a warning that injury would be inflicted

if I ventured too far? So far, at least, I have not solved the problem of a frog's intelligence; and the sunshine now was growing too bright to warrant tarrying longer. I left the frog to his Maying and went upon my own. The flowers were fresher since their recent bath; the birds took up the songs the shower had cut short; every wheel was again in motion, and I walked as if speed was the true spirit of an outing. Such spurts of aimless activity are not uncommon, but, happily, they are of short duration; sooner or later we butt against a stone wall. I butted against the strange spectacle of a bat's carnival; at least, I can think of no clearer description. There were hundreds of them, or so it seemed, and not one was bat-like and natural. Had it been March 1, and not May-day, I should have concluded it was their first outing, and much joy had made them mad; but here they were, dancing up and down and seldom circling, the point of attraction or fascination being a tall tulip-tree that, I knew, had a great hollow in its trunk. From it, it may be, they had come; but why in broad daylight? Not one made any sound save the fluttering of their

leathern wings. There was no quarrelling. It was a thoroughly weird, unearthly, and disturbing sight, that gave a sombre tint to the remaining hours of the day; that reversed the happy order that gives a silver lining to a leaden cloud, and unto this day I never see a bat but I recall that host of fluttering imps that, by their mysterious antics, closed in sadness a merry May-day out of town.

Windy Bush.

IF it be true that the birds which haunt the babbling brooks sing only of rippling waters, echo the bell-like trickling of tiny streams, and trill the murmuring of the fretted tide, then the wood-peewee has caught the languor of the hot high noon, and his note, when it fills the woods, even before the sun climbs the distant hills, is an evidence of what the day will be. For years I have held the long-drawn notes of this fly-catcher to be so far prophetic. To-day, save the red-eye, that, too, braves the noontide, all other birds were silent before the dew had gone from the grass, and the doleful peewee was our perpetual reminder of what was coming. Its song was so languid, so full of longing, that the breeze seemed to lose its freshness, as though commanded to be sad and

take on a funereal pace, leaving all thought of May-day merriment behind it.

But let me say where I happen to be, and why. As the sun set yesterday, our wanderings ceased, and, by happy chance, M. and I camped on Windy Bush. What a grandly suggestive name for hot-weather days! The tent ready, the supper cooked, the camp-fire freshened, we were ready for a moonlight stroll, and by its happily uncertain light, that leaves the imagination to build what it chooses of that our prosy eyes but dimly see, we listened to the charming chatter of the oldest inhabitant; learned when and by whom the oldest houses were built; the strange adventures of the "originals," as he called the first settlers; what was still current of the Indians. He pointed out the mineral spring, a cave dug by the Indians in the hill-side, and showed us where red men were buried; told so much, indeed, that we felt as if on Windy Bush had always been our home,—brought us in touch with Nature, ever kind fortune's goodliest gift. Many an old man of an old neighborhood is an uncut gem of humanity. He had, at least, not rounded out fourscore years for

nothing; and when at last the wordy interview was over, and I had sought the shelter of my tent, there was many a grain of good wheat to be sifted from his abundant chaff.

Morning broke beautifully over the ringing woods, and as the birds discovered us we were greeted not as new-comers, but as old friends. Whether thrush or grosbeak, lark or robin sounded the louder or the sweeter welcome, it matters not; but let the future wanderer rest assured bird-music is best heard when we are but half awake. Then its spirit only is sifted into our senses: the pure wine without a trace of lees.

Where nothing comes amiss, be it botany or history, a matter of birds and beasts, or the finding of a flint arrow, it is safe to start off in any direction; and the initial tramp was towards the quaint old house, of which we had heard much. It was but a little two-story stone dwelling, framed of huge oak logs, and the interspaces filled with broken stone and held by mortar as white as the driven snow. At the chimney or fireplace end the masonry was solid. All was weed-grown and

forsaken about the one-time yard, but I noticed a straggling—yes, struggling—rose-bush clung to a corner, and a single half-opened bud showed timidly above the tall grass. How like, I thought, many a man who has lost heart, living hopelessly among unsympathetic folks, a very prince in the realm of beggardom.

Turning a great iron key that threaded the maze of a ponderous lock and drew back its bolt, I entered this ancient dwelling, now deserted, but straightway peopled with the spirits of that hardy folk who knew the Indians as neighbors. The cavernous fireplace, now cold and clammy,—fit home for salamanders that scuttled across the hearth-stones,—grew quickly bright with the flickering flames that of old leapt from the back log. The dim outline of a high-backed settle filled the corner; the trusty rifle leaned against the wall. From the crane swung the steaming kettle: there lacked nothing of a happy old-time colonial home. The wind that moaned through the huge chimney and rattled the loose shingles of the roof was not a sobering sound; fancy freed it of all melancholy. The wild tales of woodland adven-

ture and hair-breadth escape were heard again,—for an hour I lived in an earlier century.

It is well that the scene should shift suddenly. It was but a step to the deep woods, and both M. and myself aimed for the time to live a free wild life, in touch only with uncontaminated Nature. Birds sang almost without a pause, yet the woods were silent. The brief intermissions were so deadly still that about us we had not sound, but silence framed in song. Yet this is Windy Bush, and suggestive of tumult rather than peace. It was the trees' holiday, I concluded, for no rude blasts troubled them, and the fitful breezes were considerate. The truth is, they happened to pass by high overhead, as the masses of white clouds clearly showed. When, particularly in winter, these blasts of cruel air swept across the hill, it is not strange that every tree shivered and the dangling dead leaves rattled, and suggested all manner of uncanny thoughts to the Indians. Indeed, they claimed that summer or winter the wind never ceased, and hence the name that still clings to it. Later, these rustling leaves made faint-hearted folk a little timid, or, as the octogenarian

put it, "better minded to go 'round the hill o' nights than go over it." I am happy to say I slept unguarded upon its summit, nor came to grief. My only sorrow was that of leaving so soon. The Indians were right about the wind, perhaps, but it was not always the trees that were bowed before it ; to-day it was the clouds.

Swift as the swallow, on its deadly quest,
The fleecy clouds of summer hurry by,
Borne by the breeze : as by great fear oppressed
They onward rush where sounds the warning cry ;
'Tis said a curse upon the hill doth rest
For crime of ages gone ; by Nature still unblest.

But brave of heart in these sad latter days
The woodland bird forgives the deed once done ;
He shouts at break of day his hymn of praise,
And trills a soothing song at set of sun ;
No fear of harm to him his tongue betrays,
Then, lingering here, why stand in dread amaze ?

No blanched and trembling blossom starred the grass,
No feathery fern shrank curled upon its stem ;
Though restless breezes through their petals pass,
The forest flowers looked boldly back at them.
Why then, unmeaning dread, our minds harass ?
Despite our pride and strength, a coward still, alas !

The wood-peewee was right in his prognostics ; it was torrid at noontide. The cows in the distant pastures gathered in the shade of scattered trees, and in many ways it is well to take our cue from other forms of life. Many a despised creature, even a worm, can give us useful hints, if we but heed their methods. A nap at mid-day may prove more refreshing than a night-long slumber. I was painfully envious of the far-off cows until, like them, I curled in the shade of a hill-side chestnut, and then how trivial a matter was the blazing sun ! Whether a-dreaming or awake, it matters not, but the distant landscape was a source of joy. Bowman's Hill and many a mile of intervening meadow spread out before me, and what a laden table at which one's soul might feast ! We may envy the eagle his all-searching gaze, but are consoled by feeling we can reach, in thought, beyond the horizon. Whether hill or dale, it is but the bird's resting-place ; but within the same bounds is a home for more than a mere body. Weary now, I halt in the restoring shade of a splendid chestnut and wander, the while, among the far-off hills.

The looked-for shower came far sooner than expected, and my first intimation of its approach was the threatening peal of thunder that echoed down the valley, and seemed rather to gather strength, than die, as it had reached the hills beyond. Such thunder, without a hint of lightning's destructive touch in its tones, is one of Nature's

noblest melodies. It does not awe the birds that sang merrily in reply to many a peal. But the

sudden downpour silenced them, and, like myself, they sought shelter. Doubtless they have in mind many a safe retreat, for they suffer from wet feathers at times as much or more than we do by wet clothing. I found none with bedraggled feathers, however, when the rain was over, and, indeed, was more entertained by a huge slug that slipped slimily over a prostrate log than by the robins and thrushes that made every nook and corner of the forest ring with their rejoicings. This slug watched me curiously with its absurd telescopic eyes, which continuously collapsed when I became too demonstrative. But its curiosity was unbounded, and quickly reappeared the slender stalks with eyes perched on their tips. I teased his slugship for a long time, and finally made bold to touch one of the eye-stalks. Offended beyond measure, it moved off with its head tucked under its breast, and took a back track gracefully, turning at a sharp angle, and made of its body for a time a squeezed-up letter V. Then I left the poor creature in peace. The glistening trail of slime that it left behind it, by which alone I was to remember the meeting, was not pleasing ;

but why complain? Half the people we meet leave as uncanny a track on the tablet of our memory.

By the camp-fire, not long after, I was disposed to rebel at the thought of leaving so sweet a spot; but there was the great beyond through which we proposed to ramble, and I soon returned to common sense. How easy it is to be foolish! Whether paradise or purgatory depends in great measure upon ourselves; but looking across the valley now, I cannot believe the hills beyond hold in store for us anything better than these wood-clad reaches of old Windy Bush.

On Historic Ground.

IT is an experience worth the having to pass a delightful May-day in an old colonial mansion ; to be able to wander about a spacious dwelling built more than two hundred years ago, still in excellent repair, and not fatally modernized. Think of it ! I passed a postprandial hour in a cozy room wherein Franklin and his friend Galloway were wont to discuss electricity and the coming crisis. Whether or not Galloway thought Franklin a crank in the matter of electricity, possibly no one knows ; but these intellectual giants took opposite sides politically, and for aught I know, parted, during Revolutionary times, for their remaining years.

It was a happy thought, on mine host's part, to give me an inkling of the mansion's history ; forthwith my imagination did me good service in peopling every nook and corner with the old-time folk. The stately, high-backed chairs were

occupied by grave, but not forbidding, men; the wide hall resounded with the pleasant patter of fun-loving youth, whose romping savored of the wild woods about them. Life had its drawbacks, doubtless, then as now; but who has not cast loving backward glances and thought of the boundless forest before the moccasin-print of the Indian had vanished? It was so to-day. The hands of the world-clock were set back two centuries while I tarried in the house.

Then, the afternoon's ramble. It is an unfortunate taste, perhaps, but tales and traditions of long ago, howsoever teeming with comedy or with tragic events, are soon forgotten when, in the shade of clustered hemlocks, the wild-bird's song and flaunting blossoms champion the passing hour. It was so to-day. Strolling over grassy fields and pausing only to pay due respect to an enormous hawthorn that stands like a sentinel in a wide reach of pasture, we soon reached the creek-side woods. No sound save the rippling of rapid waters stayed our progress; for who is not ready to pause when the wood-thrush sings? Then, afar off, was heard the vehement reiteration of the

oven-bird and the pleasant lisping of a passing warbler. Reading here and there in the open pages of the woodland almanac, my mind ran to orchids, and, careless of the treacherous foot-path, my eyes sought the damp soil between mossy rocks, hoping at every step to find some treasure of fantastic bloom. Nor did I look in vain. That pink-and-white beauty, the showy orchis, unknown at the home hill-side, grew here in great profusion. Still, despite their numbers, it needed constant care to spy them out, they were so carefully guarded by overtopping growths. It is not strange that many people pass through the woods and re-enter the open world empty-handed, and worse, without a new idea. In matters botanical, as well as those of more practical and prosy nature, eternal vigilance is the price of novelty.

But the woods were not all green and orchid-spotted. The pinxter flower held its showy head aloft, and whenever the genial sunbeams struggled through the interlocking branches of the trees, bluebells and snowy wind-flower brightened the grim, gray rocks. It was a fitting place to rest and ruminate, here, where the sloping rocks offered

a tempting seat; but our rumination was strictly physical. We were lost, for the time, to nature's beauties, and vigorously chewed sweet cicely.

It may seem to many a sad fall to quit the higher pleasures of contemplation and seek comfort in eating weeds, but the merit of sweet cicely lies hidden in the aromatic root rather than in its inconspicuous white flowers, which, as yet, had not appeared. Why not, then, if the weed be mentioned, tell the whole truth? It is good to eat, and good for nothing else; and its merit as food is not merely that it is pleasantly aromatic; it has, too, the magic charm of recalling other days. He who chewed sweet cicely forty years ago, and had no other care than the fear that the supply might some day be exhausted, will know what joy in after-years lies in reclining on a rock in the woods, and while listening to birds and rippling waters, chewing sweet cicely again. It is worth a small fortune, after weeks of worry, to be able, if but for a brief hour, to be a boy once more.

The goal was not yet reached. On through the tangled underbrush and over hill-side brooks.

we came at last to other rocks that jutted from the steeply-sloping bank and the creek's bed. These uptilted rocks also offered us most tempting seats, and had not a shower threatened, I, for one, should have gladly remained until now. It is not enough to see the world by daylight. There is a night side of nature full of meaning and attractiveness, and he who knows it not has but half of the world's story wherewith to please him. It would have been jolly indeed to camp at such a spot, notwithstanding the rain, for the prospect of an early return to the city was a blacker cloud than any the sky above could ever boast of.

Regardless of the distant mutterings of the coming storm, I looked for garnets in the glistening rocks, and saw hundreds that were still held fast, but found none that I could carry away. They were dingy anyhow, so I do not care; and perhaps in anticipation of such a result, I was given a huge rosy crystal from Alaska that outglittered all the gems in the Neshaminy valley.

It was the old story of the many against one; there were none to bear me company, and I paused when it came to perching alone upon the

wrinkled rock. All reluctantly, I turned my face homeward, and there was something soothing in the silence of the woods. Scarcely a bird twittered save the restless swallows, and blossoms lost their brightness. Sorrow, it seems, sees the world through a smoked glass.

If a summer shower is to be avoided as though there was pestilence in its touch, we were none too soon in reaching the kindly shelter of the old mansion. It rained steadily for a short time, and so I was given again opportunity to linger in the historic rooms. The subdued light fitted well with the surroundings, for antiquity loses something of its charm when exposed to too bright sunlight. In the gloaming time's ravages are veiled, and what might have marred the scene at noonday was now an added glory.

The rain ceasing, a second start was made, and with those pleasing impressions that such a visit is sure to give, we hurried down a long lane, pausing a moment to look once more at the giant hemlocks that overshadowed the gate, and then Trevoise, the one-time home of the Growdens, was to us a thing of the past.

All Day Afloat.

THE world is never as empty as it seems ; but then, when beyond the town limits, one must be willing to link arms with a weed or commune with a cobble-stone. For an hour I had seen little but water, the boat merely skimming the surface in response to the oar-stroke, and disturbing nothing save the few spirit ducks that cleft the clear air without a sound ; then I tarried at the fishery, as the seine was drawn, and what wealth of vigorous life was brought to the “keen, sword-cutting air !” Shad, herring, and a host of lesser fry were tossed ashore,—life that so soon before had peopled the unsuspected world of water over which I had thoughtlessly passed. Let me again protest against the common impression that life is absent because beyond the range of our vision. If it should so happen that at a given hour every

one remained in-doors, a city would appear deserted; so the well-wooded banks of the river as I passed by. Not a leaf seemed to stir, and

not a bird came or went; not even a swallow. Life absent, indeed! Rounding a pine-clad point, while drifting in the mile-wide stream where not a feather was to be seen, the music from a hundred

gleesome throats was mingled : the tireless red-eye's half-impatient cry, the fretting of the over-anxious crows, the boasting oriole's exultant call, the sad song of the plaintive thrush, the ceaseless chatter of the restless wren, here met upon the waters.

A moment here and the silence was oppressive ; turning but a step and all the world was merry. There seems to be little doubt but that birds and blossoms have tastes in common. Of all the features of a bright May morning, no one is more in touch with the conditions than the north-bound warblers. It may be that, if they tarried long, we would count them tiresome, but never at such a time as this will one weary of watching such marvels of brilliant bird-life. There are three to be found in this river valley that match well with the bright plumage of the birds of the tropics,—the hooded, the spotted, and Blackburnian warblers. To-day I had the spotted only to keep me company, and had they chosen to remain so long, I would willingly still be sitting in my boat. Never a pessimistic thought clouds their joy, and none overshadows the on-looker at such a time

and place. The sobering thought that these birds were dealing death to myriads of unseen insects does not intrude.

It is well to be without a settled purpose if, being baffled in that, we are stranded and helpless. I turned from the river's bank to the river's bed, hoping to see and recognize some, at least, of the many fishes found here. In this I failed. All were in too great haste to reach some distant point, and the occasional dark flash or silvery glitter may have been a herring or a perch. Not even the minnows tarried within range, and the curious darters that rest on the sand jerked themselves into new positions or quite burrowed under flat pebbles whenever I moved my head for a better view. At last a puff of wind half turned the drifting boat, and a little company of these darters was brought to view. I had not to move to see each one, and, very conveniently, they did not stir. These fish cannot take a leisurely stroll up or down stream; it is either a question of sitting still or darting off to new quarters. As I looked at them to-day, each rested as demurely on the rippled sand as listening and learned judges.

Let us hope they have thoughts to occupy them, for they appear to have little else; and that their wits are ready events proved. A small snake passed dangerously near, and straightway these little darters disappeared; but it was a desperate effort. Not a tittle of the ease of a startled pike, but a heavy contortion of the whole body, rapid vibration of every fin, and a mad rush for shelter. In spite of this, they seemed to take in their surroundings at a glance, for the snake passed by without a victim, and then, reaching down, I lifted here and there a flat pebble, and found these fish beneath them.

But one source of entertainment was lacking. No sturgeons were seen. One hundred and forty-two years ago an observing traveller passed this very spot, and has left on record, "Sturgeons leaped often a fathom into the air. We saw them continuing this exercise all day, till we came to Trenton." It is not so strange that our bird-life should have lost many attractive features, as cranes and pelicans, but the bottom of the river appeared to offer a fairly safe harbor for even such huge fishes. If increase of *human* population has alone

to do with it, are we slowly being reduced to domestic animals and insects?

What an undiscovered country is the bed of a river! A mile or more away, where the water was much deeper, I again endeavored to peer into the depths, and saw more than one suggestive object. Not strange forms of life merely, albeit there were many, and these may well suffice to bid us pause, for however commonplace any creature may be when dead and out of place, it is an object of ceaseless interest when in its native haunts. Let one watch mackerel in the open sea, and then draw comparison with the hacked and salted carcass in the corner grocery. There were dimly to be discerned traces of old-time navigation, and how I longed to catch a glimpse of an Indian canoe! Doubtless a vain wish, but not an absurd one. Writes Peter Kalm of the Indians of this very river valley: "Whenever they intended to hollow out a thick tree for a canoe, they laid dry branches all along the stem of the tree as far as it must be hollowed out. They then put fire to those dry branches, and as soon as they were burnt they were replaced by others. . . . The tree

being burnt hollow as far as they found it sufficient, . . . they took . . . stone hatchets or sharp flints and quartzes, or sharp shells, and scraped off the burnt part of the wood and smoothened the boats within. By this means they likewise gave it what shape they pleased. . . . A canoe was commonly between thirty and forty feet long."

There are doubtless many of these deeply buried in the river mud, but how small the chance of their discovery! I have no such excellent fortune to report, but something scarcely less suggestive: above the sand projected a ship-timber; possibly a bit of some old Dutchman's boat, such as passed up and down this stream almost three centuries ago. It looked old, and why not think it? It is on record that about 1624-25 the Dutch West India Company established a trading-house on a small island near the western shore of the Delaware, just below Trenton Falls,—a mere rocky ripple,—and placed thereon four families. The Dutch carried on a profitable trade with the Indians as early as 1621. There is evidence of this in the objects gathered from one-time village sites, and many valuable relics were unearthed well-nigh

a century ago near the head of tide-water, which would be worth their weight in gold were they in existence now ; but they were valueless then, when the Indians were looked upon simply as "heathen" and scarcely human ; although a book concerning them had appeared declaring them to be the lost tribes. Was it not enough to juggle them out of their lands without permitting a crank to lie about them afterwards ? This slowly-decaying piece of hewn timber was suffering no sea-change. Neither coral nor sea-weed beautified it, and the few lazy mussels that ploughed the sand near by were as dull and forbidding in hue ; but there was, better than all this, a wealth of suggestiveness.

Taking my oars in hand, I hurried now to the opposite shore and landed upon a narrow but clean, bright, pebbly beach. Again the Indian loomed up, but without the Dutch traders. The rounded bits of many different rocks were full of beauty in themselves, and here they were mingled with fragments of bog iron ore or limonite, which recalled the contents of more than one Indian grave I had opened. Here were scattered little cups and rings and many an oddly-fashioned form

such as attracted other eyes, centuries ago, for reasons given ; and it was evident whence came the cue to the Indian in the matter of personal adornment. Not a type of stone ornament as they are found on the upland fields but has its double in the water-worn and frost-fractured fragments that strewn the beach. But was there ever an Indian at this point? Who can say? Nevertheless, as I pushed my boat off shore, I sighted a broken arrow-point.

It was a quick transition from the past to the present, but not an unwelcome one. A straining tug rounded the near-by bend, and, following in its wake, a string of rafts. Here was a golden opportunity to return without labor. I had but to hold to the long rudder of the hindmost raft, and did so. All was novel, and he who loves laziness would have been charmed. Still, I could not be altogether idle. The same incentive, it may be, moved the birds, and many took the ride with me. It was rather startling to see a green heron perched upon a log and in no wise concerned about my close proximity. It seldom shifted its position, and seemed asleep, not even noticing its fellows that

continually crossed and recrossed the river. These were never silent ; my companion always so, for which I was grateful, as the others were forever clearing their throats, and never getting beyond a guttural. Purple grakles hopped from log to log, insect-hunting, I supposed, but nothing like a bug was within sight from where I sat. A song-sparrow came within a log's length and sang twice before departing. All told, we were a merry company ; and what a luxury is elbow-room ! Public highways a mile wide are seldom a feature of the land. Here we were as much alone as if in the moon.

An Up-River Ramble.

THE definition of "picnic," given by Stormonth, is really a brief but suggestive essay on a delightful subject. Perhaps I can meet all requirements by merely stating: June 20, perfect day, picnic. See Stormonth.

Think of a perfect June day! And add thereto "Top-Rock," the "Ringing Stones," and "High Falls," with a ride in the valley of the Delaware that never becomes commonplace, however long the day's ramble. The drive at the base of the cliff was of itself sufficient to fill the day; but although we might well have halted at every step to revel in nature's riches, there was an overpowering impulse in every one to go yet farther and reach Ultima Thule. It is scarcely to one's credit to admit that these magnificent rocks, with ferns, flowers, and reckless trees that clung to

giddy heights, should have passed with but a glance. There was such suggestiveness in each overhanging shelf and gloomy crevice, indelible footprints of Time, the day might well have been spent in contemplation at any point. There was food for thought in abundance, but, alas! there was food also in various hampers, and the day was devoted to a picnic in its broadest sense.

Let us return to Stormonth: he says, *Pick*, to eat by morsels; *Nick*, the former familiar name of the tankard for liquor. Strictly, then, we were to *Pic*, and the *nick*ing was to be omitted. At least, I have nothing to say of the latter. The rocks whereon we halted for the feast afforded ample room not only to recline while eating, but to dance and make merry should one be inclined, while the more staid and geologically inclined found the flat layers of slaty rock an absorbing object-lesson. There was but a mere rivulet trickling over one edge of the exposure at the time, but every evidence that at no distant day, geologically speaking, a torrent had rushed through the glen and leaped with majestic force over the brink of a precipice hard by. How much more readily

we may recall the past if we have even the slenderest thread holding us thereto! This little rivulet, that one might pass over without seeing, sang no less the wondrous story of the past because it lisped in childish treble, and every utterance was lost if a bird sang or the wind murmured through the hemlocks. It was almost pathetic to see the waters gather their puny strength where the flat rocks abruptly ended and plunge into the deep gorge below. Plunging as if to move the mighty rocks that barred their way, but only to be lost among the broken masses that strewed the dark, tortuous channel of the mountain-brook. No charm was missing because the spot was now so calm. It was a time fitted to contemplate what had been rather than follow the rush of tumultuous activity. I was thankful, for one, that there was no roar of sullen waters to awe, no giddy abyss from which to shrink in fear. Better, by far, the bell-like ripple, cheery as a bird's song, that so gently hinted of the tragic long-ago.

The feast over, we were conducted to the "Ringing Stones," and here grandeur of a wholly different type confronted us. It is hard

to believe that such a spot could fail to arouse interest in the spectator, and yet the fame of these rocks is not far-travelled. Until I saw them to-day I never knew of them, and yet have lived within almost a day's walk of them all my life. In a little woods we found them resting in absolute silence, but not one but responded in deep or gayer tones to the touch of our timid feet. It was wretched walking, but we little thought of danger, as peal after peal rang out, when chosen masses were sharply struck with bits of stone. It was a most strange spot. A veritable crater, from which had bubbled up a molten mass, now cracked into huge angular masses, heaped in the most haphazard way,—

“Crag, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world.”

This rugged, rocky music will not bear transplanting, and rejects a home in any mere fragment such as one might carry away. I am glad of this, for else these massive stones would be stolen by lovers of Wagner. The sound given out, when these masses of crystalline rock are

sharply struck with a metal hammer or a piece of stone, is due not only to the crystalline structure of the rock itself, but to the position in which each mass lies, those having fewest points of contact with the surrounding masses having the clearest and sweetest "voices," as I call them.

As had been true of every other point whereat we had tarried through the day, so here was a spot about which I longed to tarry, and, as in many a melancholy case before, was forced to console myself with the hope that I might come again. The plan of the leader must be followed out, and reluctantly turning from these sweet-tongued rocks, we were soon *en route* for the great feature of the day's excursion, "Top-Rock." This was no outstanding point to be seen from a distance, like a snow-capped peak, and climbed in imagination before its base was reached. To all but the leader it was a matter of faith until the moment it was fairly stepped upon. In fact, it was with some misgiving that a pedestrian tour was undertaken, when, the carriages halting in the dusty highway, the fact that such was necessary was announced. Had I not already seen enough?

was the question asked by more than one. Besides, we were at a cottage-door, and a bubbling spring, with mossy pebbles set about, and a clam-shell cup, tempted too strongly to have faith in stronger things. But we started at last, and never hath a hedge shut in so marvellous a view. As the field was crossed, there was nothing suggestive of other than the lowest lowlands, but we were, in fact, on a long reach of table-land that ended with startling suddenness behind a hedge. A mere fragment of a wood-path was followed, when, without an intimation of what was near, the valley of the Delaware was spread out before us. We stood upon an overhanging cliff, nearly four hundred feet above the water.

These are the Nockamixon Rocks, we were told, and very different the appearance from the summit as compared with that at the base; not that the latter does not merit all that can be said, but here we are above comparative description. These rocks are really a cliff, nearly one mile in length, of the new red sandstone, but do not be misled by this term "new." They are ancient in every sense, and their sheer front facing the east

has borne the brunt of untold centuries of storms. All that is new about them is each succeeding summer's mantle of vine and flower. These, clinging to the narrowest of ledges, and finding root-hold in the shallow cracks, gave rise to much speculation in my mind, for they seemed so unequal to withstanding storms, yet were as luxuriant as the growths in the valley beneath.

We had had an opportunity of comparing man's work with nature, and the little canal at the very base of the bluff was a ludicrous feature of the landscape from where we stood. But the river beyond was in no wise commonplace. It flowed, as of old, serenely past innumerable boulders that fretted its course, but from our point of view there was no evidence of haste or hesitancy; the flow seemingly as calm and unruffled as the wide-reaching landscape and the overarching sky. Heeding only the hills that hemmed it in, as a glistening thread of silver it reached to other scenes the high hills shut from us, and was the dearer to every Rambler for that, miles away, with the same gladsome brightness, it rippled past our homes. How much there is in such a feeling! Not

strangers in a strange land, but at home, whether we wander where the river is but a mountain-brook, or broadens until lost in the sea. This it is that makes, for me, the Delaware something more than

“ A river bare,
That glides the dark hills under,”

and so disputes that

“ There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder.”

Nature never duplicates a birthplace.

We saw few flowers, but abundant evidence that there are many in their season. Finding no trace of the coveted rose-root, I contented myself with fern and purple raspberry. The rose-root has a history. Gray says of it, found “ throughout Arctic America, extending southward to the coast of Maine, *and cliffs of Delaware River.*” Think of a flower that has withstood the changes since the glacial epoch! Here we have it; one that made the garlands of palæolithic maidens. There is archæology gone mad for you!

Of the immediate landscape nothing need be

said. Description, if detailed, is nauseating ; and to be worthily comprehensive who shall dare ? Contemplating a landscape, one naturally drifts towards comparisons, but avoid them sedulously. My companions, to my sorrow, were not like-minded. A fair pedagogue suggested crazy patchwork ! Miles of magnificent valley compared to a bedquilt ! And this, too, from one who is writing a novel. Her words were the one cloud that dimmed the glorious sunshine of a perfect day.

A Day in New Mexico.

COMING, as I had, from the far East, where nature, if seen at all, is viewed from a comparatively near stand-point, it was a novel experience to while away the hours of a sunny day, studying mountains apparently near at hand, yet miles and miles away. As I glanced, for the last time, at the landscape from the car-windows, I planned to wander across the intervening plain to at least the base of a beautiful range of rocky hills that bounded it in one direction; but learning soon after that the proposed goal was twelve miles away, contemplated it, as stated, from afar. Probably I did not lose much, for, protected from the searching sunshine of a New Mexican noontide, it was possible to remain delightfully cool and yet mark the endless changes on the mountains beyond.

The country here is simply a broad, treeless plain, hemmed in, at scattered points, by mountains. Without these the hotel would have seemed

more like a ship at sea, so monotonous are these level stretches of almost barren ground ; but there is endless variety where the hills begin. Against the background of cloudless, deep-blue sky there is traced the most fantastic grouping of tapering points, narrow notches, and that chance accumulation of shapeless sculpture one tries in vain to disentangle. For this reason the outlook never becomes monotonous. Fancy is slow to weary of playing with such building-blocks ; but when she does, it is but a step from form to color, and the magnificence of this is only equalled by the magnitude of the other. The restless chasing of light and shadow across the rugged hill-sides never ceases. What but a moment ago were deep, dark gorges are now sunlit prominences, and the outstanding features that held our gaze so recently have now faded from view. Later, when the long shadows creep slowly across the plain, masses of snowy clouds rest upon every peak. The scene is wholly changed. Mountains and clouds become as one ; a mighty barrier that shuts out the sun.

And now what of the intervening plain ? The soil is very like, if not, pulverized lava, and that

vegetation should exist at all is marvellous. Yet there are bushes that thickly cover the ground, but, if we except the few sickly cotton-woods that have been planted near the dwellings, there are no trees; their place is taken by countless windmills. These are no addition to the landscape, and are made the more hideous from being painted white, and too often spotted and splashed with red and blue. A green windmill would be far less conspicuous, but this color appears to find little favor with the dwellers on this plain. One needs but to tarry here for a few days to learn to love trees, and, indeed, well-nigh every feature of the Atlantic seaboard States.

Without this beggarly show of vegetation there would be no animal life here worth mentioning; but as it is, the plain is far from being deserted. My attention, on leaving the cars, was first called to a few swallows twittering about the railway station; then a dull-gray kingbird perched upon the telegraph-wires, and launched out into the glaring sunshine for huge green beetles, that seemed to replace the house-flies at home. Then, too, there were ravens that flapped lazily over the

long rows of freight-cars, croaking dismally, and, by their presence, adding no charm to the landscape, as do the merry, noisy, cunning crows at home. Of the two birds, I prefer the latter. The raven may figure better in poetry, and its name sound less harshly upon the ear; but for the pleasant purpose of recalling days gone by, or as an object of study, give me the crow. If the ravens at Deming are fair representatives of their race, then the crow is, I believe, a brainier bird.

Strolling about the plain, one other bird attracted my attention continually, and made the place less dreary. It was the black-throated sparrow. Although the voice was harsh and dry, fitting the arid surroundings, there was an assurance in its lame attempts at song that the world here was not utterly desolate. I listened hour after hour to these cheerful birds, fancying there was melody in their attempts at song, and wondering why, when their lines had been cast in such forbidding places, the gift of a sweet voice had not been vouchsafed them. Does the extremely dry atmosphere have to do with it? Not a sound that I heard had that fulness of tone common to

the allied utterances at home. At the limit of my longest stroll I heard a mountain mocking-bird, as it is misnamed in the books, and his was a disappointing song. It was the twanging of a harp of a single string, and that a loose one.

Of skunks, lizards, snakes, and creatures of that ilk I heard much, but my stay was too brief to encounter any; but of the dreaded tarantula I saw much, and, as usual, was disappointed. One would fancy, from what he reads, that this huge spider was a veritable fiend incarnate. If so, it must be at seasons only. They were not so here and now. During the day I could find no trace of them, and it is said that during the dry season they remain in their burrows or under heavy timber, as the floor of the railway platform, but after sundown they made their appearance, and the first impression I received was that no other spider was so very timid. They started at approaching footsteps, were ever disposed to run when approached, and showed fight only when cornered. This seemed to me the more strange, as every person I met held them to be very brave, very fierce, and very poisonous. I could not verify

these assertions, although I did not experiment upon myself as to the effects of their biting. That they can produce a very irritating sore, and the venom, when taken up by the circulation, produces constitutional effects, is unquestionably true, but I do not believe that death ever results directly from their bites. Not fearing the creatures, I watched one in particular, to see what evidences of intelligence it would exhibit. These were not very apparent. It simply realized that it was a prisoner, and made desperate efforts to escape. When teased with a bit of straw or leaf, it made no attempt to bite, but appeared to recognize my finger, although protected by a glove, and gave me several vicious nips, but could not penetrate an ordinary kid glove. I noticed that there was left upon my finger a minute drop of yellow, sticky fluid, after the first and second attempts to bite, but not afterwards, these two efforts seemingly exhausting the contents of the poison-sacs.

No person that I questioned attributed a voice to the tarantula, and I failed to demonstrate that they could make a faint whizzing or whirring sound, but I fancied such was the case. On the

whole, these huge black spiders are disappointing, and would scarcely have received the attention that has been given them were they not superlatively ugly, and mankind naturally afraid of the whole race of Arachnids.

I was sorry to see no tarantula-hawks, as a certain gigantic blue wasp is called. They are formidable-looking creatures themselves, but deserve encouragement as the relentless foe of the dreaded spider. It is said of them: they seem "never to rest a moment, and with tireless energy fly and walk rapidly along the ground, running into every crevice and hole, and examining every suspicious object,—after the dreaded tarantula. The fate of the giant spider when discovered by the hawk is both certain and attended with fascinating horror.

"The winged insect hovers over the victim until it finds a good opportunity to sting. The poison acts in a peculiar manner, the tarantula becoming paralyzed."

The twilight is short at Deming, and when the sun sinks at last behind the distant hills it is quickly night. The birds, unlike many a robin

and thrush at home, have no evening song, and silence, were it not for myriad insects, would brood over the plain. But the crickets are now in their glory, and a sound as of rushing waters fills the air. Its volume increases and diminishes with the fitful breeze that rushes by or lazily toys with the stiff shrubbery that dots the plain. And it matters not if there be moonlight. Except the insects' steady trill, the world was now at rest; hushed, as in deep slumber, albeit the moon overtopped the distant hills and flooded the plain with a mellow light that caused every object to stand out with startling distinctness. Here was a feature unlike our moonlit fields at home. There, the charming indistinctness shrouding every object, even when the sky is cloudless, gives the fancy full play, and a bush or tree is whatsoever we are pleased to think it; but not so here. The plain that was bathed in brilliant sunshine through the day is almost as distinct now; and even the mountains are not less rugged, and every peak pierces the upper air, but with an added glory, for upon each there rest, and over all there twinkle, millions of glittering stars.

Round about Bisbee.

ALTHOUGH I had been for some days sight-seeing from a car-window in New Mexico, and had had more than one good stroll over desert-like prairies, I was not so forcibly impressed with the fact that I was in the far West as when I reached this wonderful Arizona mining region. Then the country back of me was indeed "on East," and I was at last "out West."

Of Bisbee itself there is little to be said. It is gathered together in a little valley, hidden by high hills, and presents no striking feature, as seen from the station, when you leave the cars, or later, as you pass along its single street. The little adobe houses perched upon the hill-sides, however, are somewhat picturesque, and, what is of more importance, very comfortable. It was then—late in July—the rainy season, and from noon until

about sunset the rain is likely to be violent; but during the early morning one may wander over the hills and along the valleys without fear of a wetting.

What had I in view in coming here? was the tiresome question that every miner asked as opportunity afforded; and when assured that it was merely to see new sights and a new country, an expression of doubt was plainly depicted on their countenances. They believed it was not merely to see a new flower or hear a new bird that brought me here. But it was: and now what of the sights and sounds round about Bisbee?

Upon arrival I did not plunge *in medias res*, but looked upon the summits of the highest hills as inaccessible, and revelled in what I called mountain-climbing by scrambling over the near-by rocks. This tested my strength, gave me practice, added to my surefootedness, and so the day of a steep ascent found me equal to the task. We were off by 5 A.M., three of us, with a burro to carry our traps and a small boy to coax the patient donkey over the rocky trail. Our purpose was twofold: to reach the summit, and take photo-

graphs of such objects as struck our fancy. We succeeded admirably.

There was not one familiar feature about or above us from the very start, for even the air and sky were strangely clear, and a soaring eagle that kept long in view seemed almost within gunshot, although circling far above an adjoining mountain; and later, when, following a swift-descending swoop, its impatient scream came floating earthward, we stopped as if the bird was threatening us. So it was that at the very outset the scales dropped from our eyes and our ears were quickened to novel sounds. But no new sound, as a bird's song, is so sure to attract attention as some one that has the subtle charm of association. A curved-billed thrush across the wide valley commenced singing, and at once the mountains vanished. How long I stood in the cool shadow of a thrifty oak I cannot tell, but when from a misty cloud the mountains reappeared, I was quite alone. I had been wandering under the homestead oaks, and for long after their misty outlines stood against the sky.

If a clear atmosphere and high altitude sharpens

one's wits, it may, too, overstrain the nerves and lead to many a blunder, particularly if the spirit of adventure is well upon one. I was in such a plight, and strange indeed if something should not befall me before I joined my party! As I was trudging along alone, every pebble rattling beneath my tread, I fancied some strange creature in my path. Not a crooked stick but suggested a serpent; and so, guarding against imagined dangers, I finally met with a real one: I sat upon a cactus. As a cure for unbridled imagination, I commend it.

To better nurse my countless trivial wounds, I chose a rock for a resting-place, and considered the innumerable fragments of flinty stone that covered the entire hill-side. If color has aught to do with it, I was leaving behind me most tempting specimens of minerals. At almost every step I had been rolling down the hill crystals of many a hue, and dull-colored stone made beautiful by the green, blue, and crimson incrustations that covered them. Many a bit that I picked up and flung away was varied as the rainbow. But, beautiful as were all these, they paled to utter

insignificance when brought in contact with the masses from the heart of the mountain. If one would know how magnificent a mineral may be, how it surpasses even the orchids among flowers, the butterflies among insects, or birds of paradise among birds, let him gather from the mouth of the great copper-mine fragments of the ore as they are ruthlessly dumped upon the ground. When malachite, azurite, and cuprite are seen as I saw them at Bisbee, then one can form some idea of Nature's perfected handiwork. If in the earth's unexplored regions there is awaiting man's coming some yet more magnificent exhibition than the play of sunlight upon clustered crystals, as I found them here, then man should have other senses whereby to appreciate it.

Resuming my journey, I soon overtook my companions, and long before noon reached the summit. It was but a mass of loose, angular rocks, no larger than those that covered the mountain-side, nor more weather-beaten, although it is at such a spot that the clouds literally burst and spend their pent-up fury. This thought in mind, I was surprised to find, scattered between

rock-masses, gray-green, brittle ferns, and one bright, ruddy flower, akin in appearance to our brilliant "painted cup" of the Jersey hills. How they could withstand the fury of the storms that rage thereabout, let some philosopher explain. Insignificant as was the vegetation here, it was equal to the task of holding desolation at bay, and no gloomy thoughts arose as we stood overlooking miles and miles of country. We were perched well aloft, surely, but as a mere speck overhead still floated the eagle that we had seen early in the day. It was a thrilling fancy that the eagle above us might be looking over the Pacific, and, with scarcely an effort, might turn eastward and be over our New Jersey home before we could reach the village at our feet. It was a merit of this day that rapid transit was the rule in all things, and we were never shocked by sudden transition from fancy to fact. From the soaring eagle to the broad-tailed humming-bird was a not unpleasant change, as I had never before seen a living species of this family except the familiar ruby-throat. It came and went, as such birds always do, without our knowledge of the direction

it took, and promised to be quite uninteresting, until at last it spied our dog, and then its ire was excited. With an angry, bee-like whiz it darted to and fro, never actually touching the dog, but very loud in its threatenings as to the constantly-postponed next time. It seemed a more cowardly bird than the Eastern ruby-throat, which makes good its threats, and has been known to strike first and threaten afterwards. Fear of man seemed characteristic of a great deal of the animal life met with on the mountain, and I was not prepared to cope with this difficulty, having expected to find even the birds comparatively tame. Certainly the creatures that still linger in these now treeless mountains are seldom molested, and yet they all were more difficult to approach than allied forms at home. I realized this when a shining-crested flycatcher, that, as I saw it, looked like a black cedar-bird, came within fifty feet, and would permit of no nearer approach. But, thanks to the clear air, where nothing obstructs the sound, and vision is surprisingly acute, I could both see and hear this curious bird with some satisfaction. Its song is very sweet, yet I did not hear the full

range of its melody, as one does who meets the bird during the nesting season. As to the wrens, they were not so bold as the little, brown fellows at home; and so through the whole list of animated nature. Herein lay the one disappointing feature of my mountain-climb.

Over-anxiety for my neck caused my thoughts to centre in my heels on the return, and I saw surprisingly little; so consoled myself with the thought that what my first mountain failed to yield might be the special gift of an adjoining hill; and so it proved.

But to spend hours on a mountain and come back with but one poor weed was too much for the patience of the miners, and I was truly pitied. For once, if not oftener, they had found an unquestionable crank. Very likely. But, then, if a man is not mildly a crank in some one direction, is he not sure to be a nonentity in all?

A Rocky Ramble.

FROM the top of the highest peak, the adjoining mountains look much alike, but it will not do to climb one hill and then judge of the whole range. This may suffice for some purposes, as those of a physical geographer, but will never satisfy the whims of a Rambler bent on close acquaintance with each hill-side's unconsidered trifles.

It has been asked, What is the distinguishing whim of a professional Rambler? It is, I take it, to gather pleasure rather than profit from the world about him. He is supposed to be one free of all definiteness of purpose other than that mentioned. Whether some projecting rock is diorite or dolerite is to him of little moment, but whether it is dull or glistening, bare or covered, becomes a matter of importance. Upon it may depend the measure of his joy as he scans the

landscape. How vividly I recall one long, bare ledge of pale-gray rock, capping the precipitous wall of a deep ravine! As at first seen, it was mere Titanic masonry, but soon I caught a glimpse of one trembling fern fluttering in the fitful breeze. The rocks were changed; they were no longer grand by reason of their desolation, but glorious because of the little fern that clung to them. A fig for the name of the species! That it grew at such a dizzy height and brightened the grim gray wall was fact enough for the rambler. It is sometimes well not to be a botanist. Whether ignoble or not, I always yield to the temptations of aimlessness.

And now let us to the mountain: the hill is not high, but the path is very rough. Whether man was or was not once a creeping animal, it is well that at times he can go upon all-fours; otherwise many a chance to see goodly sights would be lost to him. It was so to-day. Loose rocks could not have been better arranged to prevent our progress,—there were three of us,—and so our satisfaction was increased as we gained, from time to time, a promising outlook. But there were

dangers that could not be overlooked. There is nothing funny in facing a rattlesnake, and to put your hand upon a centipede may stay farther climbing for that day. Even to have a tarantula comb your eyebrows is somewhat of a shock. None of these things happened, but the climb was by no means stupid; and when a great bare rock was reached, whereon we rested, each was eager to narrate his own little adventure. He who first spoke uttered the opinion of all, that probably no one had ever been so foolhardy before as to climb this hill, and the pleasant feelings of the discoverer filled our silly breasts; but only to receive a shock. A clatter as of rolling stones was heard. We looked down the hill, and there was a Mexican walking at his ease, his patient burro following. Conversation ceased and I turned my thoughts into new channels. These Mexican wood-gatherers and their little donkeys or burros did not prove vastly entertaining. They moved along with less animation than the ore-buckets on the tram-way, and recalled the sluggish "Gila monsters," that will wait a week for a rock to roll away rather than go round it. In one case the donkey proved

the more polite of the two, for my salutation, "Good-morning," was met by silence on the part of the man, but the donkey's fifteen inches of ears waved gracefully as the animal passed. Still, sitting on the great flat rock, I watched the man and his donkey as they walked towards the woods above us. Their trained eyes made out a path to which we were blind, and the sole merit of the Mexican was his ease in stepping from stone to stone without pausing to look at the loose rocks before him. Soon he passed out of sight and out of mind, leaving us to the hill-side, which we had fondly supposed no others would be rash enough to visit. It is something to have neighbors, even if the mere knowledge of their existence meets every need.

Except a solitary bird, at long intervals, or butterflies that we brushed from blooming cacti, there was no evidence of animal life upon this rugged hill-side; but when we were quietly perched upon the roomy rock and made no pronounced demonstration, many a creature that had been startled by our strange appearance as we scrambled upward, came one by one in view. It was

the old story. We had been watched at every step, as is every noisy rambler in Eastern woods when he fancies himself alone. As an illustration: our presence was held not unsafe to them by a pair of huge gray squirrels, after some consultation upon their part, and, while in full view, they warned every creature not to come too near, by barking as loudly and as lustily as a peevish terrier. It became tiresome at last, and I innocently threw a stone at them. Here my ignorance cropped out again. The stone fell so far short of the squirrels that they were not aware of my murderous design. They were quite a quarter of a mile away, perhaps farther, and yet their every movement was plainly seen, and I fancied I could hear their chattering, meant for themselves only. It is not strange, in such an atmosphere, that timid animals should be rarely seen. A man's approach would be signalled by his footsteps when almost a mile away, and every unfamiliar sound would put an animal on the alert. Certainly many a one could discriminate, too, between clumsy Easterners like ourselves and that machine-like Mexican that just passed.

It was here that I saw my first centipede, a shiny, brown creature, that rested in a crevice of the rock. It did not suggest "melancholy ferocity,"—I quote the "Encyclopædia Britannica,"—and if possessed of such poisonous fangs, why should it be so cowardly? A slight movement on my part, after I had discovered it, caused it to disappear instantly. No animal, I take it, ever moved more rapidly, not even a humming-bird. Here is the puzzling feature of this uncanny beast. For long it had been resting in this sunny crevice, and had, of course, seen us, and—may I add?—saw that we did not see it. If this startling suggestion is true, it ascribes a deal of wit to a centipede; and the longer I take note of the creatures about me, the more I am inclined to exalt their mental status. We often see such actions on the part of birds and mammals, and, too, of snakes. They are swayed by conflicting emotions,—curiosity and fear,—and while the latter usually gets the upper hand in time, it is not always so. Why a centipede, several inches long, feared by all creatures, even by man, should be so extremely shy, is a difficult problem to solve. If they have wit

enough to act as I hold did this one to-day, they need scarcely trouble themselves about possible enemies before an attack is made.

There was more upon this hill to attract a botanist than upon those previously climbed. One sprawling, prickly weed was very common, and conspicuous by reason of its handsome blossoms. These were snowy white, with a deep golden centre, and contrasted admirably with the light-green leaves of the plant. Again, there were tangled mats of vine-like growth, bearing numerous narrow leaves, and many a huge trumpet-shaped flower, also purely white, but with a rich purple throat. These, with other less conspicuous bloom, relieved the monotony of bare rocks and brown earth; but a far more striking feature was the growth of mistletoe on the mountain-oaks. I had long been familiar with this parasite on the gum-trees of Southern New Jersey, and in Kentucky, along the Ohio River, but nowhere does it grow in greater luxuriance than in this corner of Arizona. Nor does it seem to have the same blighting effect that marks its progress on our Eastern trees. Upon one oak, well down in the valley, I

counted eleven bunches, each as large as a bushel-basket, yet the tree showed no symptoms of decay.

Having rested long enough to forget our several aches and pains, it was without misgiving that the descent was undertaken; but as the upward climb was laborious, it followed, in our fancy, that the downward progress would be very easy. Not a bit of it. There was no stone that did not threaten to roll as we touched it, and many carried out their threats at the most inopportune moment. How quickly and how often I sat down! And then, when well-nigh discouraged, we heard footsteps behind us, and, looking backward, saw that morose Mexican with his burro. How deftly they picked their way; how stately the tread of that swarthy mountaineer! He did not deign to glance at us; and even if we had been helpless, would doubtless have passed us by. But that little burro! His ears alone were plainly visible, and by them we knew him. His burden made him not less polite, and again the long ears waved gracefully as he passed. That this animal could bear up under two great bundles of crooked

sticks, each as large as the creature's body, and, withal, walk down a steep hill covered with loose stones,—this was the most marvellous of the many strange sights I witnessed. But I was in part on the same errand, and strove to learn a lesson from this patient donkey. I followed closely at his heels, watching every movement. Unfortunately, I have but two legs and the donkey rejoiced in four, and that I should imitate successfully with two limbs the movements of a quadruped was not to be expected. How, when, where, and why I threw my legs about I cannot now recall, but at last my antics caused both the Mexican and his burro to halt, and I sat down upon a jagged rock utterly bewildered. After that it was a matter of careful climbing, with but here and there an occasional step upon some kindly level ledge; and so, without serious mishap, the valley road was reached, with, I trust, a proper feeling of thankfulness. I have said, "without serious mishap," but this bears reference to my body only. I was still in distress. Into what strange shapes my clothes had been converted, and how freely the passing breeze swept through them! Now that I

was upon level ground, I recalled that I had been stoutly shod at the outset; but now the soles of my shoes were as loose box-lids. Was it strange, as I entered the village, that many miners laughed?

An Arizonan Hill-side.

MY many questions caused me to be set down as a "tender-foot" the moment I reached a certain mining-camp in Southern Arizona. Amusement or disgust was depicted upon the countenance of every miner that I questioned, and both, in one unhappy instance, when I asked if the San Pedro River was an irrigation ditch. This blunder demonstrated that I had all to learn, and from that moment I pursued a course of quiet investigation.

Of mining-camps in general nothing need here be said. Probably this particular one has no distinctive feature. Let it suffice that the surroundings, and not the camp, called me so far from home, and it was to them that I turned as soon as possible. Out of the village there was but one of two things for the rambler to do: to follow this or that tortuous valley, or climb to some one

of the innumerable hills, as anything akin to a prairie was beyond easy walking-distance.

I reached Bisbee at noon, July 8, and climbed a high hill early the next morning.

There is a never-failing charm in turning into new paths; to have opened to you a new vista; to enter for the first time the bounds of a new territory. Fatigue is set at defiance. One's old self slinks into the background. We are mentally born again. What though the region was here a desert, so long had it been since a refreshing rain had fallen. The oaks were brave of heart and held their leafy crowns aloft, cacti were in bloom, birds sang, butterflies flitted in the brilliant sunshine, and snow-white clouds floated from peak to peak of the distant mountains. At last I was in a wilderness, with not a familiar object about me, and it was with honest pleasure that I handled rocks, plants, and many a living creature of which I knew not the name. It was sufficient merely to recognize their position in the grand scheme of organic nature.

For long there had been no rain, and the first impression was that of wonder that so great a

variety of animals should choose so arid a region, when capable of migrating to others more inviting. Here were birds in abundance, nesting in scattered oaks, and finding abundant food-supply among the heated rocks and repellent cacti. It is true, I was told that the rainy season should have commenced before this, and that the birds simply anticipated the coming change; but could they not have waited for it? In the East we certainly associate abundance of animal life with the constant presence of water, and never an upland field so teeming with creatures of every kind as the low-lying marshes with their ranker vegetation. The river valleys within reach of these Arizonan hills have not much to commend them: still, that they were not over-crowded, and the hills deserted, was a surprise; the more so that Professor Henshaw, our authority on the ornithology of this region, states that this over-crowding near water commonly occurs. However, here among the uplifted rocks were the birds and a goodly company of less prominent creatures, to which I turned again and again, notwithstanding the grandeur of the landscape spread before me.

The cactus-wren, because of its close kinship to the dear wrens of the homestead door-yard, but more by reason of its own merits, held me long, and it will ever be a mystery how this restless bird thridded the maze of spiny branches that baffled all my efforts to follow it. That it could dart through the tangled branches of a stag-horn cactus without a wound is simply miraculous, and do this, too, when pursued; rushing with reckless haste from a supposed enemy. Possibly it was pricked now and then, but if its feathers were ever ruffled, not so its temper; and often, when the fates seemed most against it, this bird would perch between thorns of dangerous lengths and sing with that whole-souled ardor that should cause faint-hearted folk to blush. If ever a little foot-sore, and you long to return to the smoothened pathway of the village street, pray for the cactus-wren to find you out. Never a blue-devil so brave as to listen to that bird's song.

There were other creatures on the hill-side that merit our attention, and I would that I had weeks instead of minutes to devote to them. Lizards and skinks are well-nigh countless; but not, too,

the snakes, which fact I deplored. It was not so long ago that the lively lizards in New Jersey pine barrens had given me much to do to gain some insight into their life-history, and now I recalled each time, place, and circumstance, as these same animals darted over the rocks and between the scattered cacti. The surroundings were not dissimilar: was there any peculiarity of habit? I could detect none. The lizards were as swift, but still a little strategy enabled me to capture them with my hands, and they straightway became tame, as had proved the case in the East, while the wary skinks defied all my efforts to capture them, and even when badly wounded by bird-shot, bit me savagely,—an Eastern experience also. Let him who will attempt to explain why these animals, with essentially the same habits, and constantly associated, differ in this one respect of temper. In New Jersey the skink is a solitary animal, and lives in hollows of old trees, often twenty, thirty, or fifty feet from the ground,—locations the common lizard seldom visits,—which may or may not explain the difference of temper of the two animals; but here, on this Arizonan

hill-side, the same rocks and cacti sheltered both. They basked upon the same sunlit surfaces, often in actual contact; they fed upon the same food, and took refuge in the same safe harbors when pursued; but in every instance it held good that the lizard was amiable and the skink otherwise. I fancied a score of reasons for this while on the spot, but have no foundation upon which to rest any one of them, even for superficial investigation.

A merit of such a stroll as this of to-day is that one must keep moving. To sit long in the same spot where rocks are rugged and loose wearies far more quickly than a constant change of position, and with this change is endless novelty. It needed but half a turn of the head to catch winning glimpses of a new world. From the wriggling centipede at my feet, which delighted me by reason of its graceful movements, to some distant mountain, wrapped in rosy clouds, was a bold leap, but one that the mountain Rambler has constantly to make. However vividly an object impressed itself upon me, be it one at hand or many a mile away, I was never so occupied as to be too late for something new; and why regret such aimless

wandering? If I learned little, I enjoyed much, and these are vacation days. But does one learn so little when method is left in the lurch? There is at such a time a deal of unconscious cerebration, and the most trivial incident of a mountain, tramp, when recalled, stands out in boldest outline and has far more significance than we supposed. I shall not need to turn to the photographs that my companions took to see the landscapes that were spread out before me, and I doubt not but that in years to come, when wandering about the fields at home, I will have their familiar birds and plants bring vividly before me incident after incident that at the time made but the faintest impression upon me. It has proved so heretofore, and I look for its repetition in the future. We learn much, if we but desire to learn, without making further effort. It adds a bright leaf to memory's volume to walk over a mountain.

The day is well advanced, and what of the landscape that I have so frequently mentioned? Who shall dare describe it? If it needs a lifetime to fathom the secrets of a single hill, what can be said, after a few hours, of scores of mountains

clustered about you? It is well to be passive rather than active when among them, and accept what they offer rather than be importunate. One can seldom anticipate their lesson of the day, but it is never one not worth the learning. When I gazed at their wrinkled fronts, deaf to the birds and blind to the flowers about me, the initial thought was that of their unchangeableness. Nature is here at rest, if anywhere. Peak after peak, ridge beyond ridge, valley after valley; a troubled ocean, motionless. But such a thought was scarcely crystallized before it dissolved. A cloud passed betwixt the sun and the hills, and every one was set in motion. What mighty magic lurked in that single shadow! As well, now, try to catch the contour of a troubled wave as single out one of the hundred hills before me. What but the moment before typified eternal rest was now the embodiment of the poetry of motion. Such massive clouds, hung in so blue a sky, and casting such shadows, are common to few places, and here their glory is supreme. It is little wonder, then, that the mountains were thrilled by that shadow's gentle touch.

In a Sea-side Forest.

IT too often happens in these latter days that a suggestive name proves sadly disappointing. We look in vain for the attractive features the mind pictured, and have good cause to criticise the unbridled imagination of forerunning visitors. Fortunately, a recent ramble had no such painful ending. I had heard of a wild-wood, and since have found it. *

Clustered trees, though there be many, do not of themselves make a forest. Many a woodland tract is as uniform as a cornfield, or, at best, but indefinite duplication of the trees along a village street. If the rambler merely seeks the shade, then one tree is sufficient, and perhaps an umbrella is even an improvement, seeing we can plant it where we choose. But now I had found a wild-wood in the fullest sense of that suggestive phrase.

Here variety ruled, and only the choicest of Nature's handiwork had foothold. Think of it! Century after century Nature had had full sway, and turned out a finished piece of work. Every sense is charmed; eye, ear, and nose are alike regaled; the sense of touch delighted. Perfect trees to look upon; the birds' songs and the moaning of the sea to hear; the bloom of a thousand roses to smell; the carpeted sand to lie upon. Yet, where all was nearing perfection, there stood out one grand feature overtopping all else,—scores of magnificent hollies. I had seen many of these trees before, but never where they gave a distinct character to the woods. Elsewhere they occur in clumps of three or four, or perhaps a dozen, but here, on an island by the sea, there are hundreds. One that I measured was sixty-eight inches in circumference and forty feet high. The pale-gray trunk was well mottled with curious black lichen, and among the branches drooped long tresses of beard-like lichen. The pathless wood about it was a most fit surrounding, the abundant birds its appropriate comrades, the murmur of the sea the music to which its branches gently swayed. To

be able to throw oneself on a moss-carpeted sand dune and gaze upward at such a tree is abundant recompense for miles of weary walking.

But this little nook was not the whole wild-wood, and every tree was worthy of description. I would that I could write the history of a tree: the stories of these hollies would pass for fairy tales.

Irregularities in tree-growth are nowhere unusual features of a forest, but here the hollies are, or have been, on the lookout to break away from all restraint and become as wayward as possible. Here is one that has twirled about until now the trunk is a gigantic corkscrew; and not far off, another and larger tree has branched some ten feet from the ground, and then the two main divisions of the trunk have been reunited. A modification of this, where a stout limb has returned to the parent stem and re-entered, making "jug-handles," is a common occurrence, and, more marvellous still, a venerable cedar has some of its outreaching branches passing not merely into, but entirely through huge hollies that stand near by. Evidently the cedar here is the older tree and the

hollies have grown around the now imprisoned branches. And, as if not content with such irregularities as these, other hollies have assumed even animal-like shapes; the resemblance in one instance to an elephant's head and trunk being very marked. Even the stately and proper-grown hollies have their trunks incased in strangely wrinkled barks, suggestive of a plastic mass that has suddenly hardened.

Why all this irregularity I leave to others. There was no patent explanation for him who ran to read, and I was puzzled at the outset to know in what direction to commence guessing. This is an entertainment, when idling in the woods, the rambler should not despise. Our best outings are when we wear other head-gear than a thinking-cap. So far as the crooked hollies are concerned, it will be time enough next winter to muse over the conclusions of the botanist.

Equally startling in such wonderland is it to see a thrifty blueberry bush growing from the trunk of a tree, so high in the air that you need a ladder to reach it. This bush annually bears a full crop of excellent fruit. That I am at last in a bit of

Jersey's primeval forest there is little doubt. Had an elk darted by, or a mastodon screamed, it would hardly have been surprising. This not seriously, of course; but how promptly the present vanishes in such a wood; how vividly the past is pictured before us! Everywhere towering trees bearing evidence of age, and early in the day I found myself face to face with a huge cedar, dating back at least to the Norsemen, who it is thought reached America, if not the New England coast. Here was a tree that for centuries the Indians had known as a landmark.

It is a mistake to suppose that old trees do not remain in almost every neighborhood, for an old tree is not of necessity a big one. A dwarf will wrinkle and crook as surely as a giant. In many a swamp there are gnarly hornbeams that date back at least two centuries, and grape-vines are known that are even older. It is common to consider as old every object that has rounded out a single century, but this is nothing uncommon in tree-growths, and even some shrubs. Many a wild growth, if undisturbed, becomes practically permanent, and I am positive any number of in-

significant growths in the undrained swamps and plough-defying meadows date back to Penn's treaty, and even earlier. There is a familiar lilac hedge, or part of it, within the bounds of my ordinary rambles, planted by my grandfather in 1804, and so, in a dozen years, will be a hundred years old; but it looks nothing different from similar hedges planted fifty years ago. The old cedar in the lane was but eighteen inches in diameter, and I have documentary evidence that it was a familiar landmark much more than a century ago. A thunderbolt or tornado recently shivered the old tree beyond recognition, literally reduced it to splinters, and I found that the heart was very much decayed. There was no possibility of determining the age by counting the rings of growth shown in a cross section, and so I have but the poor satisfaction of merely conjecturing. At one place a narrow bit of the outer edge was smooth, and I counted forty-eight rings, one for each year of my life, and these had added but little to the tree's girth.

But here, at Wildwood Beach, is a cedar almost twelve feet in circumference,—considerably more

than double that of the cedar in the lane. There is no reason to consider that its growth has been forced by peculiarly favorable conditions. It is simply a magnificent example of what a tree may become if a fair chance is shown it. I have suggested that the tree may be nearly or quite one thousand years old, and I believe it. Peter Kalm, when wandering in the Jersey wilderness in 1749, noticed the cedars carefully, and mentions the fact of "very slow growth; for a stem thirteen inches and a quarter in diameter had one hundred and eighty-eight rings, or annual circles, and another, eighteen inches in diameter, had at least two hundred and fifty, for a great number of the rings were so fine that they could not be counted."

Of course, much of the beauty of this huge, lone, sea-side cedar is lost in being so hemmed in by other growths, and it is a startling fact that, if the rambler was not very open-eyed, he might pass it by unheeded. Think of what wealth of wonders are in every wood, and that so few persons find them: what a staggering array of marvels in a forest laid bare!

I would that Kalm, whom I have just quoted,

had taken in the Jersey coast as well as Jersey inland. He would have found more to praise and less to criticise. His remark, "the rattlesnakes, horned snakes, red-bellied, green, and other poisonous snakes . . . are in great plenty here," would never have been written of the coast, and, in truth, did not apply to the Delaware valley, where he wrote the above. In all probability rattlers were never very numerous, the horned snake is a myth, and all others harmless. And to all these demerits of dear Jersey, Kalm adds another: "To these I must add," he writes, "the wood-lice, with which the forests are so pestered that it is impossible to pass through a bush without having a whole army of them on your clothes, or to sit down, though the place be ever so pleasant." While in much, to my mind, the world has moved backward, it has improved in this. I have passed through many bushes, and sat down often, but never with so inconvenient a result.

Why this luxuriant vegetation on a sandy island by the sea? The soil suggests barrenness only. Except the faint traces of decayed vegetation, it is a matter of pure white sand. It is known that

the land along the Jersey coast is sinking, and we naturally look for a stratum of loam, once well above but now below or at the level of the sea. This, in our fancy, we hold necessary for timber growth; but if it is here at all, these trees' roots have not reached it. It is strange that such huge growths can find safe anchorage in these light and shifting sands. They have found some strength in union and close companionship, it is true; but, though they are built on a sandy foundation, the storms have not prevailed to their detriment even. Whence the trees' nourishment? Largely from the atmosphere: but why speculate? Suffice it to say, that, were we to take these same trees and shrubs inland and set them in pure silica, though Paul planted and Apollos watered never so carefully, there would be no increase.

The undergrowth, too, is everywhere equally luxuriant and gives a semi-tropical appearance to the landscape, this feature being emphasized by the vigor of vine growths that bind together the tallest trees and unite many an oak, cedar, and holly standing scores of feet apart. We are forced to smile nowadays when we read the glowing

accounts of America's earliest visitors, and wonder how it was possible that they should have been so deceived; but the truth dawns upon me when I recall these early writers and see the wondrous conditions obtaining on this sea-side island. The least that can be truthfully said is rather a description of Florida than of New Jersey, and would give no true idea of the State as a whole.

This little island, I take it, is a relic of old New Jersey: this forest a living fragment of that now buried one, not far away, which has "given rise to a singular industry,—the literal mining of timber. At several points . . . enormous quantities of white cedar, liquidambar, and magnolia logs, sound and fit for use, are found submerged in the salt marshes, sometimes so near the surface that roots and branches protrude, and again deeply covered with smooth meadow sod. Many of the trees overthrown and buried were forest giants. In the great cedar swamp . . . the logs reach a diameter of four, five, and even seven feet, and average between two and three feet in thickness."

In one case, one thousand and eighty rings of annual growth have been counted; and under this

huge stump was discovered a prostrate tree, which had fallen and been buried before the larger one had sprouted. This lower-lying log was determined to be fully five hundred years old. Here, then, is evidence of fifteen centuries that have elapsed, and forests even before then had grown, flourished, and decayed. It is a series of surprises to dig into such strange earth. Think of passing through an underground cedar swamp and coming upon magnolias and sweet-gum still deeper down! What if there were tongues in such trees? Here is a spot whereat a poet might dwell to his and the world's advantage. Not all the grandeur of the world centres in the sea or rests upon a mountain. There are other beauties than those of a spreading landscape or a rocky gorge; a strange, peculiar beauty, worthy of a poet, clings to every trunk and broken branch of this sunken sea-side forest.

When we consider that for miles at sea, as we stand upon the present beach, we are looking upon waters that cover what was once, and not so very long ago, dry and habitable land, we can better realize the one-time conditions of this region when

primitive man threaded the mazes of the primeval forest. Dr. Lockwood has told us of masses of peat and vegetable growth cast ashore during storms, and of a mastodon tooth that had long been buried in a swamp, and yet came from the bottom of the sea, waves breaking now where but a few centuries ago a forest had withstood the tempest's fury. Was man here then? How constantly this question comes to mind when we recall the past! One cannot reasonably doubt it, and it never would have been a debatable matter had not ignorance declared man's recent creation, and that our continent's quota of humanity had to force the ice-barriers of Siberia and Behring's Strait, and so finally reach the Atlantic coast of America. Happily, such nonsense is forever downed.

While, the island over, I found not even an arrow-head, yet other traces of early man were not wanting; traces contemporaneous with the buried swamps at sea and hidden forests on the mainland. I refer to submerged shell-heaps. These are now a feature of the marshes, and would be puzzles, indeed, were it not that they rest upon

hard-pan, and so were started upon what was then dry land. Now, the marsh has grown about them to a depth of several feet, and not far from the dark holly forest, wherein I am now resting, there is a long, narrow deposit of broken and burnt shells that is not exposed even at low tide. One need not fear that his fancy will run riot in picturing that early time when the broad marsh and shallow bay were scenes of human industry of a most primitive kind. While the gathering of shell-fish, for both immediate and future needs, was kept up by the Indians into historic times, it must not be concluded that the remains of their feasting are all comparatively modern and offer no differences among themselves.

These Indian shell-heaps or "kitchen-middens" vary considerably in one particular, some containing traces of Indian art in its highest development; others have little else than a few broken and battered stone hammers. This might be explained if there was no evidence of antiquity of a geological character; but this exists, and a very superficial tabulation of these shell-heaps, scattered over a few square miles of territory,

showed that those most deeply buried in the marshes contained no pottery or evidence of skilfully-worked stone, while those that are still above the water-level do contain elaborately-wrought implements. Further, here, as elsewhere, I doubt not, if careful sections of the most extensive of these shell deposits could be made, their bases would show a lower stage of primitive art than is found near their surfaces. And what of the shell-heaps that have been washed away? Thousands of acres of habitable land have been engulfed. If this was forested, as is the little island over which I now wander, what a paradise for primitive man!

To turn aside, when a wonderful forest is at hand, and the ocean not a mile away, to consider Nature's commonplaces, may startle or even disgust; but for me there is a never-ending charm in the meandering meadow-mice that I cannot withstand. I found them on the margin of the marshes, lively as ever on the home-pastures, but here, how big, noisy, and rusty-coated they are! I scarcely knew them as bay-side dwellers; yet the most inveterate species-monger would hardly say they were not the same. They seemed to be

considerably more aquatic, and when they stood erect and squeaked shrilly, they recalled the shy woodchucks when raiding a field of clover. It is safe to presume that the superabundance of food has to do with their plumpness, and possibly the brine has reddened their fur. What do they eat? I had no means of determining, for every one kept beyond my reach, and possibly dissection of a dozen victims would have thrown no light on the subject. To question the old baymen was a loss of time. As if they had nothing to do but look after mice. At last, however, I got this piece of information, if it was not an attempt to humbug. He said, "They go crabbin' on the ma'sh at low tide." Whether this means that they are on the mud-flats at that time, and so associated with certain crustacea, or are really in pursuit of them, others must determine. Not one—and I saw several—went crabbing while I lingered on the "ma'sh." There were spidery crabs enough to feed all the mice in Jersey, and all the world knows these rodents are carnivorous as cats, in spite of their teeth. I have never had a caged mouse or squirrel that had not a pronounced

fondness for meat, and the fresher and bloodier the better.

In early summer there is one source of animal food in abundance: the eggs and newly-hatched young of the clapper-rails. These birds are phenomenally abundant now, their *kek-kek-kek* rattling over the meadows until the whole marsh trembles. That mice feast upon their eggs seems to me the more probable, because in the mucky meadow at home the king-rail has the same creature to contend with. Is it safe upon such data to come to any conclusion? I have never seen a mouse with a mud-hen's egg, but I have found this same animal rioting in a king-rail's nest, and so infer as stated.

It is among the marvels of nature that any bird should nest upon the ground; their common-sense should warn them, but does not. Probably in a wide marsh of a thousand acres or more the clapper-rails or mud-hens are comparatively safe; but not so in the upland mucky meadows. I have king-rails every year nesting at my elbow, as it were, and every year suffering from mice, minks, and snapping-turtles. How many generations are

needed to bring about an inherited suspicion of such exposed places? That beautiful bird, the least bittern, too, will make a nest where every cow can brush it with its tail or trample it to pieces; and yet, in spite of all possible dangers, the young reach maturity and in due season repeat their parents' blunders.

The sea-side and the upland marshes had other features in common: there were plenty of tuneful sparrows. Their voices were not the same, but so far alike that I had but to shut my eyes when the sea-side finches sang and hear the sweet ripple of song that quivers above the meadows at home. Could I not do this, travel would have no pleasure.

The raccoon, I was told, is another lover of the marsh, and dweller in the thick-set holly woods. I saw none, very naturally, because they are too wise to brave the daylight, and only the equipped hunter is likely to meet with them at night. Still, they are known to be abundant. That they go crabbing is beyond question; and again comes up a comparison with the meadows at home. I have had recent convincing evidence that the raccoon is

fond of crayfish, and not only knocks down the towers, but digs out the tunnel-nest of the mud-dwelling *Cambarus diogenes*. Occasionally, it would seem, the raccoon ventures abroad before sundown. I was told of one that started from the mainland in broad daylight, but did not reach the holly forest. Wide-awake gulls spied him and reported his presence. They darted upon him as he crouched in the grass, and severely nipped him with their cruel beaks, time and again. Finally, a fisherman, seeing the commotion, hurried to the spot and divided the spoils with the gulls, keeping the lion's share.

"As the sands of the sea:" how often we hear it! and it is one of a few expressions equal to all occasions. Here were attractions equally as numerous, and every one worthy of our whole attention. But the day was drawing to a close, and I had the long shadows in mind that dimmed the sun's glare upon the beach. Across lots through the woods was but a step, and in all its summer glory glittered the broad Atlantic. What a quick transition! Here, literally joining hands, a sea-side forest and the boundless ocean.

A Cool, Gray Day.

THERE is many a pat phrase that comes to mind, particularly when, on pleasure bent, we stand at the portal of the out-door world. It matters not whether we go to meet the sun upon the upland lawn, or thread the misty by-paths of a lonely valley, the initial thought will come with effort on our part, and, what is of greater significance, will color all thought throughout the day. When I reached the river this morning, and took a comprehensive glance of the world about me, this thought was uppermost: a cool, gray day. And although it is yet early in August, every moment has been tempered with the breath of autumn; every outlook that of fulfilment.

It was a cool, gray day, and with nothing so prominent as to suggest an outing. No nook or corner had put its best foot forward and beckoned

to the doubting pedestrian to come. The fringe of forest that hems in the river was asleep. The unresting tide flowed by in sullen silence and passed the rocky shore without a ripple. The purple spires of the pickerel-weed scarcely bent to

the current of the outflowing water, and the tangled ribbon-grass that at each succeeding moment came more and more to view, moved so slowly that even it seemed weary. Silence rested upon the scene. The summer's work was finished,

the harvest ended, the whole earth rested. It was fitting rather to pause and count our gains and losses than consider some new venture. Aught that savored of real labor was repugnant this cool, gray day. It was with an effort that I roused myself to contemplate a sleeping beauty. There was an unbroken gray sky above; a mile-wide expanse of gray water before me, and banks of pearly mist shut out all but the nearest trees on the main shore. As to an island opposite, there was that dreamy indistinctness about it that made it possible to fancy all things as one voyaged thither. But an island is but a main shore on a smaller scale, and why hasten towards it? The river is, at least, hospitably inclined to-day, and not so much as hints at buffeting my frail canoe, and in it, if not so swiftly, almost as airily as the swallows, I drift with the tide.

The swallows to-day are not the aerial creatures of early summer. They fly so closely to the water now their wings seem actually to touch it. I see that they snap from the surface such insects as have fallen, as well as those spidery imps that run between the ripples. Except these, I can

see no insect life whatever, and yet hundreds of tireless swallows are passing to and fro incessantly. Their activity demands an enormous supply of food, and, were it not here, the birds would not be. Sitting so closely to the water's surface, there is every chance to observe closely whatsoever is transpiring, and how different is the outlook from the ordinary point of view, as one sits bolt upright in an ordinary boat! Nothing now is clearly familiar; while to bring about still greater novelty, it is necessary only to bend over quite to the water, and so reverse the relative positions of earth and sky. It is a quick way of transporting yourself to another country; but do not try this when in a canoe; it may lead to other conditions being reversed. But the swallows: they are marvellously tame. A more innocent and harmless bird cannot be imagined, and yet I confess, to sit helpless in a canoe and have them come directly towards your eyes with the speed of a bullet is not a pleasant sensation. We do not like to be forced to wink or to toss the head suddenly to one side. There may have been no danger of an accident; there was none; but I felt the wind from

their wings as they suddenly turned aside and heard that whish! that means mischief when a collision does occur.

Later, there was another feature of bird-life over the river and high overhead that spoke more eloquently of the dying summer than did the skimming swallows: the blackbirds were already flocking. In little companies of a dozen or more the grakles flew by from shore to shore, and then a great gathering of red-wings went hurrying westward. Not merely passing from near-by point to point, but journeying to some new meadows they had in mind, or wending their way to another river valley. A flock of blackbirds is a familiar feature of an October landscape, but in August it is sadly suggestive. For the birds at least there has come a change of season, and the merry nesting days, the flowery upland thickets, the heyday of grassy meadows when the year was young,—all is now but a memory.

I would that those who for some vague reason or through ignorance deny birds a language in the ordinary acceptation of that term, and who deny them everything else that cannot be squeezed

into the cramped category of instinct, could witness the initial steps of the formation of a flock. The scales would drop from their eyes. One of the most wonderful of all the common incidents of bird-life is when two small flocks merge into one. Having met, they discuss the matter. Sometimes they unite, and when so, upon signal, every individual rises into the air at the same moment, there is a brief circling about and their ranks are closed. It is a beautiful manœuvre. But it sometimes happens that the small flocks, or one of them, prefers to preserve its autonomy, at least for the present. There may be much discussion, but no quarrelling, and the matter is soon dropped. I have used the word "discussion," for this alone correctly describes what transpires in such cases. To use any other word, unless a synonyme, or to offer any other explanation is to mislead.

To take to a canoe is to become aquatic. With the wild life of the waters at your elbow, you become one with it, and the little fishes in the weedy shallows accept you as a companion now, when they would dart in terror were the shadow of your whole body to darken the water. There is

an advantage over being in an ordinary boat, or else it was these fishes were phenomenally tame. Diminutive billfish or silvery gars were sporting in the little pool-like shadows above half-emerged leaves, and seemed to be feeding even when the water was clear as crystal. The microscope must be brought into play to tell the whole story. Small as they were, these billfish had much of the apparent spirit of fun that animates the adult. They darted off at a tangent in the most eccentric manner, and then, demurely returning to some favorite spot, would vary the play by spinning around in a brief circle, precisely as a kitten chases its own tail. With minnows proper and the young of other fishes they associated to some extent, but not so as to suggest companionship.

From the shallow waters to the shore; from the canoe to the dry land; a putting aside of the paddle and taking up the pedestrian's staff. I will not admit that the change was pleasant; enough that it was necessary. But no landsman, when in the country, should be melancholy. Here on the island was green grass, enriched with the purple and gold of *mimulus* and *hypericum*; and how

strangely beautiful were the spires of bloom of the pontederias, now nearly a foot beneath the surface of the water! It was a flower-garden for the fishes, and when their silvery sides flashed in the light among the purple blossoms of the pickerel-weed, there was then and there a brightness that contrasted with the cool, gray day of the outer world. But before wandering long, I find color, and in such abundance and brilliancy that the day needs nothing else to warm the cool shadows. Along the water's edge, where other growths hold back that they may shed their glory freely, stand in unbroken ranks the lusty stalks of lobelia, weighted with scarlet banners. Even the fresh young summer had nothing to equal this, and here present joy holds us rather than sober retrospection. All effort seems to have fallen short, however bright the season's earlier blossoms. Not until now have we seen the crowning effort of nature's artist. Does there occur anywhere throughout this wide world a more brilliant spectacle than masses of scarlet lobelia in the height of bloom?

There came no cheerful flood of mellow light

as the day closed. It was cool and gray even to the end, but the roof of clouds was not leaky, and no happiness was dampened. It is not to love sunshine less to learn as years roll by that other light may lead us, and nature has many a charming offering for those who not only wander on a cool, gray day, but venture even into the blackness of night.

An August Reverie.

UZ GAUNT remarked to me, many years ago, "I never saw the critter, but there's a bird that whistles 'wait a bit' at sunrise, and the day counts for nothing if you listen." To escape the ensnaring charm of this strange bird, start before daylight. Even in so light a matter as an August day-dream, keep the day behind you. Then, too, no one loves to be crowded, and there is more room ahead of time than behind it.

This is the way in which Zadkiel, the English astrologer, forecasts the character of this August day: "Travel and visit thy friends." Not all of my friends are asleep at 3 A.M., if, so be it, we have cultivated the good graces of our non-human neighbors. As I left my home, the harvest-moon, in filmy drapery, still held court, and the morning star shone with darkest midnight's deepest bril-

liancy. It was friendship enough to have them light our path, and while yesterday was a memory and to-morrow but vague expectation, the woods and waters, meadows and fair fields awaited the Rambler.

Says Zadkiel, "Travel and visit thy friends." It is well to do this in the order given: travelling first, for only too vividly the Rambler recalls the torrid noontides of this ripened season; recalls what time

"The sun, from meridian height,
Illumines the depths of the sea;
And fishes, beginning to sweat,
Cry——"

Well, let their excusable profanity go unrecorded. It is enough to know that long before noonday wild life, as a whole, will gladly seek the shade, leaving the world to parched weeds and fiery dragon-flies. And so, having travelled while the day was new, your friends will be gathered in the shady nook in which you take refuge.

So ran my anticipatory thoughts as I wormed my way along the village street, and what now of

the outer world that offers such varied attractions? Let no thought of discovery creep in. It is August, and a time of rest. If it will, let the morning breeze transport you, or, better, drift with

the tide. Be gay as a butterfly, but only in butterfly fashion. Do not be serious. Close your ears if a bird scolds. Laugh your loudest when the robin announces dawn.

I have been drifting in the canoe for an hour and the east grows gray. Afar off, there is the half-uttered note of a sleepy bird that dies upon the river. I have to be more than watchful to catch the next note that comes, but as the light strengthens, a hundred voices announce the dawn, and the wide world is again astir. A filmy thread of smoke rises from the woods, and why be so prosy as to think of farmers and the kitchen stove? As yet, civilization has nowhere marred the broad landscape, so why not this thread of smoke the sign of an Indian camp; or, perhaps, of more gloomy import? Here is what a close observer writes me of Indian mortuary customs: "According to local tradition, the Indians never buried their dead in this part of the Delaware valley, but placed them in the sun to dry, covering the bodies with bark and leaves. When thus laid out they were carefully watched and fires kept burning to keep wild animals away. After a certain time the bodies were burned. This crude tradition is verified, I think, by the numerous stone graves or cists found in this neighborhood. The stones forming the framework of the graves were flat

slabs that together made an enclosure only about three feet in length by little more than one-half that measurement in width and depth. In all these occur charcoal and partly consumed human remains. Cremation was never complete, and the burning occurred in the stone cists or graves; and further, many of them were used time after time until filled with human mould and ashes, and then sealed up." As yet I have found no evidence of such ceremonies here in the tide-water portion of the river valley, and my friend writes of the mountains some sixty miles away. That the same people in the two localities had different burial customs is very possible, but it may be the interloping Shawnees were the stone-grave people and not the Delawares. But let us turn from this gruesome subject, fit only for dull days and dyspeptics, and seek the glare and glitter of August sunshine.

This is the proper work for August days: put your hands behind your back and send imagination on a picnic. It so happened that where the river-shore kindly offered firm root-hold to enormous elms there was, besides, a gently-sloping beach.

Here, upon a pebbly strand, I drew the canoe and rested myself in star-gazing attitude. All things tended to perfecting the reception-room, and my friends overlooked the deficiencies. No invitations had been sent out, and with that delightful informality which is of itself a charm, the birds came trooping in. First a cuckoo, that, deftly swinging on a pendulous twig, clucked or called the rain, as farmers say, and beat time with a graceful swaying of its tail. How few people know this common bird! All summer one has been living in the maples on the village street, and more than one wise villager has been wondering what queer trouble affected some neighbor's throat. Although there is a cheap edition of Wilson's Ornithology, ignorance of birds is all-prevalent. Ten to one, if a cuckoo is hung in the market-place it will not be recognized. The cuckoo of this morning was as lazy as myself, and yet August is his favorite month. I say this because nesting duties are over and the birds have only themselves to look after. A fat caterpillar rouses him at all times, and what bird-energy means can be learned by discovering an ailanthus-tree covered with cecropia worms at

the moment a cuckoo makes the same discovery. The bird is afraid some of them may escape, and such frantic slaughtering cannot be described. It equals the killing of small fry when the blue-fish attack them. The cuckoo to-day solved no problem. It was studiously bird-like and reserved, chattered but for a moment and passed by, making no more impression than the acquaintances one meets on the street. Not so the next comer, a black-and-white tree-creeping warbler, a bird so small that it might nest by your front porch and you never know it. The little fellow knew nothing of August lassitude, but rattled loose bark and darted over an enormous area of arboreal territory. It is but a rough calculation, to be sure, but not far from a correct measurement, I take it. I counted twenty-seven main branches, each of which, as travelled by the bird, is twenty feet long, a stretch of five hundred and forty feet; then came one hundred branches of the second size with about ten feet of running room upon them, and, finally, fully fifteen hundred twigs, some five feet in length. This gives us a run-way over which the bird travelled of nine thousand and forty feet. Guess-

ing at the meaning of certain suggestive movements when the bird was near, I concluded it captured an insect at every twenty feet ; and so quickly is it all done that a hundred trees might be exhaustively searched in a day. No, not exhaustively, for no sooner has one bird left than another comes ; and none go away empty. Doubtless every creeper visits at least fifty trees, and often twice that many, in a day, and so from two to five thousand insects is the amount of food consumed by a bird no bigger than your thumb. Man reaps the benefit of this destruction of insect-life, and yet I once saw one of these tree-creeeping warblers on a girl's bonnet. Not a live one insect-hunting, but a dead one stuck on for an ornament !

There is a spasmodic outburst of indignation at long intervals, and bird-killing is condemned ; but the millinery devils laugh and only lay up the larger stock against the return of the demand for feathers, which they know will come in due time. I recently walked for ten miles on the sea-beach, and saw less than ten gulls or terns. Twenty years ago you could not have heard yourself speak for the noise of these birds at the same time of

year and place. It was near here, not many years ago, that I sat upon a sand dune to eat my lunch, and became so interested in throwing bits of bread and meat to the fearless terns that I went away; at last, hungry, having thrown all of my lunch to the birds. I remember an eccentric druggist who placed a stuffed fish-hawk over his counter, and the next spring a taxidermist near by had orders for a score of skins. To the credit of one wise man in the village, be it recorded, the law interfered; but who ever heard of the law protecting a wren or a bluebird? In some one of the forthcoming dictionaries let the compound word "dead-letter" be defined as "the law protecting useful birds."

As it neared high noon, the expected happened. Birds came trooping in, and every one on the same errand,—to take life easily. At times they were absurdly distributed, and recalled the compartment bird-cages in a menagerie. But inborn restlessness soon changed all this, and their noon-ing became as active as a morning hunt, but in a different way. The rippling water below them was a constant attraction, and from the tree to

the river and return was a short journey that was often made. When at the water's edge, the behavior of the birds was widely different. Some merely drank, others bathed, and a cat-bird seemed wholly absorbed in contemplation, for it stood quietly on a flat stone and looked up and down the river. Did as I have done many a time, pausing before I pushed the boat into the stream, to determine which way to go. Here is a nice question for students of animal intelligence: Do animals of any kind ever contemplate? Closing my eyes to the busy world about me, I look backward and recall many a ramble in this same river valley. The nesting-birds of many a spring-tide are pictured on memory's tablet, and how often, as I interpreted it, a puzzled bird stopped to think! How evidently plans were changed! How frequently advanced work was abandoned! Why? If we can describe a bird at all, we must do so as we state our own actions. If sudden thoughts did not come to these birds; if unforeseen occurrences did not change their plans; if they were not moved as men are moved, then every movement was backed by some unknown phase of

life-power of which man has no trace and can never realize. If so, we can look upon them as we do wind-tossed thistle-down, but can go no further. I doubt this. There is closer kinship than the world allows.

I clipped the following from a recent newspaper because of its suggestiveness :

“A number of ornithologists, possessed of the zeal that marks the faithful devotee of science, have climbed Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty by night and nestled in the hand of the goddess in order to make a study of the habits of migratory birds at this season of the year. It was a curious vantage-ground of study, and has yielded some curious results. Thus, it is stated by one of the observers that birds from Canada and Labrador, travelling by the sea-coast, seem to have learned the peril of collision with the statue, as year by year the number of the killed from this cause grows less. Another most interesting fact reported by another gentleman of the party was the evidence of a system of signals in flocks of birds. Each of the different flocks seemed to have a veteran leader, who gave a shrill call when passing strange

sights. 'The call was invariably answered by some birds in the rear, and it seemed to me that the cries of the leaders mean an order to close up and keep together.' As self-preservation is the first law of nature, it is not a fanciful assumption that the birds of the air are gifted with this instinct in common with mankind; and that being so, the power of communing with each other would seem to follow as a necessary conclusion."

But birdmen need not climb so high to observe much of this, if, indeed, not every phenomenon. The trackless highway of the moonlit river-valley tells the same story. Anchor amid-stream when the hunter-moon is full, and mark the sounds that come floating earthward from the starlit skies. Signal and reply, alarm and general response; all that transpires as hosts are hurrying by can be noted here. Few suspect what a busy world there is above the tree-tops.

Amid all the varied changes in the tree above me, one feature of bird-life never varied. An indigo-finch sang without ceasing. I make this statement without qualification, although it conflicts with our views of physiology and usual ex-

periences in observation. For hours it never left the tree, and seldom its perch. Its greatest journey was as short as "from the blue bed to the brown," and all the while it rang the brief changes of its sprightly song. Whether the sun poured its torrent of fervid rays upon it, or a passing cloud sheltered it and wooed a reviving breeze, mattered not; its sole aim was to rejoice that its lines had fallen in such pleasant places.

The world was given over to happiness alone,—in the mind of the dreamer; but, alas! things are not always what they seem. Far overhead a dark spot flecked the summer sky. It meant death to many a happy songster should it come too near. There are feathered as well as human demons. Why, indeed, should a falcon have been created? Its passing shadow chilled half a hundred hearts.

But the world was not made for singing-birds alone. The air trembled with the hum of countless myriads of lesser creatures, and every one rejoiced in the fulness of its heart. I pressed my head to the ground, and a tremor, as if every blade of grass was singing, rang in my ear. Every

leaf of the huge elm above me, too, had a tuneful throat. But never a life of unclouded sunshine. The vehement whirring of a harvest-fly held the destroyer in its course. A flash in mid-air; a cry of agony that stilled the million tongues about me startled the earth; a fiery-banded hornet bore its helpless victim away.

After all, happiness is but comparative. It is well to rejoice if we escape misery, but it is weakness to look upon the last overshadowing cloud as really the last. We may deal only with sunshine while it is August, but winter is drawing on apace. We may rest now as though the world's work was done, but the demands of other days already peep above the horizon. To turn our backs upon them is but the fool's device. Well we know this; but yet, what journey so seductive as that without a goal? I would be a great traveller, but the world must come to me. I have been nowhere to-day, as the man of affairs would say, yet I have journeyed for hours. Why not pause at one point as well as another? Nature does not trumpet her glories to him who hastens. The river invited both to the mountains and the

sea, but the influence of August to-day, as throughout all of my year, forbade a greater undertaking.

Labor no charm to my existence lends ;

I love to dream : there my ambition ends.

The Defence of Idleness.

CHESTERFIELD asks somewhere, of some one, "Will you improve that hour instead of idling it away?" That depends. For myself, I hold it most righteous to idle away many an hour, for, paradoxical as it may seem, with folded arms and half-closed eyes we may wax wiser with every hour. An "idle hour" is a contradiction. The world does not pause because your step becomes a shuffle; and where, out of doors, is it empty? Custom is a cruel taskmaster; but when his back is turned it is well to watch a chance and give ourselves over to receptive idleness. It is the enjoyment of such moments in anticipation that makes labor tolerable. One day in seven is every man's by law, and so he values it at far less than its real worth. A stolen week-day hour, for which one plans and struggles, is a tidbit more clearly

remembered than a month of Sundays. I never met him yet who had no love for a holiday. Toil is necessary, but it does not charm; labor *per se* is not man's chiefest aim, but to complete a life-work as soon as possible, that the inactive contemplation of it may be indulged. So universal is a love of such idleness that, it is safe to assume, idleness is the aim of life. Every one disputes this, but it matters not. We all know it as a feeling hidden in every breast; else why every one wishes he was so far rich that he need not labor? Not necessarily to sit with folded hands and dream; but to be able to follow the whim of the moment,—to do as he pleases,—to indulge in idleness. This, unhappily, is the lot of few, but the many are not so sorely stricken as they imagine, and hours of happy idleness are lost through ignorance.

A truce to sermonizing: let us to serious consideration. To be idle is not to be passive and semi-unconscious. Who really does the greater work, he who moves a mountain by the shovelful, or he who fathoms the mystery of how it came to be? Nor is this but referring to the difference

between manual and mental labor. The latter may be far more onerous. The idleness I advocate is that which allows the world to be our teacher. As I write these words the river is flowing by, bearing many a storm-riven branch and uprooted tree towards the ocean. Do you suppose that to idly drift with these, careless of where the journey ended, would not be to your gain? Is it possible that the river would withhold all it knows because you forcibly wrested nothing from it? Let us idle away this summery September day, and count our gains in the moonlight. Who ever encountered the chaotic side of Nature? Turn your back on the workshop and stroll along a country highway. Here, perhaps, you will come nearest to wasting your time; but such a disaster can be avoided. Why a highway is so commonplace is a problem to solve while lying in the shade. There is seldom ground so barren but a weed will find roothold, and a weed is not beyond the pale of a botanist's consideration. No fence was ever so intensely ugly that a spider shunned it; and what a marvel is a spider's web! Earthworms will break the monotony of a smoothly-

trodden path during the night, and what their earth-casts mean, as they lie over the bare ground, set Darwin to thinking. What nonsense it is to decry an aimless stroll, a journey without a goal! As if all life's excellence was to be purchased only by sweat-drops. It is a happy thought, that of idling away odd bits of time, only do so without thought of possibly better things. When I stop to eat a frost-nipped persimmon, a plague on the intruding thought that finer fruits grow in the tropics. To walk from Littleworth to Smalltown may be merely the taking of so many steps; but, if you reach there one fact the wiser, you have taken the first step in profitable idling.

To idle away an hour, a day, or a week, let your mind drift. Do not hold back, whatever beckons. Be it the humblest weed, a dusty worm, or even an English sparrow, let it be your leader, if it will, and you will not be the worse for the company you have kept. It is not a question of studying any of these despised common things, but the reception of such ideas as they may offer. Not one, mind you, but has a part to play in the great world drama, and, the chances are, can give you a

hint that will not need to be kept seven years before it proves useful. This is what I mean by idling, and hold it worthy of a vigorous defence.

Never reach beyond arm's length, for that is labor and not idleness, or chase a white blackbird from dawn till dark, forgetting that color is but feather-deep, and that the mystery of a bird, and not a chance happening, is the fact worth knowing. Do not count yourself a lord of creation, either, when you enter the field, for you are not, and the assumption makes you merely an intruder. Knock at the door, and ask to come in, and you will be accorded a hearty welcome. Thus it is, by humbling yourself, you shall be exalted.

It is September, and the summer yet lingers. Let us idly saunter beyond the town, gathering the best fruit that offers, but not passing by unheeded that which is blighted. Here is matter for leisurely contemplation : what caused the untimely destruction? What is blight? Some creature having equal claim to fruit has been ahead of you merely, and you, man, lord of creation, get angry because beaten by a bug! As a spectator, and not a victim, I am amused, and, lolling in the Sep-

tember sunshine, have learned something without an effort. After all, fruit does not grow that you may be filled. The fruit is but your prey, and the insect has as good cause to hate you as have you to be enraged when it gets the upper hand. Might makes right, in spite of the preacher; and I do not blame a wasp for stinging me when I disturb him at his feast. His is the rosy cheek of the apple, mine the yellow; and why not keep within bounds? Here is not an idle thought, but one bred in idleness; it is only the victim of his own unreasonableness that is deaf to reason. We are beyond the orchard, and a new field, and ever an attractive one, lies before us. What can be better than the wilds of an unkempt meadow? Have but one care as you cross the threshold: avoid haste. Not a step can be taken that does not pass by more than a lifetime can wholly comprehend. Remember, it is September, and summer's day is over before the month goes by. Long ago as June we found the firstlings of every flock full of interest, but what of the lastlings? Nature is never an old story. We think the glory of June has faded before the close of summer, but Nature

paints with fast colors, and the dust is in our own eyes. When the orchard bends with an over-crop, as now, who stops to admire the flushed cheeks of a single apple? But in years of scarcity, the single beauties are perched upon mantel-pieces as too valuable for the dumpling, where they really show to best advantage.

I have this day witnessed the first scene of the last act of summer; and if the bank whereon the wild thyme blows could hold the gaze of Shakespeare, how he would have lingered over a way-side pond this morning, flecked with white water-lilies and hemmed by the tall scarlet spires of lobelia! Never shone the sun more brightly; earth and air were flooded with its penetrating rays. Nothing was hidden, not even a blade of grass but stood bravely forth, as if conscious of its beauty. It is a crystalline day, when we have insight in a literal sense, and not merely the dim outlines of the external world; a day when Nature draws the veil and you are brought face to face with beauty. A pool becomes now something more than a hollow in the ground, decked with lilies and lobelia; but if it were not more than this, there would still be

reason for lingering here,—for idling away an hour. Can flowers bloom without whispering to the world facts worth knowing? It is no fault of theirs if their bright sayings fall forever on deaf ears. Mankind loves color. His eye craves it as his stomach craves food. We carry it into our houses, dreading the depressing effect of cold gray walls, but how sadly we use it! If an hour's idleness brings us nearer to Nature in such a matter as house-décoration, we have done our duty to the world as well as to ourselves. Why flowers, that Nature stamps as monstrosities, should replace the gems of her handiwork on the walls of our houses is not readily explained. Here at the pool is scarlet and white, and every imaginable shade of purple, green, and brown, even polished and old gold; a dozen blooming plants in the scope of a single glance, and every one a masterpiece of grace as well as color; but where upon wall-paper will we find them? Such a scene as this way-side pool haunts us. It is carried as a flitting ghost of landscape to the workshop, and even so makes labor less onerous, and we are well rewarded for that idling at which the unthinking

rail. Commune with a cloud or chat with a way-side weed and you have done better, hour for hour, than laboring under protest. At the end of your term, in the latter case, you have gold as your recompense; but who, after an hour's wandering afield, happily chancing upon Nature's flower-garden, and strolling through its by-paths, loitering by its lilies, sauntering in its scented sunshine, can return to the work-a-day world empty-handed? What of that wider vision of the universe, that assurance of right royal living which is ever at hand? A finer metal than gold is needed for its purchase. Some joys that we have tasted will return whenever called. Nature's torch grows faster at the base than ever the top turns to ashes. There is a new light for the idler every hour, and a new thought to cheer when the burden is once more to be shouldered. Who dare say that the more we learn of this world the less will we have to learn of the next? I dare think it. The lilies that float in the still water and the flaming lobelia that surrounds them,—all this is no less a part of the world because beyond the town's limits.

There is a homely phrase common to all,—

something to think' about. This is a wide-spread want, and its value may be measured by its universality. Buried in bricks, the brain will still work, and what wonders has it not wrought when there was no trace of Nature near to cheer it! Books have been written in dungeons, but would this have been possible had the prisoner never wandered in a green field or rambled in a forest?

But speak of out-of-doors and Thoreau comes to mind. He was a surveyor, but how much more an idler in the fields! Was it when he measured the farmers' wood-lots that he nailed to the mast those bright thoughts that have been a help to mankind ever since? What of the days when, to shield himself from the driving storms, he crouched behind the stone wall? He thought himself a philosopher then, as he distinctly states, and he was right. The life that is wholly given to manual labor is a life half lost.

Nature was not limited to the lilies and lobelia to-day. The fields reaching to the far-off woods were bright with golden-rod; there were ivory-white "turtle-heads" clustered in shady nooks, orchids in abundance, purple gerardia, eupatorium,

asters of regal mould, and a host of lesser lights that make good the claim that Nature's palette was not used up in painting the June landscape. To be surfeited with flowers is a weakness against which to guard; rather, they should be that joy forever which Keats immortalized. Surely it is a red-letter day when we greet the fringed gentian. Where autumn flowers bloom there, too, will be music. Merit never lacks good company. The singing-bird may have drifted from exultation to meditation; from May to September is a long journey, if we have been awake to the world as it was passing; so, too, with the birds. Their holiday has come, and they have desire to fritter it away. Perhaps they are planning for the year to come; perhaps for their migratorial flight; but no sweetness has been lost. We have it in the books that the birds cease to sing when the summer is over, as if they mourned the separation, the severing of family ties. It is not true. The young follow their parents, and the parents remain mated. Because we cannot see how this can be, how natural to deny it! but every returning spring proves it nevertheless. Autumn bird-songs are

meditative, that is all, and no less charming because of this. The woods do not ring now; but there is a gentle murmur, a whispering melody that can soothe the savage breast. If all the world idled in the September sunshine, no one need wonder why. But idle in the proper way. Be receptive; for this is but another name for contemplation, and contemplation is the noblest occupation. The ultra-utilitarian may condemn even such idleness, but it is an error. To rest with half-closed eyes, even for half a day, where Nature is busiest is not to lose time. It is that half-sleep which renews our stock of ideas, as slumber restores the outworn body.

A Pre-Columbian Mine.

“ Let’s to plain prose and talk as men of sense ;
No mouthing of great mystery, or rolling eyes
At colors brighter than the world e’er saw ;
Let’s to the world of hard and rugged fact.”

SO my companion thought to take the wind from my sails, as though only a mining engineer could deal with the facts before us. But I would not listen, and go about our work with but a compass and tape-line. It is not always to play the fool to link arms with a lively fancy. If a rosy light plays over a heap of stones, why not say so? No one will be deceived because I say I heard Indians chipping flint while I sat at the entrance of the mine whence had come the rainbow-tinted jasper that to-day, as marvels of aboriginal handicraft, are scattered up and down the valley of the Delaware. I even went a step farther, and above

the heaps of blackened stones, where fires, now quenched for centuries, had once blazed year after year, again flickered the ruddy light of the camp-fire; and through the forest a pale yet penetrating light brought upon the scene the whole village,—men, women, and children. With the gloaming comes fancy's holiday; but we need not loiter in a fool's paradise. The natural sequence of seeing and then contemplating the remains of one-time human activities is to rebuild upon these ruins the structures they call for. Happily, the time had spared sufficient for a firm foundation in this instance; nor were the ancient fireplaces less tangible facts. What my fancy saw to-night was not a fevered vision, but what every archæologist earnestly longs for,—a vivid glimpse of the Delaware valley in pre-Columbian days. He finds himself as poor as at the outset who treats of such matters without reference to what has been. It may be true that a field is sprinkled with broken stones, but never all the truth. Who broke them, and when? Or has frost been playing pranks with the living rock? Think how much is implied when we speak of an arrow-head! We gather

them in our walks afield; perhaps preserve them, if pretty; or throw them down again, if rudely wrought or broken, and think of them merely long enough to mention the name "arrow-head." But what, really, is it? Of itself, nothing. Absolutely as valueless then, when made, as now. But as the effective point of a shaft, and the two as the projectile of the bow; and this, with its armed arrow, as the weapon of a man, and what a picture of the past looms up before us! We do not, and cannot, know more of the man than this arrow-head, this chipped fragment of jasper tells us; but does it not speak volumes?

Out of deference to my matter-of-fact companion, let's to plain prose. These jasper mines, for there are several, are situated about one mile east of the village of Durham, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in the synclinal basin of Rattlesnake and Mine Hills, on the lowermost spur of the South Mountain range. These mines, or quarries, as they are usually called, cover an area of about one acre. Nature kindly left the ground in the condition brought about by the Indians' mining operations, and half a century ago extensive deposits

of the mineral were exposed to view ; but of late years every one of the depressions on the hill-top has become the receptacle for refuse stone gathered from the surrounding fields, and these most interesting archæological features of the country are well-nigh obliterated. The shafts, pits, or what you will, are remembered to have been from four to six feet in depth and from ten to twenty feet in diameter, and near by were mound-like elevations made up of the vast amount of refuse material. It is evident that the greatly varying depths of these excavations were due to the superior or inferior quality of the exposed ledges. But how do we know that the Indians had to do with these pits at all? Have we found their autographs packed in the rock, or found their bones in graves of their own digging? Not yet ; but of equal significance is the immense quantity of chips and slender flakes, besides hammers, large and small, and a goodly range of stone implements no white man, since he became white, has used. We can follow the trail of the aborigine here without being thrown off the scent. We can see, in the mind's eye,—and we need no clearer

vision,—that after the jasper had been mined it was directly subjected to a hammering process that determined the precise quality of the mass. This was a necessary preliminary, for the implement-maker and the miner were not one and the same person, or, if so, pursued the two occupations at different times.

Before considering the adjacent workshop sites, let me prevent a possible misconception. Here is not the one sole source of supply from which the Indians derived jasper, but, I take it, the principal one. It is true a block of jasper, if pure and faultless, that measured twenty feet across and six feet in thickness, would make an enormous number of arrow-points, but it is to be remembered that in every such block there is a vast amount of refuse flint that Indians could not use, and the chips resulting from a single arrow-point equalled usually a mass a hundredfold the size of the finished implement. Then, too, we have proof that jasper boulders from the bed of the river were used by those Indians who lived far south of the mine on Rattlesnake Hill, and that many a little pebble was gathered for the purpose of making an

arrow-point of it, for these, in every stage of incompleteness, are everywhere abundant.

And now, what of the workshop sites? It is a natural inference that if at the mine itself the jasper was not reduced to its ultimate condition of a finished implement, then such spots as were well adapted to a flint-chipping industry would be found to have been utilized as such; nor are we mistaken. Every Indian was not his own implement-maker. There were professional chippers in those days, and just as we find manufactories to-day near the sources of supply of raw material, so was it with flint-chipping when jasper mines were a scene of busy industry. Less than a mile from the mine is more than one such site, and many, by recent changes and the violence of floods, have been wholly obliterated. One of the most important, but not one that can now be traced, was some five hundred yards distant from the Durham Cave. It reached back from the Delaware about a fourth of a mile. The sod was never broken or a furrow turned that the refuse incident to arrow-making was not brought to light in startling abundance. Again, on the bank of a

small stream, for a distance of six hundred yards, was the same abundance of such refuse, and that a permanent village, with its varied interests, existed here is shown by the occurrence of that full range of objects having to do with their domestic life, agriculture, hunting, fishing, and, most suggestive of all, their personal vanity. They had, too, if not banks, a reliable system of safe deposit, for in unmarked holes in the ground were placed enormous numbers of valuable objects. In this creek-side village-site were found above one hundred globular stones, some with grooves, and all artificially rounded. These had evidently been placed where found by their owner, and the secret of their whereabouts had died with him. So much the naked facts, but is nothing more to be said? For years I have rambled in the Delaware valley and gathered arrow-points, until now their number reaches far into the thousands, and all the while wondered if from river pebbles alone the material was derived. This seemed improbable, for I could find so little trace in the gravel of the delicate green and bright red jasper such as occurred on the fields as broken implements or chips; but now

the problem was solved. My wanderings had brought me at last to this beautiful spot, to a camping-ground perched upon a high hill that overlooked a glorious country. Repurchase enough of itself when taking an outing, and how much more when now, at my feet, was the key that unlocked a mystery that for years had teased me! How much fuller was every known feature of Indian life by reason of this discovery! Henceforth every arrow-point will have an added interest. If I cannot trace its career, I can, at least, point to its home. It is useless, however, to speculate concerning the antiquity of these jasper mines, and yet almost the first question asked is, "How old are they?" as if they needed a few centuries, more or less, to give them interest. When the Indian first happened here matters not; but it was long ago, and even then his range of culture was not so insignificant as the average reader supposes. He could work marvellously well in stone of other sorts, and proved his eye for symmetry by objects of ceremonial import of wonderful beauty, both in design and workmanship; and then, what of those etched gorgets so common among them?

By the light of the camp-fire to-night a precious relic was brought forth, and its possible significance discussed for the hundredth time. How far are the lines and curves and dots ornamental, and how far a matter of record? Who shall say? For many days we have been wandering in search of Indian relics, and on one of the beautiful islands in the river a curiously-etched stone has been found. The marks are cleanly and deeply cut, as if by a graver's tool, and yet no metal ever came in contact with this specimen. Here we have set aside one of the objections raised against the mastodon stone found not many miles away; a specimen, be it said, that was hastily condemned, but in the light of added knowledge may prove to have an interest. To find a picture rather than a grouping of significatory or merely ornamental markings may be highly improbable, but in the light of what has been gathered in this same river valley in recent years it is foolhardy to pronounce it impossible, and inexcusable to cry "fraud" whenever the unexpected happens.

Then, as night drew on apace, our minds reverted to the long-deserted mine. The hum of

human industry was hushed, but silence did not prevail. A thousand crickets chirped in the weedy wilderness, squirrels were astir in the heaped-up rocks, birds, although dreaming, sang sweetly through the woods, and when, at last, we too wandered, in our thoughts was it strange that the many sounds we still heard were not, in truth, voices of the night, but the cries and clamor of strange men who toiled and wrestled with the unyielding rock of this pre-Columbian mine?

Why do some Birds Sing?

WHEREVER we happen to be, we are given to asking ourselves or others unanswerable questions. Why do birds sing? is one of these. It is not enough to reply, as I know has too often been done: because it is their nature to sing. If nothing more rational than this can be said, then let us keep silent. To admit our ignorance is manly, while to assume knowledge is detestable. Whether, in the present case, we are confronted with an unsolvable problem or not remains to be seen.

My reply to this often-put query is a series of suggestions. Nearly twenty years ago, in an English magazine I suggested that "birds, like mankind, sing for pleasure and talk from necessity." Many years spent more in the company of

birds than of men have not caused me to change my mind.

But let us go over the ground anew. Let us take a somewhat careful survey of familiar bird-life, such as we find it in the outskirts of all our towns. By so doing we will free ourselves of many wrong impressions, especially that common one that every bird of a given species is like all its fellows. There is as much individuality among birds as among men. It will be noticed, too, at the very outset, that not all birds sing, and yet not one of them is mute. Of course, it will be very necessary in such an investigation to distinguish between utterances that, while harsh to our ears, may not be so to the bird, and not set down as an exclamation of surprise or fear what may be one of soothing import to the utterer or its interested hearer. There is one note, or rather a brief series of notes, uttered by the crow that probably should come under the heading of song; and every one who is familiar with our blue-jay knows that at times it trills a few flute-like notes that are very musical. Here are instances where, in the case of a crow, we might go astray, while

no one would fail to credit the jay with ability sing; yet neither bird is ever classed under the heading of songsters.

Whether logical or not, in studies of animal life we must consider what we would do and have done and are daily doing under like circumstances and from such data draw our conclusions. No doubt it is significant that no song-bird proper, be it thrush, lark, or grosbeak, is limited in its utterances to the characteristic song. This is but one of a considerable series, and is heard only under certain circumstances, and the other utterances each as well defined as the song, are, too, only uttered when conditions arise that call for them. In the same way, speaking of ourselves, we laugh when amused, cry when in pain, and sing when merry or contemplative. Who, with a jumping toothache, could sing "Annie Laurie"?

Are these but catchy phrases to avoid straightforward consideration of the question? Let us take a walk across lots, into the woods, and look about the swamps and river. Here in the angle of an old worm-fence is a clump of blackberry briers, and it is easy to watch the pair of cat-bir

that have their nest where the briers are most tangled. This nest and the four green eggs are sufficient to command their owner's whole attention. This is evident at a glance ; but see how the

lord of the little manor breaks free of life's exacting cares and yields to a love of less laborious life. All men are not lazy, but who among us does not love his ease? Above the briers, away

from all entanglement, the cat-bird perches on convenient limb of the nearest tree and gives himself up to song. This is not a mere repetition of the chirps and twitters that marked every movement when busy about the nest or intent upon securing food. These were not by any means monotonous twangings of a single string, highly varied, and clearly had reference to various demands of the moment. A low chuck calls his mate; a shrill chirp warns her of possible danger; the scarcely audible utterances when near each other, when "billing and cooing," are clear evidence of the interchange of ideas; but now, how was it different and yet equally significant!

The self-released bird needs, or thinks he needs, rest and recreation, and for the time gives himself up to song. He rejoices in his own musical powers. Every note of every other bird that falls within the compass of his voice he repeats, a little withal, sounds many a matchless note wholly his own. From side to side he tosses his head as such movements affected his voice. His body sways to and fro or pitches forward as the sounds grow shriller, and then, as if exhausted by

effort, he wraps his feathers more closely about him, and then the song dies away as though he could but whisper the thought that latest came to him. The whole performance is ecstatic; an expression of the emotions that is the counterpart of music, whether vocal or instrumental, among mankind. Here, then, we have an inkling, if not much more, of why a bird sings. It has emotions like unto our own, and expresses them in like manner.

Not every bird has the same manner; very many are far less demonstrative, and yet underlying it all will be found the same impulse. Here is the confiding little field-sparrow that will scarcely move from your path. It is too happy to be forever busy with life's commonplaces, and a hundred times a day warbles a few gleeful notes that should touch the heart of even a hawk, if the world was not so far from perfect. The meadow-lark, too, is another prominent example of what I would make clear. It cannot withstand the temptation to mount to the very topmost twig of the tallest tree in the pasture, and for half an hour whistle "I see you,—you can't see me!" This song has nothing

to do with the bird's ordinary occupations. It is a breaking in upon them, just as we who labor all love to do,—lay aside our tools and take up the fiddle and the bow. I do not propose to trifle with the subject, but give honest expression to my convictions in this matter. So long as we persist in considering ourselves as something widely different and wholly set apart from the animal creation, birds and all other forms of life will be a profound mystery to us, and whatsoever they do, beyond our powers of interpretation; but let it dawn upon us that they are largely governed by the same laws, actuated by the same motives,—the same causes urging them to do and dare,—then the differences between the various utterances of a bird will become evident, and we will go away convinced that birds, like mankind, sing for pleasure and talk from necessity.

It has been shown conclusively by philosophical naturalists that the songs of birds have a close association with the pairing of birds, and all that belongs to the continuance of the race. Here we are brought, I doubt not, face to face with the question of the origin of song, which is not that

which heads this article. In the beginning of bird-life there were few, if any, songsters. The birds' immediate ancestors made day or night hideous if they cried out at all, and only after countless centuries of gradual evolution of highly-specialized forms did the song-bird, as we know it, come upon the scene. These early musicians possibly sang only during the nesting season, and more to please their mates than themselves. The original impulse still survives; but there is now an added phase,—singing from pure love of music. I have mentioned several instances of this, and many more could be given, but with one of a striking character I will conclude. It is well known that in autumn there is comparative silence among those birds that in early summer made the woods and fields fairly tremble with the flood of song, and in autumn those birds that are migrating southward seldom utter more than an occasional chirp. Among all these an exception to the rule sometimes happens. As if some object near recalled happy by-gone days, the almost silent bird pauses in his occupation and sings as though it were May-day and not October. This is not so unusual

as to have no significance. I have heard it a thousand times, and now offer such songs out of season as further evidence that the prompting of bird and men to indulge in song is essentially the same.

At a Public Sale.

IT is not so very long ago that I swore off, in the matter of attendance upon public sales. I was always victimized, and finally became disgruntled. But many an Ephraim, not joined to his idols, occasionally takes a sly backward glance. It was so recently. A huge red flag was fluttering opposite the door of Smalltown's oldest dwelling-house. Furniture that had been in use since the Revolution, and a few odd pieces for nearly a century prior to those stirring times, were now to be sold. Even into this Smalltown house had drifted a "Mayflower" chest, and a bed upon which Washington had slept. Little wonder that every family of this inland village was well represented in the crowd of expectant buyers.

That red flag at the door merely announced in four words a public sale, but he is wise who reads

between the lines: Who enters here leaves wits behind. He who is sane in such a crowd is scarcely human. Covetousness is epidemic. Never a thought of the effect of long years of use enters our minds. Every colonial acorn has grown to a latter-day oak. Here the glamour of age has proved the transmuter of metal: pre-Revolutionary pewter is sterling silver. And now the sale begins. Perched upon a chair, from his coign of vantage the sea of fools is calmly surveyed by the auctioneer, and distorted truth charms the willing victim. A long table was covered with china, earthenware, and glass; and the mantel beyond—a narrow shelf quite near the ceiling—glittered with a tangled maze of clean brass candlesticks, steel snuffers, and plated trays. At one end dangled a huge warming-pan, and on the wall near it hung a bit of canvas in a gilded frame, from which the portrait had as utterly faded as he whom it represented had vanished into thin air. It was a strange place,—a room from which many a colonial citizen had passed to take a stroll upon the village street; and here, in sad confusion to be sure, the dishes that graced his breakfast-table. I could have lin-

gered there, if alone, for half a day ; but not willingly for half an hour in such a crowd. The crowd, however, closed every exit, and all had to submit. A possible chance to secure some odd bit was my only consolation. Why the good old soul who last occupied the house, and who was born in it fourscore years ago, should necessarily have had only her grandmother's table-ware ; why every generation of this family should have suffered no losses by breakage, was not asked. Every bit, even to baking-powder prizes of green and greasy glass, antedated the Revolution ; and the wise and mighty of Smalltown knew no better. A bit of egg-shell, sticking to a cracked teacup, was stolen as a relic of Washington's last breakfast in Smalltown.

While willow-pattern china was passing into other hands, I made a discovery. A curious piece of polished, crooked mahogany was seen lying between soup-tureens and gravy-boats. I picked it up cautiously, fearing to attract attention, and, with one eye everywhere else, scanned it closely. What a curious paper-knife ! was my first thought, and the prize was slyly tucked back of a pile of

plates. This must be kept track of. It may prove a veritable treasure. But all my care went for naught. An inquisitive old lady, standing near, had seen every action. "What is it?" she asked; and the wooden wonder was brought to light. "It's an old-fashioned wooden butter-knife. I've seen 'em afore this. Don't you know, in old times, it wasn't everybody as had silver, and mahogany knives for butter was put on the table for big folks. We folks each used our own knife." All this was dribbled into my willing ears, and have the relic I would at any cost. Time and again I nervously turned it over, to be sure that it was still on the table, and so excited another's curiosity. "What is it?" a second and still older lady asked. "A colonial butter-knife," I promptly replied, with an air of much antiquarian lore. "A butter-knife! No such thing. My grandfather had one just like this, and it's a pruning-knife. He wouldn't use a steel knife 'cause it poisoned the sap." What next? Paper-knife, butter-knife, pruning-knife! At all events, every new name added a dollar to its value, and my anxious thought was what the crowd would say, for now it was in the auctioneer's

hands. He looked at it with a puzzled expression, and merely cried, "What is bid for *this*?" His ignorance was encouraging. It started at a dime, and I secured it for a quarter. For a moment I little wondered at the fascination of public sales. The past was forgiven, for now luck had turned, and I gloried in the possession of a prize.

To seek the outer world was a perilous undertaking, for fear that the triply-named knife might come to grief; but I reached home at last, and, hugging the precious bit, mysteriously disappeared for quite an hour. No one must know of my success until the mystery was cleaned, brightened, and restored to pristine beauty. I rubbed the gummy surface with kerosene, and then polished it with flannel. Then warm water and a toothbrush were brought into play, and the oil all removed. Then a long dry polishing, and the restoration was complete. Certainly no other Smalltownner had such a wooden knife; and it was indeed beautiful. Black in a cross light, red in direct light, and kaleidoscopic by gas-light. Ah, such a prize! The family knew that something strange was transpiring, but what, no one had an

inkling. They must wait patiently, and they did. In due time I proudly appeared with my prize in hand. "See there!" I cried in triumph, and they all looked eagerly; and when my pride was soaring at its highest, a younger daughter cried, "Why, papa, it's the back of a hair-brush!" And it was.

Old Fenny's Dead!

OLD FENNY'S dead! Gone, at last, the youngest of those rare old men who taught me in my youth: unlettered philosophers who drew me nearer than the learned folk of later years. About the backwoods now degeneracy is painfully marked. Ignorance is still everywhere, but now without the brains to make it respectable. In the days of Uz Gaunt and Miles Overfield it was well worth the while to listen to those to whom life-long contact with Nature had not been without results. Of late, the power of observing seems to have left the backwoodsman, or the present poor apology for such. Old Fenny was the last of his race. There is no one now living who will ever approach him, though he lives to pass the century year-post. Perhaps the change in the country

has to do with it. A child that lives among oaks will have sturdier thought than he who knows nothing but brambles.

I would that I were rich in the wisdom of these unlearned men. Never knowledge so refreshing as that doled out by octogenarians who have grown up with the trees, in the shade of which they passed their declining years.

Here, as I recall it, is what one of these old men said to me just before he died, some twenty years ago: "Gran'daddy cleared off the woods in 1765 and daddy built this house in '93, and I've growed up with the trees that make it shady round the yard. I got so far as to write my name, when a boy, but always did my figurin' in my head. As to readin', well, I'd rather be read to." Again, he remarked, "A roof's handy, but I live out o' doors, and I tell you, I like these old trees. They talk when the wind blows; and it never struck me, as it seems to some folks, that a tree was sort of in ruins when it lost its leaves. Or take the bushes, when they're out o' bloom they're not out o' beauty."

Here was a man worth talking to; one who

charmed Lyell when fossil-hunting over in Jersey, and well he might.

But Old Fenny. He did not rank quite so high, but would there were hundreds like him. Put him in a room where the current tattle of the town was the staple of conversation and he was soon asleep; but speak of the meadows, of felling trees, of disastrous freshets, great storms, or a barn-raising, and how his eyes flashed! Every nerve was alert, and every word weighty with earnestness and truth. Yet he was unlearned; sadly so, as he interpreted Nature, in the light of modern science; but, though I knew he was wrong, it was more refreshing to hear him talk than to read any text-book ever printed. His was not misleading ignorance. He held to the moon's influence over the weather, and quoted believingly half the weather-sayings ever heard of; but, with all, there were facts. These you could detach from his inferences and forget the latter straight-way, but the others were ever so cleverly put you could not forget them. And, after all, do we not treat the really learned in much the same fashion? We are all so wedded to our own opinions that

the inferences of the most prominent men in the line are but too apt to fall upon deaf ears.

As men like Fenny deciphered it, this word was thoroughly intelligible to them. They were all deists, of course, and delved no more deep into matters spiritual. There was a tendency to spiritualism of the modern kind, because so much was beyond their comprehension, so unsolvable to them, but plain to the learned. This gave them their poetry, and their lives were full of it; but this feeling extended beyond such things to the trivial incidents of every-day life. Fenny wore upon his little finger a rudely-carved bone ring. I once questioned him about it, and, holding it before him, he said, with a strange change of voice, "It's nothin' of itself, but the sunshiny days of our summer come back whenever I look at it."

But let us take a walk with Fenny in the woods. If he did not know a tree botanically he did practically. He laid no claim to why or how tree growth was thus and so, but he did know where every tree passed through from the sprouting of the seed to maturity. His knowledge shone with positive splendor when he remarked, "That tree

doted," and yet to all the world it was typical of perfect health. How did he know? Of course I asked him, and then the full discussion of the color of the leaves, their comparative absence from certain limbs, a smoothness or roughness of the bark, a hundred matters others would never see, yet plain as the printed page to him. Yet he was unlearned.

Was it the weather? The moaning of the wind in the pines, the swaying of the meadow-grasses, the rippling of the river's flow, the color of the mill-pond's surface, the quiet or the song of many birds, the hum of bees or flutter of butterflies; these had their meaning, and another "sign" that he correctly interpreted was the condition of the atmosphere. Would I know if it would rain tomorrow, Fenny could tell. However black the clouds; ay, even if it sprinkled at the time, if he said, "Leave your umbrella behind," I should have done so. Yet he was unlearned.

Alas! Old Fenny's dead, and I must ramble alone or with the scientist. Pardon me, you who have knowledge to explain away the world: Old Fenny's dead, and I have lost much.

The Gathering of the Clans

NOT even the owl is as much of a hermit as appears. The little fellow that all summer long has slept by day in the hollow apple-tree, and hooted by night from the adjacent tree-tops, has a taste for company, and when two meet, their hooting gives way to a varied range of lowly-murmured chatterings very different from the conventional cries of all owldom. Keep a pet one (and they are easily tamed) and you will find them not only as wise as they look, but not averse to rough-and-tumble fun. But a few days ago, in my wanderings, I reached the bank of a river, long after sundown, and pitched my little tent by the fitful light of a green-wood camp-fire. Ejaculations were not smothered, but explosive, and the whole strange scene brought not one but three little owls to the front. They were not afraid, and d

cussed my companion, the dog, and myself vigorously. They enjoyed the novelty, and all through the night their tremulous tones broke the stillness of the dense, dark woods. I dreamed of huge flocks of owls, such as no man ever saw, and was routed at dawn by a great rushing of wings that seemed dangerously close at hand. It was a flock of blackbirds.

Birds are social, and whatever may have been the conditions at the dawn of bird-life, their gatherings now are purely pleasurable. I do not think any advantage to the individual can come of it, other than satisfying social impulses. Let us go back of the formation of these huge flocks and give a moment's notice to another phase of a bird's existence. This, from a recent paper, covers the whole ground: "Most birds, we are told, 'pair once for all, till either one or the other dies.' Dr. Brehm, the author of 'Bird-Life,' is so filled with admiration for their exemplary family-life as to be led to declare enthusiastically that 'real genuine marriage can only be found among birds.'" The initial point of flocking is there,—that of mating; later, the family keep largely together; towards

the close of the summer the families of a neighborhood unite, and, urged by the approach autumn, the birds of a whole river valley w merge into some two or three great flocks, and such close companionship migrate, or wander and fro, from one feeding-ground to another.

When did birds begin to flock? This has oft been asked, but never can be told. A close study of this habit, as of many other bird-ways, point to the conclusion that it is a survival of a much more fixed one. There is now a vast deal of irregularity about it. Certainly the red-wings, blackbirds, which form our largest flocks, are not all gathered in, and single ones, pairs, and half dozen together remain all winter scattered up and down the river valley. It is true of every other flocking bird. The majority keep up the old custom, but so many stand aloof in every instance that it might almost be said the custom is dying out.

Let it be borne in mind that I am writing of a single locality, the Atlantic seaboard of the Middle States, and of this region I am disposed to make the statement that man has so modified the lar

that bird-life is rapidly losing its one-time characteristic features. It is sad to think that birds have seen their best days, and what we now have left us, as the chief charm of our outings, is but a lingering remnant of the great concourse that not only filled the valley, but made glad the outermost parts and neglected no nooks or corners of the land. Making due allowance for travellers' exaggerations, it is still evident that we have, except of the English sparrows, not one-half of the birds of some two centuries ago. Even though the flocks of red-wings may sometimes reach well into the thousands, I have positive knowledge of much larger flocks than ever Wilson or Audubon chanced upon. In 1722 a flock of these birds appeared one September afternoon on the Crosswicks meadows "that shut out the sun and caused great concern among the farmers, who feared if they came to the fields every green growth would be laid waste." Blackbirds then were feared and for years after by reason of their numbers; and, seemingly, when in such flocks they were far more bold than ever as individuals.

It has been suggested by some one that proba-

bly, in Indian times, or when the country was heavily forested, such birds as the red-wing and grakles or crow-blackbirds were really less numerous than now; and that the extensive cultivation of corn had to do with their increase and favored the flocking instinct. This is an error. Writing of crow-blackbirds, or "maize-thieves," as he says the Swedes called the familiar purple grackle, Kalm states of those he saw in New Jersey: "They are very bold; for, when disturbed, they only go and settle in another part of the field. . . . They fly in incredible swarms in autumn; and it can hardly be conceived whence such immense numbers of them should come. When they rise in the air they darken the sky and make it look quite black. They are then in such great numbers and so close together that it is surprising how they find room to move their wings."

This was in 1749, when the amount of cleared ground and acreage of corn was not greater than in the palmy days of Indian supremacy, for Kalm was mistaken about Indian agriculture, and the statement, "they planted but little maize," is misleading. If small, their fields were numerous, and

some were used for so long a time that to this day they have not recovered their fertility, the application of patent plant-food even availing little.

Why do they congregate in such numbers? It has been suggested that in early autumn their food was to be found only in limited localities, and they naturally drifted there, moved, one and all, by the same cause. In other words, the upland fields, the spring-holes, the grassy nooks in old field-corners, where they nested, offered nothing but shelter, and to stay longer than during summer meant to starve. The fact that scattered birds do frequent the nesting-places contradicts this; and the food found in the meadows is not greatly different, and often too many gather in one spot for all to be fed. Whatever the bird, there seems to be nothing gained by flocking, and much is lost. It appears to be an inherited instinct that, once a source of delight and unattended with danger, is now, as ever, attractive, but directly disadvantageous.

We are accustomed to look upon certain species of birds as flocking in autumn, and that others never do so. I am convinced that all were gregarious originally, but changes of environment

have caused it to be relinquished ; but it is astonishing to find that there are few birds that cannot be found at least "in loose companies," as it is commonly worded. In September the bluebirds occasionally fly in pretty compact flocks of fifty to one hundred individuals, and a company of twenty or thirty is a common occurrence. The common kingbird is another well-known species that flocks to some extent, and a third is the Baltimore oriole. I have seen the females and young of the preceding summer in flocks of certainly one hundred individuals, and when on the wing they kept so well together as to merit being classed as a flock, rather than a semi-independent gathering. It is evident that such close association, as in the case of red-wings, of bobolinks, of rusty grakles, and other birds, could not occur if there was no power of communication and no predetermination as to movement. I have yet to see a large flock of birds without guards perched in commanding outlooks, and know from experience how difficult it is to outwit these sentinels. It has often been my afternoon's amusement to try to plunge into the midst of a thousand feeding blackbirds, and I

never succeeded. I have reversed the conditions more than once, and, being concealed, have had them pass within arm's reach, and then I took notes of them as fast as possible. That they talked faster when they ate was evident, but my disguise never was effective for long. They always suspected that something was wrong, communicated their suspicions, and now the mystery: one and all rise from the ground as one body. Not always, but so frequently that a telegraphic signal is evidently theirs that informs a thousand, it may be, at the same moment. Without this power, this possession of rudimentary language, a flock of birds would be at the mercy of every enemy, and they are legion.

Suggestive as is every flock of birds, we really know but little about them. No naturalist has yet fathomed the mystery of bird-life, and bird-slaughter has accomplished comparatively nothing. But no class of animals affords so much pleasure wherever we ramble.

Caught in the Rain.

IT is exhilarating to test those faculties that usually lie dormant, as when, being caught in the rain, you accommodate yourself with bewildering promptness to the new order of things. It is to be accounted good fortune, if the mere turning from a well-worn rut and running over new ground leads one to make merry by reason of such trivial novelty. To particularize: I, with two companions, was caught in the rain recently. All were disposed to make the best of it, and found that which contemplation would have painted sombre tints delightfully rose-colored.

Somewhere ahead of us—how far or near I knew not—there was reported to be an excellent Indian field, and each was eager to collect some curious carving, shapely weapon, or even home potsherds. We had come many miles and dread

returning empty-handed; but, as if the spirits of departed red men were in league with the clouds, when near our journey's end it began to rain, and our courage was not equal to facing a storm. It remained to us to return home or seek the shelter of a near-by woods, and we chose the latter.

Let us hope that our horse was not unhappy, browsing the wet leaves of chestnut sprouts; we certainly were not, feasting on many a product of foreign lands; an inspiriting lunch suggesting postprandial contemplation on my part and a spirit of exploration on the part of my companions. I sat in the carriage and studied the woods in front of me; they hunted for wild-flowers where the trees offered moderate protection: we were all happy.

There is little merit in a pine woods or a cedar swamp, because of its monotony. We may be impressed with the silence that pervades it, or by its vast extent, but the pleasure that Byron asserts of pathless woods, if he had such as these in mind, is to me a myth. Animal-life seems largely to shun such spots, as if the same feeling of intense loneliness unpleasantly affected it; but when

we stroll leisurely along, or quietly seat ourselves in such a wood as this, where trees of many sorts are grouped, wholly different feelings arise. That pleasure which variety affords is now our own. We can turn from the tall, arrowy pine to the stately chestnut, from sturdy oaks to the graceful liquidambar; or, tiring of these, scan the thrifty undergrowth that to-day was brilliant with golden, pink, purple, and snow-white bloom.

But for the time this mixed woods was silent. I could detect no sound save the dripping of the sullen rain-drops upon the leaves. Not a bird chirped, not a squirrel barked, or timid wood-mouse rustled last year's leaves. Wanting this feature, I turned to the trees themselves.

One noble chestnut, directly before me, embodied all the dignity of tree-growth, and I longed to know its history. What of the storms that had tested its strength; what of the summer's heat and winter's cold that had nourished its growth and bade it rest for a season; what of the men that had come and gone, resting for a while in its generous shade; what of the children that had gathered its fruit, since its first few nuts were

scattered on the ground beneath it? But a tree is not communicative upon short acquaintance. It is shy of a stranger, as it were, and only warms into genial but mute companionship upon seeking its protection. Then, it may be, every wrinkle of its rugged bark will brighten to a smile, and the limbs that at first were held aloft will reach over us as sheltering arms.

With the many beautiful flowers that the wanderers continually brought to the carriage were numbers of those clammy, curious growths, familiar to many as "Indian pipe." Attention being called to it, the plant was found growing in great luxuriance everywhere about us. It was a rather strange but pleasant coincidence. Here we were deterred from relic-hunting, and with this plant, that is so suggestive of the Indian's chief treasure, his tobacco-pipe, scattered over the ground. If it be true that the plain bowl and slender stem, fashioned in clay by the Indians, is their oldest and original form of pipe, then, indeed, they may have taken a hint from the plant in question. Nothing is more common on one-time village-sites of these people than clay pipes of this pattern, and their close re-

semblance to the plant mentioned very naturally gave rise to the common name.

Time and again, as my companions wandered away in search of new treasures, I fell a-dreaming ; and therein lies a merit of a wet day in the woods. The patter of the rain upon the carriage-roof, like the songs of childhood, brought back that other, beneath which I can never rest again, the roof of the little unceiled chamber of the old farm-house, where I whiled away the rainy days of forty years ago. The same low plaint of the dripping trees filled the air ; the same gray mist walled in our little world ; the same dull, leaden sky shut out the sun. But never a hint of sadness sobered us then ; why should it now ? Why, indeed ? But how usually it does ! Be the effort ever so sincere, we fall short of perfect joy, having put by childish things. I know I love the woods as when a child, but their greeting now is more formal. I can chase a butterfly with old-time ardor, but the ecstasy of victory is mine no longer. It is a melancholy change from loving a captive for its beauty only to merely prizing a specimen because of its rarity.

I have said there were no birds about the woods.

As the day drew to a close, crows began flying over, and their familiar calls filled the air. Again I should have indulged in reverie, but my companions' return held me to the solid ground of heartless fact. It was time to return, and my eagerness to still listen to the "dear old crows," as I called them, was greeted with ridicule. That such a bird should awaken pleasant memories, or be listened to with pleasure, was evidence of mental weakness. I do not know what passed in their minds, but that they feared I was strangely affected was more than apparent. But no gibes can cure me of loving the crows, and I trust not to suffer from so strange a whim. If man, to be happy, must have a hobby, why not this of mine? My defence of these much-maligned birds led to my hearers' suggestion, to talk thus savored of a crank; but, bless me! why worry if dolts call you names? Who ever saw a fool in a flock of crows? and, alas! who ever saw a flock of men without its quota? To be cunning as a crow is a laudable ambition; to be knowing as a crow, a liberal education. Why not love them? They afford me both pleasure and profit, and of what use, under

the sun, are the dolts who bray "*crank*," "*crank*," when they encounter men who can see beyond their shadows?

Dispute, happily, ended as we turned towards home, and as the horse would not or could not take a quick step, we had abundant opportunity for botanizing by the road-side, if by so dignified a name one may call the gathering by armfuls of golden-rod, asters, and that gorgeous September bloom, gerardia. All the available space in the carriage being filled with flowers, it is little wonder that pedestrians stared and children called to us. As we afterwards learned, the county fair had closed the day before, and we were credited with being benighted individuals that had not been aware, at the proper time, that the visitors were leaving. How strangely vivid is the average imagination! All on a strictly scientific errand, and my companions learned specialists from a great city, and yet this was the impression of the villagers we met!

Free from the gibes of one village, we were even less fortunate in the next, for as the horse neared the stable his pace quickened, and undue haste

broke the carriage. Here was, indeed, disaster ! The yellow dust of the golden-rod had showered upon us until we were well streaked, and now the generous mud of Jersey by-roads spotted us freely. And in this plight we had to walk to the railway station. It was of little use to talk learnedly in the hearing of others. My companions were set down as tramps, and nothing more, and so, it seemed, were in proper company, for to be thus accounted has been my fate whenever and wherever I have rambled, whether the skies were clear or, as to-day, I chanced to be caught in the rain.

Persimmons.

I RECALL a conversation once held with an obstinate man in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who insisted that we had no persimmons in New Jersey, and was only convinced by reference to Gray's Botany. It is not an unusual occurrence for the New Englander to be in the dark about our Jersey lowlands, and if he was brought here blindfolded would swear he was in the Carolinas, if not farther South. Well, what the people up North know or do not know matters nothing; we do have persimmon-trees, and in abundance. They are in almost every tract of mixed woodland, and often single trees are found along the road-sides. Whether the ground is dry or damp seems to matter little, for the tree is sure in either case to be a thrifty one, even if not very large. In one important respect it is of consequence what the

soil is, for every boy will tell you there are persimmons and persimmons: fruit that is never good, and other, when frost-nipped, that is really excellent.

What of the tree itself as it stands in the woodlands of to-day?

Turning to Kalm, the level-headed Swede, who saw more in Jersey than most naturalists have

since discovered, I find he associates the tree with wet grounds, "round the water-pits," as he has it; and of the wood itself remarks, it "is very good for joiners' instruments; . . . but, after being cut down and lain exposed to sunshine and rain, it is the first wood which rots, and in a year's time there is nothing left but what is useless." Let me add, that as firewood it is exasperating, and many an evening has been spoiled for me by having too much of it on the andirons. It is an ebony, according to botanists, and can be used as Kalm mentions; but remember also what he says of it, and gather none for the winter's wood-pile.

If there were but one kind of tree in the world, the forests would be as unattractive as crowded streets. The plain would afford the rambler his best loafing-place, if not his only one. But there are many trees of many kinds, and each has an individuality of its own, quite apparent to him who strolls for pleasure and in a receptive frame of mind. Perhaps this is vague, as it doubtless is nonsense to those who see in trees only so much lumber, so I will restate the case. An oak, a weeping-willow, a holly, and a pine will very dif-

ferently impress the Rambler. When you stop for a moment in your walks, on finding a notably perfect example of any one of these trees, you more than admire its beauty; you fall to thinking in lines that such a tree always suggests. The thought of a tree or trees in the abstract will not obtrude. If it does you are somewhere lacking, or, for the time being, dyspeptic. Oak and *strength*, willow and *grace*, cedar and *gloom*, these are approximately synonymous terms, and not so from your own early associations merely, or through impressions made by what has been told you in childhood. The tree speaks to you. Were this not true, a charm in woodland walks would be lacking. The fact that the motion of the branches is due to the passing breeze should be overlooked, and the rustle of the leaves and murmur that fills every corner of the forest, save where you stand, help in this your fancy. Without a trace of childishness on the Rambler's part, the tree before him is greeted as a friend.

Another phase of the subject must be noted, and that is the effect of early association. Here, speaking personally, the persimmon looms up with

greater prominence than its position among forest trees calls for, notwithstanding Gray says it sometimes reaches a height of seventy feet. Along the hill-side, in the meadows, and skirting the several huge upland sink-holes are quite a number of persimmon-trees, and when rambling about my one-time country home in summer, I probably quite overlook them. They are not a feature of that season. Every tree about them has been long in leaf, and they are lost in the crowd. But pass this way in the golden days of frosty October. Look through the red-leaved branches or over the brown fields, and spy out at last a tree with branches bare as midwinter of foliage, but laden with golden fruit. It is something to be remembered: a goodly sight, one that rids autumn of the charge of emptiness, of being a season of decay and desolation. Doubtless, if this royal-looking fruit competed with strawberries in June, or later with the good things of August, it would lack a champion; but coming upon the scene after all other fruits have been gathered, it has found many to speak for it, even if never loud in their praises. On the yet green and growing grass I

have a pyramid now of this regally golden fruit, and what can be said of it? It is not so brilliant as the crimson winter-berries on the bush above me, nor does it glow like the ruddy fruit of the holly. Even the clustered bitter-sweet, ragged, yet rich in gold and scarlet, is as showy; but then these are not food for man. The persimmon appeals to other senses than that of sight. I fancy every phase of the past summer is in its juices; there are both the torrid noondays and the chilling storms. The extremes from April to October are gathered about its seeds, and not until its wrinkled skin has been thrice grimed with frost will the better elements prevail and the fruit be perfected. Even then there is a lurking imp in every berry, and skill is needed to outwit him. Help be his who rashly bites a green persimmon or crushes the seeds of a ripe one. I have been told that Gray or some one somewhere does or did in a text-book mention this fruit as eaten by pigs and small boys. May I remain so far a small boy to the end that I can eat, with my present relish, wrinkled, frost-nipped persimmons. Eating them means so much. This is no market fruit that has been in

others' hands too often before reaching the consumer. Nature has been the farmer and raised a crop after its own notion. The harvest and the feasting are so near as to be one event; the laborer is the small boy, whatever his years, and to what merrier feast has he ever been invited? What though you dine on the threshing-floor? The fruit gathered has not soiled it, and what statelier temple stands than the autumn woods? You are a guest, not an intruder; and now the feast! Does not the persimmon smack of the wild-wood? How little of the tamed orchard or trim garden in its sugary pulp! The town and all that that means is for the moment forgotten, and you are in touch with Nature while you eat.

Long years ago there lived a basket-maker in the meadows, having a railroad switch to look after and willow switches to weave into such shapes as he fancied. He was a curious man, and had he never seen some people I could name, would have been a success. A book might be written about him, but not now; for the present more prominent than he, in my mind, is his wife's persimmon bread. Tastes change, we are told,

and I might not like it now, but it was better than the average ginger-cake, and possessed the rare merit of novelty. It was something to boast of, and I did boast, and involved it all with mystery, for no one in all that school knew where the basket-maker lived. Every Saturday, in the season, I secured a persimmon loaf and displayed and shared it with the boys on Monday. Life was worth living then, so persimmons, that helped to make it so, have not lost favor since. How often of late I have spoken of this persimmon bread as a novelty, and there has been none to gainsay me! but it is no novelty after all. In Pickering's "Chronological History of Plants" I find it recorded that De Soto found loaves made of persimmon pulp, "like unto bricks." The basket-maker's cakes were only so far "like unto bricks" as to be of that shape. They were really toothsome.

It would appear, according to Kalm, that in early colonial times the persimmon was not so despised as now; pigs and small boys had their share only, not all. Our author says, "In a great book, which contains a description of Vir-

ginia, you meet with different ways of preparing the persimmon," and the older Bartram told him "that they were commonly put upon the table amongst the sweetmeats;" and again, we have a description of how the English and Swedes, a century and a half ago, brewed "a very palatable liquor." The first step was to bake loaves of persimmon bread, and these were then reduced to a pulp, mixed with malt, and so on, until the beer was ready to be bottled.

Did the persimmon bear no noticeable fruit the tree would not be overlooked by the rambler, because, as Kalm has said, it grows by the water-pits. A tree some fifty feet in height, standing alone, and near water, will not be shunned by birds, and in autumn affords too good an outlook not to be constantly visited. Of course any tree similarly situated will be equally acceptable to birds; but this matters not; I have one huge persimmon in mind that is peculiarly favored. Whether in spring or autumn, as the tree's foliage is very late in appearing and soon drops, there is the one requirement of bare branches, and where these are, there will the birds be. The cedar-birds con-

gregate here when not feeding near by; tree-sparrows gather there and chatter so vehemently, some important matter must be discussed; and well I remember the overstaying warblers that late in November I saw darting over the twigs, hoping their brethren had left a few insects in the crannies of the wrinkled bark. Here, too, as in all lone, way-side persimmon-trees, the sparrowhawk takes his stand and surveys the grassy haunts and run-ways of field-mice. And as, in midsummer, the "water-pits," with their abundant attractions of curious animal life, often held me throughout the day, here the persimmon-tree again became a prominent feature, because of the shade it threw over and about me.

Although no strange adventure or narrow escape is associated with this tree, and no ugly trick upon strangers, offering them green fruit, pricks me when I gather the frost-ripened harvest, it is a growth of our woodlands that stands prominently forth as I recall days gone by, and what greater merit has any tree or product thereof than the power to withdraw the curtain that conceals those days of other years which we fancy were

happier than the present? Think, too, as I hope some time to try, of brewing a beer, as Kalm directs, and, in the middle of a stormy winter night, drinking to the memory of those hardy folk who long ago learned the merits of our Jersey woods; and drink, too, to the Swede who, loving the wild life found here, was good enough to give us a most excellent account of it. In a mug of persimmon beer I drink to Peter Kalm!

Traces of Troglodytes.

IT would be interesting to know how far our country roads follow the lines of the old Indian trails. That some do so we have positive knowledge, but how seldom do we think of this when jogging along the present dusty highways, and picture the lazy bucks and burden-bearing squaws as they passed this same way and rested, it may be, in the shade of some still standing way-side oak! If happily our thoughts drift in such a channel, there is added interest even to the most romantic thoroughfare.

Not long since, with a companion, I wandered many a mile over a hilly country, having the Indian uppermost in mind, because we were in search of whatsoever he had left behind, and for long the road and one-time trail were the same. In and out among the rounded hills, sometimes

crossing the sparkling waters that brightened the valley, or pausing by the bubbling spring that welled up from the roots of a spreading chestnut, and wherever we tarried we found that the Indian had been there before us.

It is mere child's play to pick up relics, and it became monotonous before the day was done, for wheresoever we halted had once been a village-site or the spot whereon a wigwam had been built. With what permanent ink fire writes its name ! Burned and blackened pebbles, although cold for nearly, if not quite, two centuries, were everywhere conspicuous, and half those that had escaped burning were battered or chipped. There were strange forms among them. To decipher their meaning is labor and not pastime, and, out for a holiday, it was enough to gather an abundance of such treasure for the winter's study hours ; and, so laden, we finally halted for the night. But relic-hunting was not the primary object of our outing, and we had hurried by many a tempting nook in field or woods, having knowledge of a certain far-off cluster of old trees, among which was a cliff-dwelling, rock-shelter, or what you will ; a place

that for centuries had sheltered man in pre-Columbian days. At least so ran the tale.

It is never wise to build largely upon hearsay. Accept one per cent. as probably true, and if that does not tempt you, stay at home. The excess, if there proves to be any such, is the bonus awarded your courage. The sun went down, not upon our wrath, but our rejoicing. We had ninety-and-nine per cent. in our favor. Rumor for once had held to the straight path, and now our camp-fire chased the dark shadows from a huge rock-shelter. There had been Indians upon the upland fields; this we knew; that they had fished in the mountain-stream that rippled by we had proved beyond a doubt, and it was now left us to determine what of the yawning cave near which we camped. Do not ask, "Why not in it?" One of us drew the line at sharing a bedroom with bats, and then it was dangerously damp so near the water. But this was of little moment. The cave would not run off in the night, and we were within arm's reach if it attempted it. Until long after midnight we rejoiced. There were chattering squirrels and hooting owls to keep us company, and the over-

flying herons called to us from the misty skies. Erratic night-hawks chuckled as we sent columns of smoke into their hunting-grounds, and every vestige of these tame latter days faded from view. We were not, for the time, troglodytes ourselves, but had them for our next-door neighbors.

It was a most strange night, yet one that I would have repeated often as the years roll by. So much of life's pleasure lies in expectancy. Nothing that our dreams called forth was one whit more strange than the reality that at last was well within our grasp. For how long had we wearied of wigwams; dotting, in our imagination, every fair landscape with wattled huts thatched with maize-leaves or rushes! These, we had been told, "were built in groups and surrounded with palisades of stakes driven into the ground." We had a stock of these ever ready to plant at any turn of the road that took our fancy. But now was novelty in most tempting form,—a cave.

Morning came at last. That curious gray light, born of dense mist, and that scarcely more than makes the darkness visible, was sufficient to arouse us, and slight were the preparations for breakfast.

For the first time in my experience the early fire and steaming coffee-pot were too commonplace for contemplation. There was but one influence controlling us: to solve the mystery of the cave. It was a matter of pick and shovel, and poetry promptly took to the woods.

The cave, let me say, is not in limestone, but in shale, and how far, if at all, artificial is a matter of opinion. I could not divest myself of the feeling that man had had a good deal to do with its shaping. My companion thought otherwise, and based his views on the peculiarly friable condition of the rock. As it proved, this is not so important a matter, and I have faith yet in that first impression, that whisper in the ear of the returning ghost that tradition holds once groaned and growled in the cave whenever the night was stormy.

When we came to dig,—for the treasure was hidden in the floor, if anywhere,—a few prosaic thoughts came to our rescue, and we were sobered straightway. We had a thick deposit of tough earth and broken rock to examine, bit by bit, and this over a space some five feet in width and six

or more feet in length. But we were not frightened. Bit by bit we turned it over, and how all thought of drudgery disappeared when the potsherds came to light! Then bones, broken into small fragments, fire-cracked pebbles, more pottery and flint chips. One by one these were spread out to dry, and made a goodly show when the last shovelful of earth was overturned. And now, what of the story they told? Here is one of the delights of archæological research: to reconstruct the past after the digging is done, which is legitimate, and something very different from the theoretical archæology that occasionally crops out in the pages of learned reviews and believed because of its prominence.

The result, as we considered it, was that the cave had not been continuously inhabited, but frequently and for many years. The *débris* upon the floor was not in thin layers, and so to be examined as the leaves of a book; but whatever we found was scattered through the mass and bore no relation directly to other subjects. The charcoal was in little pockets, as if for a single night had a fire been kindled. But that these fires were

started by Indians there could be no doubt. Their pottery, their implements, and bones of wild animals only were found. Deer, wild turkey, mussels from the creek, and nuts from the trees had been their main-stay, and no white man would have hungered with this at hand. Retired and beautiful as the place is, I think no one would have preferred it to the shelter of the grand old woods that covered the surrounding hills. Even with a glowing bed of coals in front of it, it must always have been damp and depressing except in winter, and the difficulty of access when ice and snow covered the ground also an objection. We agreed in this: that the cave was for ages a place of temporary shelter rather than one of permanent occupation.

There was one most striking feature of the cave, a "window," as the farmers called it, in the east wall, and yet it was scarcely intended for such a purpose unless the front was veiled. This hole made me more sceptical of its natural origin, and seemed more probably designed as a means of communication with the next cave, for there was once another; possibly several more. For a long distance along the creek this same shale-like rock

outcrops, and at places there are masses of it now resting upon the side of the cliff that suggest the roofs of just such caves or rock-shelters as I have described. Certainly this is true of the east side of the cave we explored, and what treasures may forever be hidden there! How I longed to lift the huge rock-masses and peep beneath! But why worry? There is many another such place in the valley of the Delaware, and the work of recovering the past, of placing the Lenni Lenâpé where he belongs in Indian history, is far from completion.

It is not a long walk from where I stand by this cave in a shale outcrop to one of grand proportions in limestone rock that has long been known. Along the river-shore the well-defined boundaries of Pechot-wòâlenk can yet be traced, and its prominent feature is the huge cavern, a considerable part of which is still intact. In Indian times, this cave "had a total length of about three hundred feet, an average height of twelve, and a breadth varying from ten to forty feet." The cave in its natural state was divided into three compartments or levels, and each reached by descending a short and slippery incline of at least ten feet.

One narrow passage leads to a dark and gloomy room, about eight feet by twelve in dimension, which is still known as Queen Esther's room. Her royal highness was a talented woman of much influence with the Indians, and during her frequent journeys from Philadelphia to the Six Nations, in New York, made this cave one of her halting-places. So runs the story at least. However all this may be, the Indians made good use of the cave and left abundant evidences of their one-time presence. The name of the locality in the Delaware tongue, Pechot-woalenk, signifies where there is a great depression in the ground, and obviously refers to this cave. The whole surrounding region is beautiful, and the Indians who possessed the land were over-generous, it seems, in allotting it to the Shawnees, who occupied it from 1680 to 1727.

There are other caves that have been found to contain Indian relics, but not perhaps in such a manner as to clearly evidence that the red man himself was a dweller therein. Floods may have carried them and swept from villages elsewhere the spears, bone implements, and beads that have

been found. We must know more of the history of the whole region and of what has transpired since glacial times before speaking positively ; but if the good fortune awaits us to be able to report all the secrets of all the caves, a wonderful chapter will be added to Indian history, and such puzzling discoveries as village-sites buried twelve feet beneath compact beds of sand, high upon table-lands, will no longer plague the archæologist.

Nowhere have the Indians of the Atlantic seaboard been essentially cave-dwellers, as were some of the most ancient people of Southern Europe. This has been explained by the assertion that there are no caves, but, as we have seen, it is untrue. There are certainly sufficient of these natural shelters in the Delaware valley,—overhanging rocks, caves proper, and wide and winding crevices that needed next to no modification to make them habitable. The difficulty is to find those wherein traces still remain of human occupancy. It is probable that where used for temporary shelter the fire would not be in the cave, but at its mouth, and all traces would be obliterated by the winds and rain. This was true, in a

measure, of the cave explored. The fireplace had usually been beyond the projecting roof, and when the back of the room or cave was reached, no trace of charcoal could be found. Certainly, a cave would be sure to attract an Indian's attention. The Lenâpé name for them is *wáloh*, and the fact that such a word was in their language is significant, for they had a word, too, for a hole in the ground, and drew the same distinction that we do. That such natural shelters were often utilized is a fact worth knowing, and how far cave-dwelling was a feature of our Delaware Indians remains to be determined. But we are dealing now with what has transpired since man first appeared upon the scene, and how many caves may be filled with glacial *débris*, upon the floors of which rest the remains of feasts of primitive man,—of the Indian's remote ancestry! Perhaps we are wandering too far from solid ground and may find ourselves immersed in the quicksands of theory. Fearing this, I retrace my steps, and, standing, as the sun goes down, at the mouth of the cave that has been so rudely disturbed to-day, I recall the old-time occupants that have rested here, and dimly

discern them, in fields beyond, returning from the hunt. Every potsherd is a perfect vessel; the coals are glowing; the spears are mounted on their slender shafts; deer and turkeys hang from the giant ash-tree near. This, my fancy,—the heap of broken stone, of bone and clay, veritable traces of troglodytes.

In Winter-Quarters.

WHETHER certain birds are annexationists or not would be hard to tell, but a goodly company of Canadians regularly spend the winter with me here in the valley of the Delaware, and what jolly times we have ! It was later than usual, this year, that we met, but none the less hearty was their cheerful greeting. The wide wilderness of weeds, tangled greenbrier, the grove of stately poplars rang as though the bells of Moscow had been brought with them. There were kinglets and tree-sparrows, snow-birds and bluebirds, black-caps and the crested tit, nuthatches, purple finches, and a winter wren. So much for the deserted woods that newspaper poets are groaning over. Even the upper air was not without its quota, for hundreds of bluebirds were passing to and fro and singing that plaintive autumn song that is matchless of a cool October morning.

Shout your merriest, ornithologists, and declare these birds are not Canadian. Of course I know it, but there is a bit of Canada south of the State-line of New Jersey, which possibly you did not know; and what concerns me only is that my winter friends are from the North country, and some of them very probably did cross the great lakes in coming here. What matters it? They are here, and being a law unto myself, I shall call them "Canadians." The others are here; but better, because more fixed in their ways, are the white-throats. There is a trace of uncertainty in all the rest; but who ever failed to find the white-throats at home? All the year round we have vesper-sparrows in the lane field, and from early October to May the white-throats in the thickets. Perhaps minnows in the brooks and frogs in the marsh are as much a fixture, but it is only perhaps.

To-day I heard their song, though there was overmuch clatter, and how completely the song and the season go hand in hand! To us, untravelled natives, though the whole world was green and the heat of the tropics prevailed, the song of the white-throat would be crisp with frost.

It is the same place and without change these thirty years. The rank growths of summer bar all progress to the stranger, but I have found, as

of old, the one slight trail that leads to the inner court, and here I propose to stay and listen. This is the white-throat's winter-quarters, and I fancy they do not take my intrusion unkindly. Other

birds are not crowded out, but they are transient visitors ; for the time being, the white-throats and I are at home.

The charm of this sparrow's song lies in the evident satisfaction of the tone. There is not a trace of longing, but a superabundance of content. It recalls some of the old people whom I have known, who occasionally gave way to whistling a few notes, looking into the far-distant past as they did so, and then coming back to real life with a frightened look. Such people remark, "Oh, excuse me; I was thinking!" as if they needed an excuse. So with the white-throats; they seem always to be thinking, and they are. But of what? Has the painted hill-side and the gilded meadow aught to do with it? Is it the haze and shimmering that softens every angle and blends the harshest clustering to a beauteous whole? This, I fancy, gives color to their thoughts and its dreamy expression; for "let sage or cynic prattle as he will," the surroundings have to do with a bird's ways in all directions. It is not a valid objection, either, that in summer there is not the same dreamy surroundings, but all the activity and merriment

known elsewhere in the bird-world. Very true, but what of the six months of each year in the alternately dreamy and dreary thickets of New Jersey? Live six months on the Delaware meadows and the recollection of that experience will not fade away, even though you mount the shoulders of a saint and peep into Paradise.

I very vaguely recall, just now, a canal-boat trip reported in a magazine. The authors went through the best parts of these meadows and said there was nothing to be seen between the two towns that are separated by these wonderful lowlands. They were not careful in reading the proof-sheets. Grant them credit for meaning there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the town. But evidently they never saw the meadows, though their eyes rested upon them. It matters not. There are half a hundred kinds of birds that know them well, even in winter, and I bear testimony that they are excellent company. Winter birds, too, have an advantage over our summer contingent, in that they are not "wrapped up in their babies," as I heard it said of young mothers recently. No, birds now are free, and how thoroughly the white-

throated sparrows enjoy it! As I sat where the noontide sun could shine upon me, I watched these birds, as often before, but now they were newly suggestive. There were five on the same reach of stout greenbrier, all facing me. At brief intervals one would chirp and the others reply, but there was little movement and no demonstration. How vividly they recalled certain loungers on the long tavern porch! There were five of them, too, and I was ever glad to sit near by and listen to their drowsy talk. They talked of old times, and the birds here make me think of my old times; for, be it few years or more, our best times were those farthest removed from the present. The Delaware is now very tame since I have seen the St. Lawrence, but it is none the less dear, and tells so strange a story that few believe it from hearsay. It is commendable loyalty to defend the merits of one's birthplace, and I think those the wisest birds of their kind that make this river valley their home. The white-throats and I are one in this, and so what wilds in the remotest regions can equal the greenbrier thickets of the homestead meadows? We are not exclusive,

and many a visitor is made welcome. Prettiest, merriest, most restless of them all are the kinglets. You have but to sit still to meet them face to face. To-day I had them within arm's length, and heard many a lively chirp as I startled them by some uncouth sound I made. As in all birds, each day brings to the front some marked peculiarity, and we think of the creature in that regard only. What swallowing capacity they have! One found a huge worm in its travels, and at first glance it seemed nip and tuck between them. That was due to my ignorance. There was a struggle, of course, but the bird came off conqueror, and ought to have looked twice as big as before. Such incidents have no effect upon the appetite. It was ready for another before the first was swallowed. Only the white-throats seemed indifferent in this matter. They, too, were spectators, and never once looked for food.

The nuthatches came and went. The chickadee was somewhere overhead in the persimmon-trees; a crested tit whistled from time to time, and I fancied I heard a cat-bird. I know a chewink was scratching among the dead leaves. But will

this continue? It is an enormous change that is wrought between October and January, and what of the midwinter storms? If there is actually a storm, then even the south hill-side will be deserted; but if it is but clear and cold, where the thermometer ranges is of little moment. Because you shiver and ache, even when wrapped in fur, do not judge your neighbor as equally tender. There are cakes and ale for our winter birds when you look at Nature with a shudder, so desolate is its every aspect. I have seen them on dress parade with the mercury at zero. With grass as brittle as spun-glass, and every twig encased in ice, the cardinal grosbeak has headed the motley troop, and every bird in the neighborhood has marched along the hill showing its best paces to whomsoever would look. Nor were they mute. Not one but sang as joyously as ever the robin greeted morning in the month of May.

It is worth our while to meet birds when in their winter-quarters. Why, as has been fancied, should they be mopish and unentertaining? It would seem as if animal life was but sleep when the cares of reproduction have passed, in many

people's minds. A bird and a bird's nest always go together. This is true, too, of midwinter, and a bird's nest without bird babies is well worth consideration. Not all our birds huddle up in the bushes as the sun goes down, and trust to the little shelter of scantily-leaved twigs. The winter wren, I know, has the same sleeping-place day after day, and this I have seen it fit up until storm-defying. The titmice in December will build nests that they soon abandon, as if they knew a storm was coming up and they proposed to keep dry while it raged. Flying squirrels find themselves with strange bedfellows occasionally; and how often have I found birds sheltering in the hay-mow! Birds that winter with us have need of all their wit. The struggle for existence is not lessened because no longer burdened with the care of young. There is less available food, and death-dealing storms to be defied. But when these have passed, under the clear skies, my happy white-throats and all their companions are blithe as ever. But who yet has kept track of them from October to May and knows of their coming and going and doings of each day while in winter-quarters?

There is work to be done by the winter rambler as well as by him who strolls afield in summer. Forcible evidence of this is the fact that apparently favorable conditions do not influence the birds. In other words, beautifully calm and warm days may be birdless, and forbidding, chilly, half-stormy days may be birdful to a remarkable degree. It is never safe to predict in such matters. I recall one beautiful November day when all the earth and air was simply perfect. I started across lots as the sun was slowly sloping in the west, and saw at a glance how complete was every arrangement, but it was as if you were alone in a vast theatre. The rich brown tones of the ripened leaves; the dark cedars with their dusty fruit; the tufts of gilded and bronzed grass; an andropogon bearing eider-down tufts; shimmering cobweb that stretched from everywhere to all places whatsoever; and a mellow sunlight that gave welcoming warmth to all. What more could be asked? yet there was not a bird in sight. Not a vesper-sparrow, yet never in June had they known better days; not a song-sparrow on the weed-grown fences; no bluebirds in the air. This is the

nearest to utter desolation that I have known,—a perfect and yet a birdless day.

While yet the sunlight lingered I walked on and on, until a chilling breeze from the river drove me back. Here were birds. Bluebirds were trying the cedars, as if any one of them would not afford sufficient shelter. Snow-birds darted from bush to thicket and back, and warblers by the score sought refuge from the coming storm. There were enough birds in every tree to have made the whole sunlit fields ring with joy; but no, perverse things, they must crouch and shiver by the river shore, and fret because the days were growing colder and shorter.

It was miserably dull the next day. A chilling Scotch mist rested on the fields, and the oak leaves wept—shall I say?—at the woful change. What now of the birds? I asked, and later found them merry, active, and every one afield. It was dull enough to dampen the ardor of an English sparrow, yet not one of them was snugly housed in its winter-quarters.

The Dutch on the Delaware.

ZIGZAG journeys are not to my taste, either as matters of personal experience or as the subject-matter of books; but I have taken several of late, passing in the most abrupt manner from an island in the river to the college book-stack.

Buried inches deep in gradually-accumulated soil rest the ruins of an ancient house: buried fathoms deep in the mouldy pages of forgotten books are the records of stirring times, before Philadelphia was, when there were Dutch on the Delaware.

Where I have been paddling in my canoe for many months there is a large island. I have been paddling around this, not over it. Like all the others in the river, this little body of fast land is fighting against two great odds, and slowly wasting away. An occasional freshet dumps a mass of

rubbish now and then, but far oftener carries away a goodly slice of some fair field or woodland strip. Certain it is that the tide covers many an acre now of what, even within historic time, was cultivable ground. Huge trees, that within the century crowned a bold headland, have been undermined and swept seaward by the floods. This steady destruction has not in all cases been an entire sweeping away of the island shore, but often of so much earth only as to leave exposed the long-hidden traces of other days. In brief, the island has for ages been a closed cabinet, and now time has rusted its hinges and the floods carried off the door, leaving to the aimless prowler of to-day to rifle the rotten shelves of such treasure as remains.

This is how it came about. During a recent ramble I found a yellow brick upon the sand; and, looking farther, another, and curious old red bricks, and bits of roofing tiles, and pipe-stems; scattered everywhere odds and ends that could only have come from some old house near by. But where? It needed but to ask the question to change from aimless Rambler to explorer, and then my troubles began. It was not enough to search

for the spot whereon had stood the house, for this was soon found; but who lived here; when did he build; when and why did he leave? A hundred questions plagued me at once, and I took refuge in the book-stack.

As far back as 1668, we learn that Peter Jegou purchased a tract of land including this island, and for his own use built a house, which, by the way, was an inn, and the first house of entertainment, or tavern, built on the Delaware. It stood near the mouth of a large creek, and on what is now the main-land, the Jersey shore; while within sight, on the end of the island, was another house, and one most advantageously situated, for it commanded a perfect outlook down the river, which is here fully a mile wide. We will not speculate as to the guests of Jegou's tavern, nor as to who were his neighbors. The whole matter would probably have been irrecoverably lost to history had Peter not gone to law, and left on record that, of this island and the Jersey shore hard by, he was "in Lawfull possession until ye Jeare 1670; att w^{ch} tyme yo^r Plt. was plundered by the Indians & by them utterly ruined as is wel knowne to all

ye world." This is pleasant reading. Think of being "utterly ruined" for nine years, and then bobbing up serenely in a lawsuit and winning it! But better news awaited me. About the same time the two men living in the island house were murdered. I was delighted, and hurried back to the island. To think of murder and a state of siege and all the wild tumult of midnight surprises having happened so near home! Heretofore the Delaware Indian, except among the mountains and in far later times, has seemed a commonplace creature, that gave way to Dutch, Swedes, and Englishmen without a murmur. Now I know better, and every arrow-point and stone axe is of added interest.

Having gathered the relics that the floods had scattered, I commenced to dig, and soon brought it all to light. But let me not anticipate. I would that some one had written a learned essay on the art of digging. It is something more than mere shovelling of dirt, pitching aside with a spade sand, gravel, and clay. It may mean important discovery at any moment and the bringing again to light of day of long-buried treasure. This is a

powerful incentive to dig. The world has had a host of Captain Kidds, and no one will question our right to search for whatsoever they have hidden. Then, too, let it be whispered, there is a supreme delight in digging out of bounds. Of course an archæologist, historian, or curiosity crank looks upon himself as not amenable to common law, and in his case trespass is not trespass. I speak from experience, governed in all such cases by a juvenile phrase as faulty in grammar as in morals, but very convenient,—*finding is keeping*.

I stood now on the bank of the river, looking landward. Stood where sturdy Dutch pioneers had passed and repassed many times, and I almost worked myself to the pitch of seeing the well-worn path leading from the dwelling on the high ground to the little wharf. There is almost nothing left now for the imagination to build upon. Here is the same island, but how changed! The same river, but lacking many a feature of its prehistoric days. Here, happily, all trace of human industry is shut out, and we have to do only with what Nature in her varying moods has fashioned. Tall

trees, dense underbrush, and that melancholy array of dead summer fruit, blighted leaves, grass, and seed-pods stranded upon the beach. History has it

that the Dutch called more than one lonely reach of river shore *Verdietige-hoeck*,—Doleful Corner. To-day, at least, this was such a one; veritable waste-land and wasting land, too, for the tide is

wearing the whole island slowly but surely away. A word here about waste-land. Such is not necessarily barren tracts, cold, gray sand dunes, or forbidding rocks. Nature is often most active where man finds no foothold. This is the waste-land that I have in mind ; land that makes it possible for a man to be a naturalist ; land where he who loves Nature loves best to linger.

Sitting upon the damp sand, dotted with bits of the old house and pipe-stems, I burrowed into the low bank with a garden-trowel, making little horizontal holes that would have pleased the swallows, saving them half the labor of nest-building. But at last the steel struck a resisting object that was not a stone, but a curious, long, thin brick. This was the outlier of the treasure beyond, and the digging henceforth was a pleasure, notwithstanding the many tree-roots that had enviously wrapped about the one-time belongings of the defunct Dutchman. A part of a wall was finally exposed, and many small, pale-yellow bricks. The larger red ones were generally perfect, but every yellow one was broken. Next came a part of the roof, still intact, three large curved tiles, and beneath

them portions of what I took to be a charred beam. Hand-wrought iron spikes were found, all twisted out of shape, the effect of heating when the house was burned. One little fragment of glazed earthenware, being slightly curved, I fancied a bit of a beer-mug; but there was no question about the pipes. Either this old Dutchman was the most inveterate of smokers or he had on hand a stock for trading. Who knows but he had a shop here, just as there was a tavern across the narrow creek, and this pioneer settler bartered not only with the Indians but as well with his fellow-countrymen; for the island was in the then line of travel between the west shore settlements on Delaware Bay and Manhattan Island. There is authority for this, inasmuch as somewhere about 1621 an effort was made by the Dutch "to truck and trade with the natives" living on the shores of the river, and in 1623 an attempt was made to settle on the part of Europeans. This island house is a matter of more than forty years later.

I have said the occupants were murdered. These crimes "were owing to Tashiwycan, who, having a sister dying, expressed great grief for it,

and said, 'The Mannetta hath killed my sister, and I will go kill the Christians;' and, taking another with him, they together executed the barbarous facts." Then was the island abandoned, and it returned to waste-land. How soon all traces of the ruined house disappeared can scarcely be conjectured, but, doubtless, the Indians took everything of value, and the destruction was complete. But the history of the troublous time was safe. All the world knew about the tragedy, and, without details, George Fox refers to the incident: "On the 10th of 7th month," he wrote, "at night, finding an old house, which the Indians had forced the people to leave, we made a fire and lay there, at the head of Delaware Bay. The next day we swam our horses over a river about a mile wide, at twice, first to an island called Upper Dinidock and then to the main land, having hired Indians to help us over in their canoes." This is a reference to Peter Jegou's tavern which stood within sight of the island house. Perhaps Fox paused to contemplate these ruins. They offered him a text for preaching to the dusky ferry-men that helped him over to the "main" or Pennsylvania shore. It

may be the ruins were weed-grown and hidden then; if so, the greater interest to me, for, neglected by Fox, the opportunity comes more than two centuries later to revive the history of a river tragedy.

Whether his countrymen ventured back, or some Indian had the courage to do so, is not on record; but one of the murdered men was buried. His bones—a headless skeleton, indeed—were found near by, so near that he can be said to have been buried in the ruins of his house. Certainly the bones had not been exposed to fire; but where was the head? We know of war-clubs and tomahawks. They are common to all the farm-lands along the Delaware even yet: and was the poor Dutchman's head crushed by the assassin? Gathering up the bones—for what purpose I do not know—and whatsoever I could move of bricks and tiles, I sat down, at last, to rest at the foot of an old tree, fancying it, of course, one of the Dutchman's shade-trees, and took in those farewell glances that are ever fullest of meaning. The day was well spent, and that soft south wind, which, according to Roger Williams, was held to

be the giver of every good and perfect gift to the Narragansetts, was blessing now the Delaware, as in good old Indian days. A misty veil shut out the busy towns on either shore, but allowed a shadowy view of what yet remains of the ancient forest. No sounds save those of untamed Nature disturbed this remote, forgotten, long-forsaken spot. A fierce hawk screamed, the crow uttered his alarm-cry, and startled fish leaped from the water, scattering a generous gift of gems in the dimmed sunlight. Such sights and sounds the old Dutch settler had often witnessed, and, for the passing moment, I took his place. I had no need to turn and look at the upturned surface of the river shore, but rebuilt it all on the wide expanse of waters before me. The massive walls of squared oak logs, the huge chimney of red brick without, and lined with smaller yellow ones that made bright the generous fireplace and the great living room. Gleaming through the trees, the bright red tiles of the roof gave to this early home a cheery look, contrasting strongly with the unbroken wilderness that then stretched from the river to the sea.

And, as the sun set, with what a strange cargo did I venture home! A pile of bricks, three precious tiles, a handful of pipe-stems, and, overtopping all, the skull-less skeleton of a murdered man.

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