NATURE NOTES AT NETOP

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

NETOP: Pronounced Nee-Top. Meaning: an old Indian word signifying "friend" or "friendly"

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

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THINK me not unkind and rude,
That I walk alone in grove and glen;
I go to the god of the wood
To fetch his word to men.

Tax not my sloth that I
Fold my arms beside the brook;
Each cloud that floated in the sky
Writes a letter in my book.

There was never mystery,
But 'tis figured in the flowers,
Was never secret history,
But birds tell it in the bowers.

EMERSON

On the Way to the Cabin

TO

ELIZABETH,

MY COMPANION AT NETOP

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BOOK I: SPRING

CHAPTER I

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

'Tis a tune of the spring,
Every year plays it over,
To the robin on the wing,
To the pausing lover.

EMERSON

A LITTLE cabin of rough boards, situated on high, dry ground in the center of a wooded acre. It is used as a vacation house for the summer. Sometimes we stay in the cabin overnight. Oftener we spend just the afternoon there.

Inside, the cabin measures 16 × 26 feet. Six feet at one end is partitioned off to make a woodhouse and storage room. There remains a large single room containing a bed, table, couch and stove. The cabin and furnishings complete, including garden tools, cost about $280.

There is a tiny garden back of the cabin, but the woodchucks benefit most by what is grown there. Sometimes the wild deer come and take a few nips.

A short distance down the road was a clear, cold spring which was deeded to us with the land. This spring bubbled from beneath the shrubbery which lined an old stone wall.

Three years ago a fine new piece of hard surfaced state road was completed, leading past Netop and up through the Notch to Amherst.

Just where the Granby road runs into the Amherst highway, there is a sharp curve. In widening the road at this curve, at the time the state road was built, our spring was buried beneath four or five feet of sand. Now we have to depend upon a big bottle of Mt. Holyoke spring water to quench our thirst. This we take out from the city.

Nearby the spring a little brook gurgles merrily down through a rocky glen and on into Aldrich lake.

There have been no fish in the brook for many years, but this spring it looked so suggestive of trout that Chester dug three worms in the garden one night (while he was waiting for me to plant the morning glories), baited an old rusty fish hook of mine, cut a crooked little sapling and started down toward the Winchester camp to fish. In about fifteen minutes he returned triumphant with two of the finest trout of the season. He made desperate attempts to break all records by getting a third fish with the third worm, but couldn't quite accomplish it.

A RED squirrel makes his home very near our Netop cabin, and is often on hand to greet us upon our arrival. He runs up the hemlock tree by the garden for a few feet, and then stops to peer curiously around the trunk at us, chattering a streak of squirrel talk meanwhile. Two chipmunks have their holes almost at our back door, and we do not seem to cause them much worry. A phoebe built her nest under the eaves of the cabin last year, and came back again this spring to raise another brood. One day I noticed three little gray-breasted birds looking over the edge of the nest, probably trying to screw their courage up to the point of flying.

One summer we took enough time off from planting beans, squashes, cucumbers, etc., — and writing articles for *Nautilus* — to make what Elizabeth calls a rockery. I never heard of one before, nor saw one to my knowledge, but Elizabeth knows all about 'em. You'd think she was born and brought up with them to hear her talk, 'though I believe this is the first one she ever helped to make.

To start with we had a nice pile of dead leaves lying by the side of the path that leads down to the railway. These we bunched well together in the shape of a lump of sugar — brown sugar you know, not the square white lumps. The pile of leaves was situated in a shady place, which is only touched by the sun's rays for a little while at high noon, and consequently is nice and damp.

The next step was for me to shoulder my spade, take the wheelbarrow and transport five or six loads of nice leaf mold to the rockery. This earth was piled on top of the leaves, making a cone-shaped mound.

* * *

THEN one warm, sunshiny Sunday morning when Elizabeth was feeling quite ambitious, and I wanted to go blackberrying, she picked up all the loose stones adjacent to the — as yet — embryo rockery, and piled several wriggly rows about the base of the pyramid, until perhaps one-half the surface was covered with them.

Everything was now ready for the transplanting of the growing things which were to constitute the chief attraction of this rockery. We couldn't get anything suitable at the greenhouse, for which I was rather thankful, as I prefer the wild things anyhow.

On another Sunday morning we transplanted sweet-smelling pennyroyal, with its tiny blue flowers in full bloom, which we found growing in abundance in a mossy place by the brook. We also found several varieties of moss, the partridge berry vine, and two kinds of fern. Somewhat to our surprise, all of these things have seemed to take to the rockery, so far, and all are alive and looking green and healthy.

Then, one beautiful, warm September afternoon, when the hills and fields smelled fresh from

Aldrich Lake Near Netop

The Cabin Turns its Back to the Road

a recent rain and the first touches of fall were in the air, we walked up the railway track about half a mile from Netop, turned into the woods and followed an old wood road nearly to the top of the Notch where the Amherst car line cuts through the rugged Mt. Holyoke range.

On the hillsides we secured plenty of rich material for our rockery, including ground pine, several handsome specimens of fern, wild clematis and another vine the name of which is unknown to us.

Close by Netop there is a wonderful swamp where all manner of sweet-smelling herbs and flowers grow. The flowers bloom from early spring until late fall — always something in blossom. Here in this swamp the catbird's plaintive cry may be heard at almost any hour of the day. When evening comes you may hear the whippoorwill calling to his mate. When the sun rises a dozen varieties of bird voices greet our ears.

We have named our nature home, "Netop." It is an Indian name signifying "friend" or "friendly." It was used by the Indians as a word of greeting.

In the following chapters I will give you some of the annals of our adventures in this secluded corner where nature holds almost undisputed sway. These annals cover a period of several years.

CHAPTER II

NETOP IN MARCH

THE warm, soft, showery, sunshiny April days which we have been having (albeit the calendar says it is still March) have been drawing us to the country.

Every morning as we listened to the robins singing "hurry up, hurry up," and looked forth upon our lawn at the green springing grass and the tulip bed, where the tulips seemed to have grown an inch during the night, we felt that we could not put off "going to Netop" for very much longer.

So one afternoon we went down town and bought a gallon of olive green paint, to be used in freshening the Netop cabin, and took the three o'clock car for Amherst.

When we got as far as Byron Smith's Maple brook farm, we looked to see if he had tapped his sugar maple trees and was perchance boiling sap. We were disappointed to find that he was not doing anything in that line this year.

At Netop we found a few stray snowbanks in the woods, where the ground sloped to the north, and a little ice along the north side of the cabin, but aside from this everything wore a cheerful, spring-like aspect.

We had been reading about half a dozen sum-

mer camps that recently had been broken into and rifled of everything movable. Netop cabin has twice been through the experience, in a modest way, and so we wondered a little as to just what we might find.

Everything was shipshape. My cruiser pacs (lumbermen's shoes) were just where I left them, under the dry goods box, used as a wash stand. There were the scraps of wrapping paper left from our last big hike of last fall, when all the *Nautilus* office force picnicked at Netop and sang songs and played games in the evening around an open camp fire. (I remember Mildred had just been married and her husband was the guest of honor.) There were the rain water barrels, just as I stored them for winter. There were the shotgun shells in the center of the table, the fish lines, the axes and garden tools. There were a pint or two of lethargic wasps on the floor, waiting for the resurrection of spring!

The clover about the east and south of the cabin is beginning to look quite green, with leaves the size of peas. At the back of the cabin the maple buds are swelling fast with the joyousness of spring.

We found wintergreen berries within two or three feet of our door, and the green leaves of the mountain laurel looked forth from beneath the foundation of the cabin.

The laurel leaves are evergreen, and the woods at the back of the cabin are full of it. Later on

the laurel will present a wonderful mass of pink-white blossoms.

Around Netop cabin the earliest flower of spring is the blue hepatica. On this, our first visit, there were only yellowish green leaves with sturdy buds lifting their short heads amidst the brown grass. Too early yet for any color to show.

Out in the garden we uncovered our Luther Burbank rhubarb, which was already sending up a few red, tender looking shoots beneath its winter covering of hay and leaves.

After working all winter in a steamheated office (with a few days off in New York and Boston), the thought of spading up fresh, moist earth, raking it into a fine seed bed, making it rich with fertilizer and planting the first row of peas, or sowing the first lettuce and radishes, gives gladness to the heart and puts energy into the step.

Late last fall, on account of chestnut blight, we had all the chestnut trees on Netop reduced to logs and four-foot wood. The logs were sawed into railway ties at a nearby sawmill. The wood, in half cord and cord piles, is still scattered over the Netop acre. Some of our exercise this spring will come from reducing these piles to stove wood length by the use of a buck saw.

Tomorrow, if Providence gives us a pleasant day, I am planning to buy a new buck saw and saw horse for the editor-in-chief's own personal use — a light saw that will run easily through

those chestnut logs. She doesn't want me to monopolize all the joys of Netop, and, of course, this particular pleasure is one I am willing to share. Elizabeth is strong on cutting down trees, but has never yet tried sawing them into stove wood length — which is a somewhat less exciting sport.

We wandered up the Amherst road toward the Notch. Where the little creek crosses and recrosses the road three times in the space of a quarter of a mile, and close up under the foot of the mountain (we call it a mountain here in Massachusetts), we found a few little cottony looking pussy willows.

Perched on a large rock I saw a gorgeous yellow and black butterfly. He seemed remarkably lively, too. And the birds on every side were announcing the advent of spring. Crows were cawing, in lazy spring voices, phoebes were singing their cheerful, sweet, energetic song, robins were occasionally voicing a few notes in their modulated afternoon tones, very different from their robust, optimistic morning melodies. And there were other birds whose tones we recognized, but whose family names we are not familiar with.

Down across the railway track we could hear the soft, musical gurgle of Maple brook falling over the rocks. It was enough to inspire a poet or a painter — even a house painter like myself!

THREE YEARS LATER

ON Sunday morning, March 31, 1918, a light pall of smoke softened the sunlight and reminded one of Indian Summer. Everyone was burning weeds and rubbish in his garden the previous afternoon, which, perhaps, accounted for the smoke. The daylight saving went into effect early on the morning of the first, and we breakfasted at 6.45, old time, which gave us an early start.

Elizabeth had to arrange for a family Easter dinner, and I had to meet part of the guests at church, after the service, at 12.30. In the meantime I could sneak out to Netop for the first time this spring!

I could hardly believe that it was not October instead of April. The air was cool, but not cold. The sun shone through a magic haze. The robins and other birds sang merrily. At 9.30, when I started for Netop, it was really only 8.30, old time, so the freshness of the morning still lingered.

About a mile this side of Netop I left the main highway and took the little earth road that passes by Bourbonnais' sawmill. Just above the mill I left the car by the side of the road and went up into the pine woods to look for arbutus. Among the pines the snow still lingered in spots, and the arbutus blossoms were tightly curled. A few days of warm sun is needed before the

pink and white blossoms will really begin to show. I did find a few pussy willows, rather over ripe, and carried some back to the car.

Past the mill, over the bridge, up the hill and to the left I went, until, just ahead, where big pines shaded the road, the road bed became a mass of snow and mud. I recalled an hour spent in passing through a similar place while we were on a hunting trip last fall, and decided to back up a few rods to the fork in the road and go back to the main highway.

The cabin looked peaceful and undisturbed. The porch was littered with pine twigs and cones. Robins and phoebes were singing in the trees. But when I unlocked the door, what a litter I beheld! Someone had broken into the cabin during the winter and turned things topsy turvy. He had used one of our tin pails for a coffee pot and left the smoke-blackened pail and a dirty pitcher in the center of the table. Crumbs and bits of paper were scattered over the table and floor. My carefully blacked stove was a rusty red on top and the hearth had been knocked off.

Well, a half hour's work made the cabin look quite respectable, and I could not find that anything of value was missing. I swept up the rubbish, including one or two pints of dead wasps. Not being quite sure that the wasps might not come to life when the weather grew a little warmer, I put all the rubbish, including the wasps, in the stove and burned it.

Then I went out on the porch to investigate the robins' nest which was built last year under the eaves. It looked as if it had been freshly lined with grass, and contained a bit of blue eggshell, left from last year, and a broken fragment of walnut.

Next I gave the stove a thorough dressing with coal oil and, as soon as it was dry, the rusty red top became an attractive gray.

On the north side of the cabin a little patch of ice still lingers, but elsewhere it is very dry and a deep carpet of dead leaves covers the earth. It seems to me I never saw so many dead leaves. They completely cover the hepatica leaves. A little later the earth will be carpeted with purple hepatica blossoms on each side of the path to the garden. Just now you have to look sharp to even see the green leaves. But the bright red partridge berries stand out like gems among the dead leaves. The evergreen mountain laurel makes the woods cheerful at a time when all the prevailing colors are drab and brown. The few hemlock trees also make a beautiful bit of green color wherever they stand.

Monday afternoon I sharpened the scythe and cut all the dead weeds in the garden. Then I raked the weeds and leaves into the center and meditated on whether or not it was safe to burn them. A stiff breeze was blowing, and the woods were dry as tinder. Ever since the woods between the highway and railroad were swept by a

forest fire some years ago I have been rather cautious about starting a blaze. I finally divided the leaves into four small piles, placed a pail of water and an old gunny sack handy, and then lighted a pile whenever the wind died down for a moment. The leaves and weeds burned so rapidly that all danger of the fire spreading by the wind was past in a few seconds. The four or five feet of bare earth on each side was not apt to be crossed by the fire even if the wind did fan it fiercely at times.

Poor Oscar was left out all winter, and he did look decidedly the worse for it! Oscar is the garden mascot and scarecrow, made in the image of a man and wearing one of my cast-off suits.

Just to get a little additional exercise I cut two large logs from the dead pine which was felled last year, and then it was time to start for home.

. . .

I SAT on the doorstep to write notes for *Nautilus*. The hemlocks gently soo-oo-ed in the thin March south wind and sunshine, the dead leaves stirred with the moving of life coming forth from the earth. My muse moved in this unaccustomed measure:

Turn up the corners of yer mouth
An' smile awhile.
Lay yer winter's grouch away.
Ain't no use to nurse a grouch
When the wind is in the south,
An' spring's a comin',
An' brooks is runnin' —
It doesn't pay!

CHAPTER III

NETOP IN APRIL

TWO slender gray brown birds, with long tails and black and brown bars running lengthwise over the crowns of their heads, are searching industriously in the dry grass near the porch for material suitable for their dinner. When I came up the path to the cabin one of the birds was creeping over the porch and steps and finally disappeared beneath the cabin. Not a sound do they make except for the rustling of the dried leaves. I wonder if these can be our phoebes who for several years nested under the eaves back of the cabin? They seem very much at home, and evidently intend to settle here.

What a change one short week can make! Just one week ago the day was raw and cold. A chill wind blew out of the west and an overcoat and gloves were not uncomfortable. The hepatica blossoms were still tightly folded in almost invisible little buds. Not a sign of color did they reveal, and only the most careful searching among the dried leaves and grass revealed the brown leaves of hepatica. Here and there a leaf showed bright green if it had been specially well protected with a covering of fallen leaves or overgrown with grass, so the winter's snow and ice could not touch it.

Today, between the cabin and garden, there are myriads of the bluish purple flowers in full bloom. Down beyond the garden, close to the edge of the woods, there are more of the flowers. There they grow with longer stems and are a trifle larger. The hand of man has not come quite so close to them, and the more primeval environment makes them thrive.

I just noticed that the patch of mountain laurel which grows about fifteen feet from the front door is less than half as large as it was a few years ago. Civilization has crowded it out. Picnics and camp fires and cutting the grass about the patch each summer have discouraged the sturdy little shrubs. Down in the hollow where Elizabeth sawed wood two years ago, the laurel thrives and increases from year to year, because it is undisturbed.

Down toward Netop brook (or, properly, Meadow brook) the robins are softly singing a few notes from time to time. An endless procession of automobiles whirs busily along the highway. The occupants of these motors are gaily decked in coats of many colors and hats ditto. (Aren't women's coats gay this spring?)

There! I just heard the chickadees, whom we have always with us. And there are many more birds about, whose names I have not yet recalled.

I am writing this while sitting on the steps, and am comfortable without an overcoat.

I stopped a moment to look at the vines we

started growing about the cabin and porch last year. Only one of them seems certainly to have lived through the winter, but others will doubtless come to life a little later.

There goes one of those ubiquitous crows with his raucous call. And those little gray and brown birds are still rustling about in the leaves, very close to the porch.

What a combination of nature and man is here. The wind sighs through the pine tree over my head the same song it sang when the Indians gathered near this little hill, and automobiles and cement roads were far in the future. The damp earth gives forth the same sweet odor it did two hundred years ago. The sun gives to this corner of old New England the same warm April days that it did in the days of the Puritans. And I suppose that two hundred years ago there were dreamers, philosophers, poets and nature lovers who sometimes walked near this very spot and watched for the first hepatica blossoms, thrilled at the sight of the green laurel leaves among the brown wastes of grass and leaves, which winter had left behind, admired the sturdy evergreen hemlocks, the slender, graceful young white birches, and listened with pleasure to the musical gurgle of Netop brook as it rushed over the rocks and through the little glen down by the Granby road.

A YEAR EARLIER

OUR pleasant, warm March weather gave place to a cold and cloudy "spell" for April, so we couldn't go ahead very rapidly with our Netop garden. Everything was backward.

Then suddenly, near the end of April, we had a few warm days and everything burst forth as if spring had been bottled up as long as she could stand it, and the creative leaven must now express itself in leaf and blade.

The cool weather helped the grass to thicken up, and our lawn here at home looks much nicer than it did last year.

The first gardening we did at Netop was to reset some of our Burbank Everbearing Crimson Rhubarb, which was too thick for its own good health.

Then last Saturday afternoon Elizabeth and I went out to Netop and took our supper along. I planted some early peas and Elizabeth set out a woodbine, an ampelopsis, some golden glow, a peony and sundry other things.

Then she decided that the trees, or bushes, in front of the cabin were too thick, and started in with the axe to thin them out.

When I came up from the garden she had some of the bushes laid out flat on the earth and was cutting the tops off. At every stroke the axe penetrated the earth about half an inch. I told

her it was evident she was brought up in the city, as she had so little respect for the keen edge of my axe. I reminded her of Emerson, who was so little of a practical agriculturist that when he started in to spade his garden his small son shouted, "Look out, papa, you'll dig your leg!"

This week I have extended the garden a little on one side, by the addition of a few wheelbarrow loads of earth, and by spading up a grassy bank. On this new made land I planted three rows of early beets. A little later in the season we shall plant corn, pole beans, wax beans and other vegetables.

There is a large herd of deer (numbering a dozen or so) roaming about in the vicinity of Netop. Mr. Byron Smith told me the other day that he saw one in his pasture just across the road from our cabin, and also that he saw their tracks by the brook, up above the railway.

We are going to take what precaution we can to keep them from breakfasting off our garden. As the railway is on one side of our land and the highway on two sides, we think there is little danger of the deer coming around, but we are contemplating a small wooden, home-made windmill such as we used to have up in New Hampshire for keeping the crows out of the cornfield.

By tying colored rags to the arms of the windmill, and possibly by attaching small bells, we can make it quite awe-inspiring to the innocent and uninitiated deer.

Then the windmill will serve another purpose, we hope, and that is to frighten away the woodchucks until the garden sass gets a start. We are also going to construct a scarecrow, of the orthodox type, for the benefit of the chucks.

An old woodchuck is a canny fellow, and becomes accustomed to almost anything in time. I was reading an article in *Country Life* recently which said the only way to exterminate a seasoned old woodchuck was by use the of simon pure dachshunds. These little short-legged pups work in pairs, and burrow right into Mr. Woodchuck's hole. One dachshund lies on his back and digs and the other keeps watch outside, for the woodchuck always has two outlets to his burrow. If the dog who is doing the digging gets tired, the other relieves him. They never quit until they get the chuck. Sometimes they stay underground for hours.

However, we don't care to do more than frighten the chucks away, and we are not going to invest $100 or so in stubby-legged little pups for the sake of one or two woodchucks.

One afternoon of this week I went out alone, and Elizabeth failed to come when I expected her. Being in doubt as to whether she might not come on the next car, I waited at the cabin until nearly dark. And such a chorus as I enjoyed for the last half hour. The phoebes and several other birds started up their evening songs, the frogs peeped, and a specially fat robin

perched on a low limb near the foot of the garden and nearly split his throat with song.

I surmised that he might be giving thanks for such a nice, wormy garden, all freshly spaded and near at hand.

We have had some of our back lawn spaded up here at home, and intend to raise a few vegetables on it. Have already put in peas, bush beans, onions, lettuce and radishes.

CHAPTER IV

FLOWERS, SHOWERS AND WASPS

IT is May 12th, but here I am sitting close by the Netop stove, in which is burning a brisk fire of dry walnut and chestnut sticks.

A cold shower mixed with hail blew out of the northeast just as I got here. I had only time to put up the automobile top and get under cover. No work in the garden today. The garden is spaded and ready to plant, but the weather man won't give me a chance to put in the seed.

The purple hepatica blossoms have mostly turned a pale gray, and there are only a few left. Down in the hollow back of the cabin the dainty white anemones are beginning to bloom. They look a little discouraged on account of the cold weather. These are not the true wood anemone,

but a cousin known as rue-anemone. They are distinguishable from the "real thing" by the fact that they usually bear three pinkish white blossoms to a cluster, whereas the true anemone has but one.

A halo of romance has been created by the poets about the anemone. The very name is of romantic origin. It comes from a Greek word, Anemos, meaning the wind. According to the tradition the wind employs these dainty, star-like flowers to herald his coming in early spring.

Another legend attributes the flowers to the tears of Adonis, springing up and blossoming as a wind-flower.

"Where streams his blood, there blushing springs the rose;
And where a tear has dropped, a wind-flower blows."

The Romans used to pick the first anemone of the season and go through a ceremony in connection therewith, which was supposed to guard them from fever. The Chinese plant the anemone on the graves of their ancestors and call it the "death flower." The same modest little star-like blossoms which brighten the woods about Netop are also found in Europe and Asia.

Yesterday I found one solitary gay wings or fringed milkwort just back of the cabin. The Smith pasture down beyond the brook is white with bluets. A nature writer says of these tiny flowers: "Where the white variety grows one might think a light snowfall had powdered the

grass, or a milky way of tiny floral stars had streaked a terrestrial path."

A pair of robins have built their nest just under the eaves of the cabin. The mother is occupying the nest this very minute — sitting on three blue eggs. The nest is made of twigs, strips of bark and strings, and is not more than eight feet from the door.

It looks as if most of the perennial plants and shrubs we set out last winter have survived. The white clematis vine at the south end of the cabin is putting out green leaves, and the buds on the polygonum baldschuanicum at the north end are beginning to swell. The ampelopsis, which is climbing the pine tree by the porch, is showing signs of life.

A delicate cloud of green is beginning to show in the tops of the white birches down by the garden, and the pig walnut buds are beginning to start.

* * *

LAST fall Elizabeth stuck a small pig walnut branch in the earth by one of the perennials and the branch has taken root and is putting out buds as big as any of its fellow walnuts. It sounds almost like a miracle, but I remember hearing an old woodsman say that a branch of pig walnut would live and grow anywhere you stuck it into the soil.

I find quite a good deal of enjoyment as I sit here in regarding the shining surface of Netop stove. There is a leak in the roof, exactly over one corner of the stove, and every spring that part of it is coated with rust. The other day I gave the stove two or three coats of polish and now it looks as good as new. Spring never seems to have really arrived until I get the cabin floor swept and that stove polished.

A few dozen wasps have crawled lazily out of the cracks in the cabin and now and then butt against the screen door in lumbering flight. They are harmless enough so long as you don't try to become too familiar with them. Most of the wasps seem to have been winter killed, judging from the dead ones lying around the cross studding and in the corners of the cabin.

It has stopped raining and partly cleared. The sun shines half-heartedly, smothered with gray clouds. Its light over on the pine covered hillside is like the pale light of the moon. The water drips gently from the eaves onto the porch with a soothing rhythmic sound. Then there is the subdued music of the brook falling over the rocks in the little glen nearby. Just at present not a breath of air is stirring, but it is cold, cold. From up toward the mountain comes the distant musical tinkle of a cow bell.

The birds don't seem to mind the cold. Encouraged by the clearing weather they are singing everywhere. The crows call to each other over

in the pines. I can hear the phoebes, the blue jays and the robins. They are all reminding me that it is way after six o'clock and time to go home.

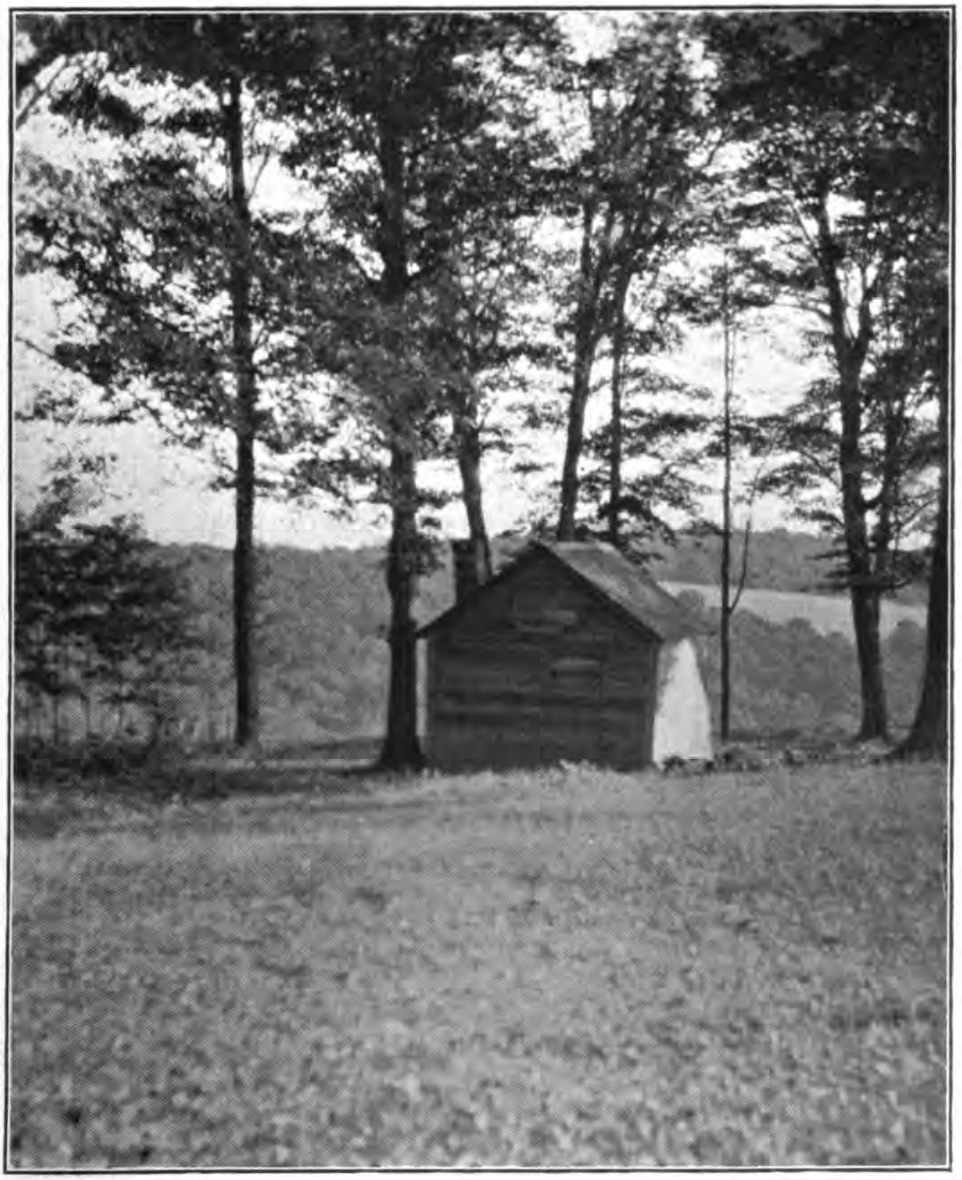
CHAPTER V

A WALK AT NETOP

WE have staid overnight at Netop just once this season. That was along about the middle of May, and on Saturday night. It proved to be almost the only real warm night in the month. On Sunday morning it was slightly foggy and very balmy.

The fog soon lifted from the hills and we started out for a two-mile walk. The apple blossoms were just coming into full bloom, and their fragrance filled the air as we strolled down the road past the Winchester cabin (which looks like a New Hampshire sugar-house) and towards Mr. Smith's farm. Near the top of the hill we turned into the pasture and started "cross lots," intending to strike a road which branched off at right angles to the one we had been following. We had gone but a short distance when we came upon masses of large sand violets.

From this point we had a beautiful view, taking in the white, gleaming Granby church spire, a green meadow with a winding brook and many wooded hills interspersed with cultivated land.



THE OLD SUGAR HOUSE IN WALPOLE, N. H.

A little farther along, down in a hollow where flowed a tiny, softly-gurgling brook, we found a barefooted youngster amusing himself with a water-wheel. The water-wheel was apparently made from a small wheelbarrow wheel with floats nailed to each spoke, and it was set where the force of a miniature Niagara, about eighteen inches high and twelve inches wide, would catch the floats. The power was hardly sufficient, or not well enough utilized to run even this small wheel. A Scotch collie, who was looking on at the proceeding, came forward to greet us and waved his plumy tail good-naturedly.

On the farther side of the brook we came to quite an abrupt and rocky bank along which we found quantities of wild columbine, commonly called honeysuckle.

* * *

WE now found ourselves close by the road we had been aiming for, and after climbing the fence we found growing by the roadside a small, magenta colored flower which seemed to be related to the orchid family, but which we were unfamiliar with. It seemed to thrive in rocky ground, and we saw one of these plants, in full bloom, growing out of a cleft in a rock where it seemed impossible that any living thing could gain a foothold. We have noticed the same flower this year close to our cabin.

We soon came to a wood road, branching off

from the main road, and down this we strolled in search of adventure. We found some very large anemones, which we left growing, as they droop almost immediately if picked.

We descended a sandy hillside, clothed with scattered sumach and white birch, and there, spread out before us, was our broad, green meadow, backed by a wooded hill and intersected by the brook—a broad, deep, swift-flowing stream, almost entitled to the dignity of being called a river. Just at this time it was so high as to overflow its banks, and portions of the meadow were under water. Elizabeth sat down on a bank and refreshed herself with a banana, while I went down near the stream to investigate it at close range, and got wet feet for my pains.

By this time the sun was high and warm, and we started on our return trip. On our way we noted many wild flowers, including Johnny-jump-ups, violets and a yellow flower by the banks of Maple brook, which might belong to the cress family.

On arriving at the cabin we found that a saucy robin had eaten part of a banana which we left on the threshold. Everything else was undisturbed. The windmill in the corner of the garden turned lazily, the scarecrow in the opposite corner kept his silent vigil. At the back of the cabin, on the hillside which slopes up towards Mount Holyoke, the red maples waved their gorgeous blooms and thousands of poplars reared

their silver-gray heads, rustling gently in the breeze, while the soft, hazy light of the May sun shone at high noon. All was still, calm and peaceful as could be.

At this writing (June 5) the June pinks (a species of wild azalea) are beginning to bloom at Netop. They have beautiful pink blooms with a very sweet, spicy smell.

CHAPTER VI

ELIZABETH CUTS BEANPOLES

IT was Saturday afternoon and we were coming home from a fishing trip.

No, we didn't get any fish, even though we followed a game warden's advice as to where to go. But we had a delightful ride over beyond Belchertown and Enfield to the west branch of the Swift river. The west branch is a beautiful little stream that flows through stately forests, tumbles over masses of rocks, passes under a little wooden bridge and winds peacefully through a cow pasture to the main stream. In one place I found the remains of an old log dam and the foundations of a little grist mill that must have dated from the early days. While I was exploring the stream, Elizabeth lay across the front seat of the automobile and took an after-dinner nap, and then read the morning paper (the New York

Tribune), which she never has time to do until afternoon.

Well, as I was saying, we were returning home along about six o'clock by way of Amherst, Mount Holyoke Notch and Netop. I hadn't been at Netop for a number of days, so I stopped a minute to see how things were coming on. Just as I came up to the end of the porch I heard a rustle in the underbrush down toward the railway track, and there in the dim half light, under a bush, was an animal the size of a very large cat. It stopped only long enough to allow me a hasty glimpse, but I guessed it to be a large rabbit. It seemed to be too tall and was too agile for a woodchuck. At any rate the clover around the porch was sadly trampled and mauled, and the turnips in the garden had been nearly all devoured.

Since then I have made several trips to Netop accompanied by my 32 Winchester repeating rifle, loaded with flat-nosed bullets, but so far have not caught a glimpse of the rabbit, or whatever the animal may be. There has been plenty of evidence of his continued visits to the garden. Recently he has been living on the cucumber vines, which had grown nearly large enough to blossom.

There are seven or eight rows of asparagus beet which is big enough to use. The rabbit ate the leaves to the ground for three or four feet on the end of one row, but he evidently much preferred the flavor of turnips or even cucumbers.

The large rainfall in June has caused all the wild plants and the undergrowth of small trees to grow wonderfully fast. There is a wild grape vine on one end of the garden fence that seems to have about doubled in size every time I see it.

The little crimson rambler that Elizabeth set out in the garden two years ago, just about holds its own. It bore a dozen or so blossoms this year. The young wintergreen leaves are large and tender. Several varieties of star grass of different colors grow around the cabin, also a few wild geraniums.

Elizabeth has kept at the work of cutting small trees until she has cleared what she calls a "vista" in front of the porch. You can see the white meeting house at Granby by looking through this vista, but that's about all.

. . .

ONE afternoon Elizabeth cut 22 beanpoles for use in our war garden here at home. When it was time to go home that night, she came up to the cabin with the perspiration dripping from her face and looking as if she had just been taking a trench single-handed, and asked me to guess how many beanpoles she had cut. I knew from her looks that she had cut the full number needed, but realizing the susceptibility of womankind to flattery, I said, "Oh, maybe 15!"

Down in the hollow, where the anemone and mountain laurel grow, there is still quite a pile of

wood left from that which Elizabeth sawed into stove lengths two years ago. We bring in a couple of big baskets full in the back of the car on nearly every trip to Netop.

CHAPTER VII

A TRAGEDY AT NETOP

A TRAGEDY occurred at Netop in connection with the robin family who built their nest over the porch!

Just what happened we shall never know, but one day I found the nest deserted and the robins gone. Fragments of blue eggshell were scattered about the porch and nest. Whether it was a crow or some other bird, or some animal that descended upon the nest and wrought swift destruction, I know not. Perhaps it was some human animal, for on the same day there were signs which indicated that a party of picnickers had invaded the woods and dumped their waste papers in the rain barrel.

Two phoebes come every pleasant afternoon and perch on a tree back of the cabin where they sing for an hour or so with great gusto. They take the place of the departed robins so far as company is concerned.

The season's changes are being recorded at Netop in the endless procession of wild flowers. The hepaticas were in blossom for several weeks.

At their best they made a purple carpet over many square yards of ground between the cabin and the garden.

Then came the fringed milkwort or gay wings (known also as flowering wintergreen). These brilliant purplish rose-colored flowers clustered thickly in the open spaces back of the cabin, but they do not last as long as the hepatica.

About the same time the milkwort was in blossom, the snow-white flowers of the blood root began to appear around the rocky knolls and between the crevices of outcropping ledges. It almost seems as if some of the plants were rooted in stone. The stems appear in crevices where it does not seem possible there could be soil enough to nourish any living thing. The blood root opens its immaculate petals to the sun for a short time only. No flower is more evanescent. If you do not look for it often, you will miss it. Whenever the stem is broken the orange colored sap flows freely. In the olden times good mothers used to drop the juice on lumps of sugar and give it to the children for coughs and colds.

For some reason we missed the dogwood blossoms this year. Possibly Elizabeth's activity with the axe is responsible for this. She finds her chief source of entertainment now, whenever she goes to Netop, in cutting small trees, those from one to four inches in diameter. When it came to a dead pine, about eighteen inches in diameter, she passed the buck up to me.

One afternoon I made a new windmill for the garden and painted it a gorgeous scarlet. Perhaps it will cause woodchucks to hesitate before entering to make a meal from the tender vegetables.

The steady rains have caused all the young vegetables to shoot up in abnormal fashion. The five rows of young turnips in the Netop garden fairly lifted the top of the earth, like miniature mines exploding, in their eagerness to get up to the light and air. I sowed the seed much more thickly than was necessary, which partially accounted for their superactivity. In one row, however, there was an abrupt break and on one end of the row nary a turnip showed its head. The succeeding four rows were likewise blank. The cause was some left-over turnip seed that had either lost its vitality or was never any good. I have now replanted these rows and the turnips will ripen in instalments as they should.

Two years in succession I started some healthy morning-glories at the south end of the cabin, and each time some human or animal marauder cut off the plants in their prime before they came to the blossoming point. So this year I substituted turnips.

Five rows of Swiss chard and six hills of cucumbers in Netop garden are also doing their share towards releasing food for the allies.

The grass around the cabin is growing thick and rank, spurred on by the unusually heavy

rains. Two years ago I covered several bald spots near the porch with a sprinkling of clover seed, and this year it has produced enough clover for a dozen woodchucks. For some reason neither woodchucks nor rabbits seem to be living in the neighborhood now. I shall have to get out my trusty, rusty old scythe in a day or two and trim up the yard. I hate to cut the clover, it looks so green and vigorous. Looking at the small sample growing by the porch steps, I can easily visualize the big, sunny meadows filled with clover, waving timothy, and buttercups with which I was familiar as a boy. I can almost hear the steady purr of the mowing machine and feel the hot sun upon my back, just as I used to feel it when, all through the long summer morning, I swung the scythe in the fence corners and stony places where the mowing machine could not be used.

CHAPTER VIII

ELIZABETH SAWS WOOD

EVERY afternoon about 3.30 or 4 o'clock (when Elizabeth doesn't have a suffrage committee meeting or a Hampden County Progressive Women's League meeting, or something similar to attend) we slip into the car and glide through South Hadley Falls, out over the state road and under the grand old elms of South

Hadley Center, past Mount Holyoke College with its beautiful campus of green lawn and stately trees, past the Skinner summer home with its quarter mile of crimson ramblers, which will soon be in bloom, across the sandy plains just this side of the Granby line, up a steep hill, through the woods toward the Notch — and there we are at Netop, just eight and one-tenth miles from home.

I recently bought a saw and made a saw horse especially for Elizabeth's use. Now we have one apiece. But she has taken such a fancy to sawing wood that she can't spare any of our five or six cords for me. As nearly as I can find out she likes to saw it just to see the pile grow! We bring in two big market baskets full every trip, but do not touch her pile. That we preserve, so far, to look at, and take the small limbs cut up by the woodchoppers last fall.

Down in the warm, sunny hollow, where Elizabeth works, the white anemones have, for days, been dotting the hillside. Indian pipe is plentiful and shad blooms make the woods white in several spots.

About five o'clock the robins and phoebes begin to make their presence known. The two phoebes that, for several seasons, made their home under the eaves of the cabin, seem to have deserted us. They came to see us one afternoon, but their home is somewhere down across the brook in Smith's pasture.

A friendly chipmunk comes out occasionally to watch the work and, when we look at him too closely, scurries under one of the big chestnut stumps that the roadbuilders tore out last fall.

. . .

WE are doing quite a bit of gardening this year. I have radishes, lettuce, parsley, lima beans and fennel here at the house besides half a dozen rows of peas up in Chester's garden that I am looking after. The afternoon I planted the peas little Catharine assisted me. She dropped peas gravely for a time and then looked up at me and asked, "Did Garga tell you you could come over here this afternoon?"

We are planning to dig a trench across the south side of the cabin (where the soil is very poor and thin and stony), fill it with clear soil and humus and plant vines that will cover the end of the cabin. We bought four tons of humus this year, and over one ton is to be scattered about Netop (aside from what was used in the garden) to stimulate the grass crop and make the plants grow.

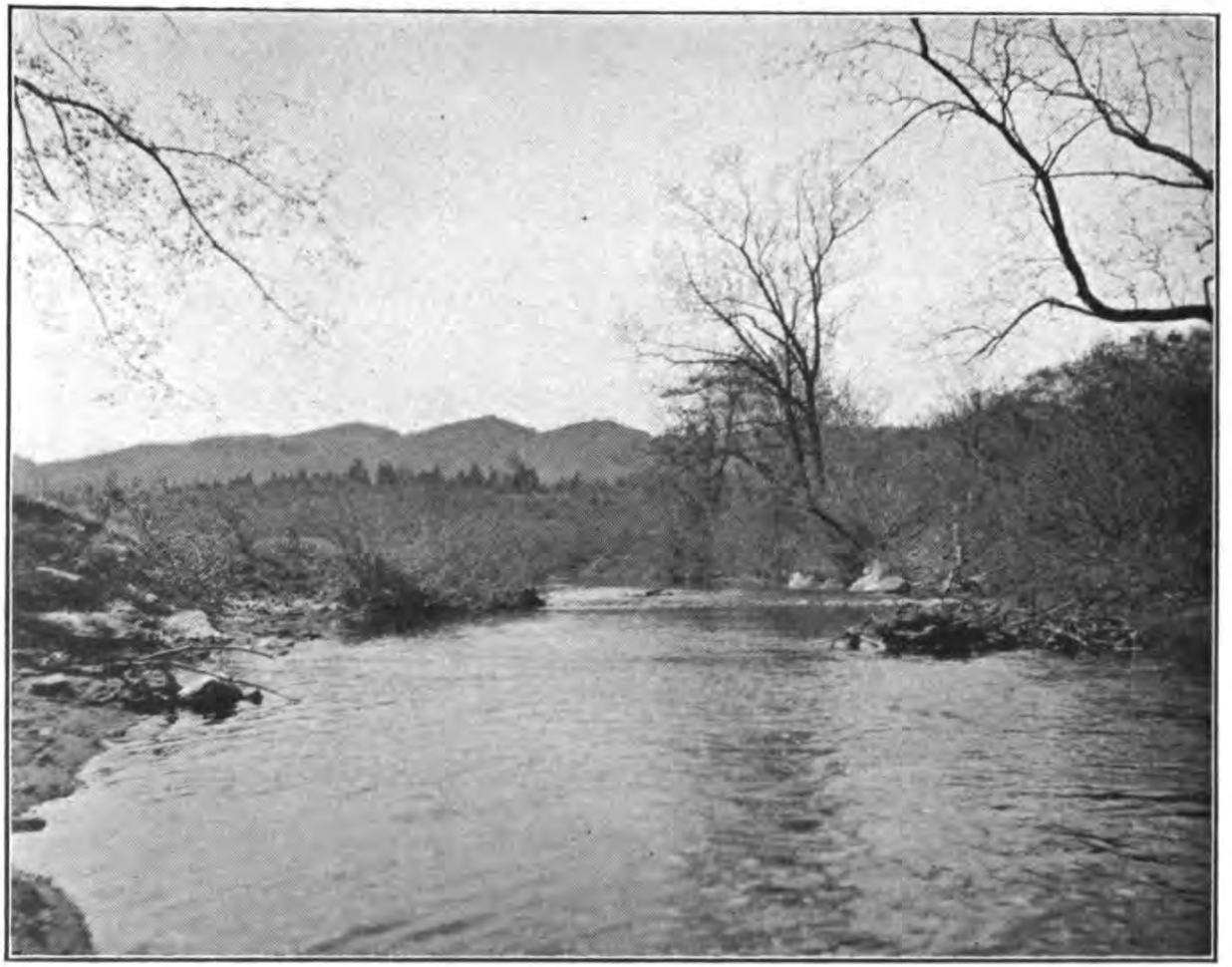
. . .

THE other afternoon we heard a tremendous rattling among the dry leaves over on the hill across the road. Being curious, I quietly crept toward the noise and, peering through the undergrowth, saw half a dozen small brownish birds

(probably field sparrows) scratching among the dead leaves like diminutive hens, and making the leaves and twigs fly at a prodigious rate. After each one or two scratches they paused and quickly searched the ground to see if they had uncovered anything in the line of insect eatables. They were quite timid and, under inspection, became restless and flew up into neighboring shrubs, from whence they gazed with an inquisitive air at the intruder, giving the impression all the while that they were poised for instant further flight.

Now and then as we are at work a flock of crows will fly high over our heads, cawing their lazy, easy-going spring song. Several times on our way to Netop we have seen three or four of these big, black, brilliant fellows close by the road, walking about with their inexpressibly impudent swagger. (They always remind me of little Gavroche in "Les Misérables.") And they would not even take the trouble to fly away, evidently deciding that the big black bugs with white eyes, which travel at such a terrific pace, are harmless so long as you do not get in their way. That is about the way an automobile must look to a crow.

Every afternoon we are at Netop we start home at six o'clock almost on the minute. As we come out on top of the first steep hill and look out through the woods toward Holyoke, we never fail (on a pleasant day) to witness a beautiful sunset and cloud effect. The combination of



LOOKING TOWARD THE MOUNT HOLYOKE RANGE

colors in clouds and hills is different each time. One night the sun will show blood red and the clouds will be streaked with red, while the hills are almost hidden with gray haze. Another night the whole western sky will be shot with streaks of burnished gold and the hills will show a most beautiful soft blue in the gathering twilight.

CHAPTER IX

A WOODCHUCK COMES TO NETOP

OVER Sunday a woodchuck came along and cleaned out the old burrow which has an exit right in the center of the garden. A day later I took out a hunter's license and purchased a Winchester repeating rifle. Perhaps the woodchuck heard the news and took the hint, as I have seen no sign of him since.

You have, perhaps, heard the story of the ox who worked daily with a horse. One day the ox conceived the idea of pretending to be sick, so he could loaf. It worked so well that he soon tried it again, and that night recommended the idea to his mate, the horse. For a third time the ox played sick and loafed, but the horse distrusted the scheme and went to work as usual. That night the ox said to the horse, "Did the farmer say anything today about my not working?"

"No," replied the horse, "but I noticed that he stopped on his way home from the village and had a long talk with the butcher."

Saturday afternoon little Catharine and I went out to Netop all by ourselves. The afternoon wasn't nearly long enough for all the things we wanted to do. There was a row of corn to plant in the garden, Catharine dropping the kernels "almost better" than I could do it, as she expressed it. Then we walked down the road toward the Winchester camp and turned into the pasture after sand violets.

Out on the warm, sunny hillside, by a little juniper tree, we took turns at taking snapshots of each other.

On the Amherst road, which is being rebuilt, a big steam roller was standing quietly (it being Saturday afternoon), sending out clouds of steam. This was such a powerful attraction that we had to pay it a visit and have a little talk with the engineer.

On the way home Catharine remembered that on a back road which we used to sometimes travel over last summer there was a farm house, where two baby goats could be seen in the yard. I explained that the goats would probably be nearly full grown by this time, but that only increased her desire to see them. So we left the state road and drove up over the hills until we came to the home of the goats and, sure enough, there they were in the identical place where we

saw them last year, but grown so large as to be hardly recognizable.

* * *

YESTERDAY afternoon Elizabeth consented to make one of her rare trips to Netop. We had to come home early because we were all going to Mountain Park in the evening to see Priscilla act in the Holyoke Dramatic Club's presentation of "The Road to Yesterday," so there was only about an hour to spend at Netop. Elizabeth sat in the automobile and read the New York *Tribune* (which we think is the best daily in America) all the time we were there. I carried a volume of Russian plays (Tchekoff's) but did not open the book. There were a few extra hills of squashes and cucumbers to put in and the stove to black (I take a very special pride in keeping it bright and shining), and the rest of the time was occupied in trying to wash the blacking off my hands and getting two baskets of wood loaded into the car.

* * *

ALTHOUGH no tramps visited Netop last winter — so far as we could discover — there were some other unwelcome visitors who evidently made quite an extended stop, and helped themselves freely to everything in the cabin. They not only took everything in the eatable line that suited their fancy, but investigated about every

package of any sort in the place, apparently out of sheer curiosity.

These visitors were mice, and we have never seen traces of them at Netop before this spring. They tested every package of vegetable soup in the place, pried into the Postum box, gnawed a hole into each box and package of seeds (eating all the seeds that suited their taste and strewing the others about), and gnawed two large holes in our sofa pillows. Cucumber seeds seemed to suit them exactly. Beans and corn were too hard for their teeth, or not palatable enough. Sofa pillow covers and an old gunny sack pleased their taste, or offered suitable material for a warm bed. In future we will not tempt these little visitors by leaving eatables lying around loose.

If you have lived in the country you know how wasps often gather in the gable end of a barn, on a southern exposure, in the warm, sunny days of May and June, and build their nests and carry on their business in life. Well, they seem to be pleased with our cabin as a location, and they gather close up under the rafters in considerable numbers on every warm day. As soon as the doors or windows are opened, they begin to fly down against the wire screens. Then I throw a handkerchief over them and put them outside. But the more I put out, the greater number there seems to be inside. They are getting very wise, too, for they often fly away as soon as they see me start for the window or door, whereas at first

they would let me approach without stirring. We have about made up our minds to let them live with us in the cabin without trying further to dispossess them.

CHAPTER X

THE FOREST FIRE

I'M slicking up the cabin, getting ready for company. Just grabbed my fountain pen a moment to start in on these notes.

You'll please excuse me now, while I black the stove. It has a rusty shelf where the rain beat in upon it last winter.

After I had finished blacking the stove, I took down the long ladder, climbed up to the gable on the south end of the cabin and brushed down three or four good sized wasp nests with the end of a rake.

After giving my attention to the south end I repeated the process at the north end of the cabin.

There were many wasps on the inside, too. I put on the two screen doors and opened the inside doors. The shutters were tightly closed, so there was no light visible save at the doors. The wasps on the inside would make for the doors every few minutes and strike the screen with a thud. It kept me busy opening the screen doors to let them out. I got rid of twenty-eight

in the course of the afternoon, and am giving them Christian Science treatment to stay away.

I'll not give them exactly the same kind of treatment that a lady in Los Angeles gave to the rats which were overrunning her flat. She told a friend that she treated the rats to go away, and in a day or two they all left and went into the flat downstairs!

(Just laid down my trusty Automat to let out the twenty-third wasp for today.)

* * *

I'VE just been wondering whether those darned wasps don't go around the corner as fast as I let them out and crawl into the cabin again through a good wide crack that's in the south end. Anyway, they seem like the widow's cruse of oil in the way they hold out.

There's a splendid group of young white birches down at the end of the garden and two smaller groups at the north end of the cabin. Their bark looks as clean and white as newly-drawn milk. The white birches always remind me of the Indians who used to live about here and use the bark of these trees for canoes and household dishes. The white birch is a handsome tree, and the young saplings at the back door are like slender, graceful girls.

The wind is giving a nature concert today. It sighs loudly in the pines and rattles the last

year's leaves which persist in clinging to the many scrub oaks about the place.

So far this spring the crows, the phoebes and a chipmunk have been my only companions at the cabin — except the ubiquitous wasps.

. . .

AFTER writing the preceding lines yesterday, I went out to the garden and began spading. Happening to glance up toward the mountain I noticed that there was a lot of smoke hanging about. A little later a fresh breeze blew a cloud of smoke directly over my head, and as I sniffed the pungent odor of burning leaves it dawned upon me that there must be a brush fire near. The leaves and underbrush were as dry as tinder. I started out to investigate. I followed the highway down toward South Hadley, and less than half a mile away, on a wooded hilltop, dense clouds of smoke were rising. The wind was blowing a gale and driving the smoke into the northwest and across the highway.

It looked like a big fire, but as the wind was not setting exactly towards the cabin, I thought the fire might not reach that far.

I continued to work in the garden, but soon heard excited voices down the railway track, and two boys, sweaty, red faced, minus coats and vests, came up to the garden. They said there were several men fighting the fire, but that it

had got beyond control and would surely sweep over our land within a short time.

We went down the highway again to reconnoiter. About ten rods below the cabin a frightened rabbit scurried across the road. He seemed dazed with fear, and let us approach within a few feet.

The fire was coming in our direction. There was no doubt of that. We could see the flames and hear them crackle. They were less than thirty rods away.

The young woodlot, of which our land is a part, is shaped like a letter A. On one side and the point it is bounded by the highway, and on the opposite side by the railway. The fire had started near the base of the A and now extended clear across the lot, from the highway to the railway, and was sweeping up toward the point where our cabin is located.

We hurried back, dug a shallow trench around the cabin and started a back fire. After burning over six or seven square rods, I noticed that the big fire, being partly held back by the wind, was not approaching so rapidly as we had anticipated. Not wishing to destroy any of the young trees unnecessarily, I decided to wait again before proceeding with the back fire.

In the meantime another man had arrived, accompanied by his hired help, a husky Pole. We cut off the back fire with a shallow trench, and all hands went down the highway toward

the big fire. We soon came upon several other men. One of the men was experienced in fighting fires, having once been fire warden. He suggested that we had time to put a trench clear across the lot, some fifteen rods in advance of the flames, and start a back fire.

Selecting the narrowest place available, where there were comparatively little leaves and underbrush, the men started to work, and in less than half an hour the trench was completed from the highway to the railway. We started a back fire all along the trench and had burned clean a strip about a rod wide when the main fire reached us.

Night was beginning to fall as the big fire closed in upon us. There were many scrub oaks in the woods, upon which thickly clustered, dry as tinder, all of last year's leaves. When the fire came to these trees, the flames would shoot upward, twenty feet or more, with a fierce hissing and crackling. The heat was intense, and whenever a gust of wind came our way the smoke drove us back.

A few small pine trees also furnished very combustible fuel for the flames. Here and there a pile of dry brush or an old stump made a bright blaze.

At times the flames blew far out over the highway, and there was some fear that they would leap the road and reach the woods beyond, where the fire would have a clean sweep to the mountain.

The Pole worked madly with his shovel for a few minutes, throwing sand upon the fiercest flames by the roadside. But as the fire came up to our burned strip it found nothing to feed upon.

All along the line the advancing flames died out, and the great fire was no more. Our cabin and most of our trees had escaped injury.

CHAPTER XI

CHESTER AND I GO A-FISHING

HERE in New England the weather is not really suitable for planting even early vegetables until May 1.

But I have a big package of seeds from Dreer's finely illustrated catalog — some of the seeds being my selection and others representing Elizabeth's ideas of what will grow in New England.

The list includes golden wax beans (even the sound of the name makes you hungry and brings before the mind's eye visions of robust rows of plants loaded with long, tender yellow pods), Chinese celery, lettuce, romaine, carrot, beet and parsley.

Last year we had an almost endless succession of string beans from three short rows of white navy beans. They were prolific beyond any beans I ever knew, and the pods were sweet and

tender. The vines were so rank and the pods so thick that many escaped notice, and this spring the dead vines contained many well-filled pods of white beans.

We had more string beans from these three short rows than the family could use, and the managing editor's wife put up several quarts in glass jars for us on shares. We served some of these canned beans at a recent family reunion dinner, and they could hardly be distinguished from fresh beans.

We also raised some pole beans that were wonders for prolificness. The pods were eight or ten inches long, and from the fifteen or sixteen hills we had six pounds of dried beans left over, in addition to those which were used as shelled beans while fresh.

In addition to the beans and other fresh vegetables, our little garden plot here at the house yielded nearly a barrel of nice, smooth Green Mountain potatoes.

Joe has the garden all spaded, ready for fertilizing and planting. We have a barrel of humus — which is nothing but rich swamp muck — which we intend to work into the soil along with a thin coat of wood ashes. Then, with a local application of commercial fertilizer, the plants ought to find plenty of food.

MY own gardening so far this spring has been confined to a hasty, almost frantic, search for angle worms. The managing editor and I went trout fishing the second day of the season, and although I made elaborate preparations, including minute directions to Mary about the lunch, the hot coffee for the thermos bottle, etc., I completely forgot the worms until we were ready to start.

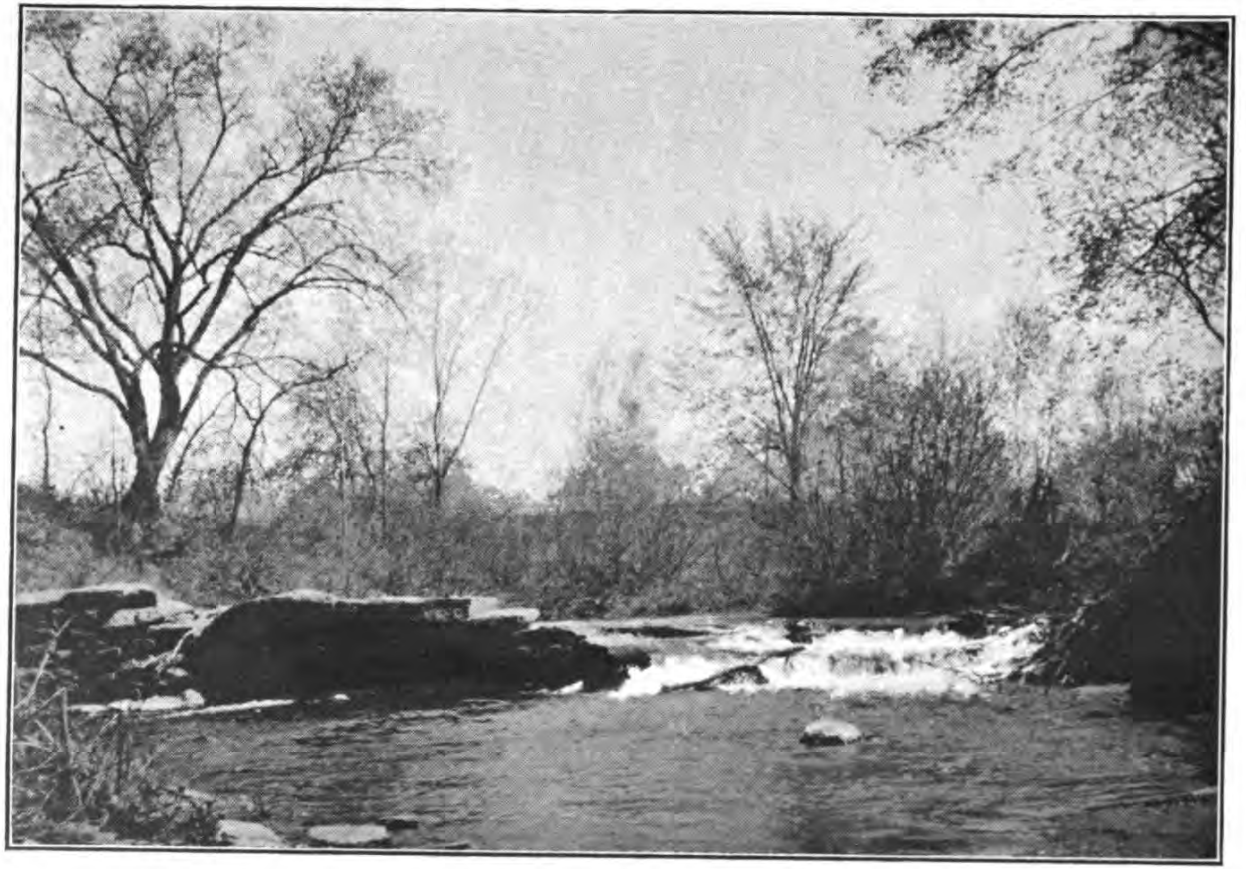
The lower side of the garden, where there was a slight depression and plenty of moisture, yielded several colonies of worms, so the omission was soon supplied.

Then we had to stop down town for extra hooks, a copy of the New York paper, without which no day is for us complete, a five-cent wedge of apple pie, another of cocoanut-custard and a piece of frosted cake — all from the Hudson Lunch — for our dessert.

The evening before, I spent in reading fishing and hunting lore in *Forest and Stream* and *Rod and Gun in Canada*, and in applying a plentiful dressing of dri-foot to my cruiser pacs (lumberman's moccasins), and in demonstrating that most of our real pleasure lies in anticipation!

How many fish did we get? Well, that's a delicate subject with us. But we did get a few good ones.

A few days later the managing editor learned that the Netop brook had been stocked with trout by the kind State Fish and Game Commis-



THE OLD DAM ON BATCHELLOR BROOK

sioners, and we made another short trip out there. We had also read in the Springfield *Republican* of the exploits of an old man of eighty-one in catching a trout that weighed five pounds in a brook near Netop. This had a somewhat stimulating effect upon our imaginations. The resulting demonstration on our own behalf did not come up to our anticipations, and so we have about decided that we have had fishing enough for a year.

While I was fishing along the Netop brook, down below the Winchester cabin, the other afternoon, I came upon a sunny, rocky hillside that was dotted with white bloodroot blossoms.

I saw some Mount Holyoke College girls returning with great bunches of fragrant pink and white arbutus — the most attractive of all spring flowers.

Among the pines on the hillside above Bourbonnais' mill I, too, found some arbutus, but only a few blossoms had fully opened.

CHAPTER XII

STUCK IN THE SAND

A CLOUD of tiny green leaves shimmering in the tops of the white birches, a carpet of green grass between the cabin and the garden, to say nothing of the pleasant sound of Elizabeth's buck saw down toward the road, announce to the eye and ear that another Netop season has opened.

It is six o'clock, and a robin is singing his evening song. Elizabeth, with unwonted industry in this particular direction, is carrying down to the big brush pile some of the bushes she cut last fall.

An hour ago the Italians who are working on the state road passed by on their way home. One of them was singing, in his own language, a bit of what sounded like grand opera. He had a wonderfully smooth, rich tenor voice, which would do credit to a professional.

We talked with the overseer of the construction gang — a lean, sunburned, keen and capable looking Yankee. He assured us that by June 10 the state road past our place would be completed. At present every time we come to Netop we make a detour past Bourbonnais' mill over a mile and a half of muddy earth road.

All last summer we were obliged to make either a long or short detour each time we came

out, and we shall certainly appreciate being able to ride over a hard surfaced road all the way from Holyoke. It will add quite a bit of time to our day.

One afternoon recently I tried coming directly through without making a detour. The road was in the "passable but dangerous" stage, where the grading was being completed. At one point a line of teams and automobiles was waiting while the roadmakers dumped two loads of sand in the center of the road and leveled it off. An old man with a long white beard, who was driving a Ford car, motioned for me to go ahead of him and, slipping the lever into low, I crawled over piles of sand and rocks, descended into ditches and dodged pitfalls for a quarter of a mile. The Franklin is such a light car that it will climb over or through almost anything in the way of mud or sand. When I had passed the worst part of the road I looked back and saw a car which was following me stuck fast, with wheels spinning. The workmen lent their assistance, and in a few moments the car was free.

* * *

WHEN I started home I passed around a sharp angle where the Granby road joins the highway to Amherst, and running a little too far toward the edge of the road, one rear wheel dropped into a hole and I was stuck fast in the

sand. The Italians were just going home, and about a dozen of them came running to help me, talking earnestly and excitedly in their own language and looking very serious and businesslike. Several dropped on their knees and began to claw the sand away with their bare hands in front of my wheels. Others pushed and lifted in the rear and, in less than half a minute, the car moved forward into the center of the road. I turned around and shouted, "Thank you very much," and one of the men replied in Italian. They probably caught the sense of what I said, even if they did not understand the words.

Today I had a visitor — a large gray and red woodpecker. He had a bright red collar around his neck and a very long, heavy beak. Clinging to the opposite side of a maple not ten feet away, he looked around the tree at me with a questioning gaze and then went on with his tap, tap, tapping.

CHAPTER XIII

A WET SEASON AT NETOP

OLD Jupiter Pluvius has been spilling so much water upon us that the Netop garden looks sickly.

Four or five spindling rows of sweet corn have survived the deluge and, although the plants are about one-quarter the size one could reasonably expect at this time of year, yet they seem healthy enough. When the weather man grants us a little more sunshine, they will doubtless take a sudden jump and surprise us.

The squashes and cucumbers are looking fairly well, but the Swiss chard plants no sooner got their heads above the earth than they began to droop and die. Whether excessive moisture or an excess of bugs was responsible, deponent knoweth not. A few isolated plants are still struggling and may survive.

The one thing that does thrive in all this rain is grass. This afternoon I got out the old scythe that has never been ground since we built Netop cabin and cut the clover and whitetop growing around the edge of the garden. It mattered not in the least that the scythe was dull. The grass was so thick and so soaked with water that each stroke of the scythe brought forth that pleasant

"swish" (so dear to the ear of the man who has ever cut grass with a scythe) which indicates a clean-cut swath.

Elizabeth set out quite a number of plants around the cabin this spring — honeysuckle, polygonum baldschuanicum, Shasta daisy, clematis paniculata and the like. They all look thriving except the honeysuckle. Some animal ate the top of that off down to about four inches above the ground. It was set in the trench at the south end of the cabin, where I planted the morning-glories last year.

I recently discovered the home of the Netop woodchuck, or rather I should say woodchucks, for there were five in the family, a mother and four halfgrown sons and daughters. I made war upon them with considerable regularity, using my new Winchester repeater, and succeeded in accounting for three of the family, and today I find the remaining members have pulled up stakes and taken their departure — whereunto I do not know.

* * *

JUST this side of Bourbonnais' little sawmill, which I pass on the roundabout detour now necessary in going to Netop, there is a crossroads which seems to be a favorite resort for all sorts of small animals. Several times in passing we have seen brown rabbits hopping across the road, and today I saw an enormous woodchuck lumber across

the road, slip under the barbed wire fence and go crashing awkwardly through the mountain laurel shrubs on the bank of the mill pond. Perhaps our family of woodchucks migrated to that cross-roads neighborhood.

On the heights back of Batchellor's brook, which feeds the mill pond, there are a number of summer camps with very wide verandas and screened windows. One man has purchased most of these camps and Bourbonnais' mill and mill pond.

It is the intention of the purchaser, I understand, to create a more pretentious summer resort. The new owner of the property is having all the timber cut for a half mile or so along the stream and plans to build a new dam which will make a much larger reservoir — one which will be suitable for boating purposes.

CHAPTER XIV

WE VISIT THE WEST BRANCH OF THE SWIFT RIVER

THE hill across the road from Netop (looking toward the mountain) is covered with a dense green undergrowth.

Just now it is beautiful with great masses of white dogwood blossoms. The dogwood trees are from five to twenty-five feet high, and the blossoms are about an inch and a half in diameter. The poet refers to the dogwood trees as "the sheeted ghosts that through the forest steal," and it is a very apt description.

We have discovered a healthy, young, pink azalea bush right back of the cabin. It had one fragrant blossom on it, and we immediately stuck sticks around the bush to notify wild flower gatherers who frequent the vicinity of the Notch that this particular wild azalea is to be preserved. Back of the cabin the ground is now bright with the purplish pink blossoms of fringed milkwort.

* * *

WE are planning to add a porch to the front of the cabin, using some of the lumber sawed from our own chestnut trees, which were cut last fall. The porch will be without a roof, and

when we have our hikes it will serve as an outdoor platform for the girls to sit on the edge of. The ladies of the Hampden County Progressive Women's League will find it convenient for the same purpose when they have their annual picnic at Netop, next month.

We plan to do most of the work on the porch ourselves. A carpenter from the city will attend to the frame and foundations, and we will do the boarding, add a railing, steps, etc. At one end we will make a sort of arch over the entrance and cover it with running vines.

The trench along the south end of the cabin is completed. I made it about eighteen inches deep and two feet wide. I emptied four hundred pounds of humus (four bags full) in the bottom. This will be mixed with ordinary soil, and then we plan to plant a row of morning-glories and some other old-fashioned flowers.

While I was digging the trench I came across some pieces of stone that looked exceedingly like Indian relics. One piece looked like a stone hammer. Three other pieces, which fitted together, seemed to be parts of a stone dish or mortar that might have been used to grind corn in. These pieces are worn smooth in such a manner that it hardly seems possible they could have been created by the action of a glacier or by any other natural force we are familiar with, except with the aid of human intelligence. There is a very even, well-defined rim extending along the edge of the

pieces we thought might be part of an Indian mortar, and the part that seems to have been the interior of the mortar is worn evenly smooth.

Our belief that these may be real Indian relics is strengthened by the fact that, where they were found, there is a ledge of stone cropping out of a kind that it seems to us would be suitable for making such utensils without the use of civilized tools. The pieces we found may have been fragments of accidentally broken or discarded utensils in process of being made. Perhaps we shall find someone familiar with Indian relics who can tell us whether or not these are the real thing or simply a freak of nature. Netop is situated in a country known to have been frequented by Indians, and arrow heads are often found within a few miles of the place.

There are many varieties of birds around Netop these days — far more than I can name. Late one afternoon when it looked as if a shower was coming, and the atmosphere was filled with mist, a whippoorwill sang a few soft, plaintive notes. Wood thrushes also sing their beautiful long drawn *Nolee-a-e-o-lee-nolee-aeolee-lee* every afternoon. Another bird sings somewhat like a meadow lark. We have not been able to get a glimpse of it yet.

A WEEK ago Sunday we visited Netop by a roundabout drive of some thirty miles. It was a beautiful, warm, hazy day, and the apple blossoms were just at the height of their blooming. We drove over country roads through Granby and Belchertown toward Enfield. Everywhere were apple blossoms, some already whitening the ground with their petals, a few in the beautiful pink bud stage. For miles the air was fragrant with their odor. Elizabeth kept humming, "It is apple blossom time in Normandy." We drove along a high ridge where, looking across the valley, we could see the little village of Enfield nestling in a green pocket in the hills. Once we stopped where the road was very narrow to let a team pass, and found what seemed to be wild azaleas of a purple shade and no odor. They were new to us. We also found a few wood anemones (not the star anemones which grow around Netop and which are a species of primrose).

I wanted to show Elizabeth an especially pretty spot on the west branch of the Swift river, so we descended into the valley. We crossed a tiny bridge and left the car by a pasture bars.

Under the bridge flowed a rapid little brook, which twisted and wound in a perfect maze through the green pasture beyond to the river about a fourth of a mile away. The course of the brook could be easily followed by the dense thickets of alders which lined its banks. Aside

from these the pasture was quite open. Four cows, close by the bars, were taking their mid-forenoon rest, contentedly chewing their cuds. As we crawled through the bars, they contemplated us calmly with the exception of one cow, who arose and examined us curiously, as if undecided whether to run or stand her ground. She decided we were safe and came forward a few steps to see if we had some salt for her.

As we followed the little brook down to the river, we came across big beds of red wintergreen berries and found many more of the wood anemones. There were also many large plants, which we took to be iris, not yet in bloom, and here and there an adder's tongue.

. . .

THE west branch of the Swift river is, in places, a rapid-flowing little stream, seldom more than thirty or forty feet wide, and at times narrowing to rapids not more than ten feet wide.

At this particular spot the river broadens and flows through a grove of elms, red maples, shag bark walnut and other hardwood trees. The trees grow close to the bank and in several places lean across the stream until the tops meet.

The water was crystal clear on this particular day, and at the bottom of a deep pool we saw a big bass who appeared to take no notice of us. He gently wagged his tail to keep from getting

swept down stream by the current, but otherwise remained nearly stationary while we looked him over at our leisure.

When we were just ready to start home Elizabeth stepped on the near running board, and pshh-sh-sh-sh went our tire in a slow blowout. All conditions were favorable for quickly putting on the extra inflated tire, which we always carry, and in fifteen minutes we were again ready to start.

Returning through Belchertown we saw a big black snake wriggling up the bank by the roadside. He shone like polished ebony in the sunlight and must have been nearly six feet long.

At Belchertown we left the main highway for a series of winding, narrow backwoods roads that would ultimately bring us out at Netop.

Coming out of the woods at one point we saw a beautiful young deer feeding quietly in an open field. He was perhaps thirty rods from the road. He raised his head, looked at us a moment and, with prodigious leaps, started for the woods. The last we saw of him was his white tail standing straight in the air as he leaped the fence on the edge of the wood.

A little farther on we came upon an apple tree with half-opened buds and picked an armful of the blossoms to take home. When we got to Netop it was so late that we did not even get out of the car but came on home to dinner.

Down in the woods, near the hollow, where

Elizabeth is sawing wood, she found a big ledge partly covered with a thin layer of soil, where dozens of columbine are in bloom. They prefer rocky nooks around ledges to any other place, but usually we find them in the open where there is plenty of sunshine.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAUREL HIKE

LAST Saturday, after some mutual bribing, I persuaded Elizabeth to visit Netop for the first time this year.

The bribing arose in this way: Down in Prew's store was a certain broad-brimmed Panama hat which she was anxious I should buy. She liked the hat. I did not, or thought I did not, which served the same purpose. Besides, I had just squandered $3.00 on a straw hat. But Elizabeth said my first purchase was frivolous and inconsequential. Not becoming to a man of my grave parts.

So she finally agreed that if I would buy the hat at Prew's, she would go walking with me Saturday and Sunday.

Arrived at Netop it took only a few minutes to inspect the place, look at the phlox which I had carried out from the house and transplanted, cut the heads off a few weeds in the garden, inter-

view a few mosquitoes and we were ready for the walk.

It was a moderately cool June afternoon. Big masses of gray clouds obscured the sun, so it was just comfortable for walking. The route I had selected led up the highway toward Amherst for a half mile and took us right to the foot of Mount Holyoke. This highway was a little dusty, and every few minutes we had to run for the tall brush on each side as some haughty limousine or touring car flashed past us.

Right under the mountain we came to a pasture bars. The rattle of the bars as we let down two and crawled through, attracted half a dozen cows who were grazing back in the pasture. They raised their heads and came toward us, evidently supposing it was milking time.

We now followed what seemed to have been an old wood road back into the undergrowth. Here and there a fine specimen of an ash or maple tree was still standing. For the most part there was only scrub undergrowth and open pasture.

The undergrowth grew thicker and larger as we proceeded, and on each side of the road were immense masses of white mountain laurel blossoms. Some of the laurel bushes were ten or twelve feet high, and loaded with flowers of snowy whiteness. Growing for the most part in the deep shade, the blossoms were unusually white.

The laurel continued for a half mile or more.

Then we came to a place where on one side all the wood had been recently cleared off. We could look away to the north where Mount Holyoke rose abruptly, and as imposingly as it is possible for a 1000 foot mountain to rise, toward the sky.

Then came a winding shady stretch of wood road, completely overarched with hardwood trees, interspersed here and there with young hemlocks and pines. This finally ended and we came out into recently cleared ground, elevated, so that we could look back to Mount Tom and the city of Holyoke, getting a most pleasing view.

From this point the wood road descended rapidly. We passed cords of pine and other soft wood piled by the roadside. The air was filled with the pleasant, pungent odor of drying pine. Just beyond we came out upon the South Hadley-Amherst highway, which runs back of Netop cabin. At our left was a beautiful waving field of timothy. Ahead across the fields a special trolley car waited on a switch. Elizabeth had completely lost the sense of direction and exclaimed, "Where are we?" A few landmarks set her right. A few more minutes and we were back at the cabin.

A Friendly Road

Three Friends

CHAPTER XVI

BIRDS, RABBITS AND PENNYROYAL

I READ the story of Frances Hodgson Burnett's tame robin, published in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, and tried to get on intimate terms with the phoebes at Netop. A pair of them has nested under the west eaves of the cabin each year for four or five years. They looked at me in rather friendly fashion, but would not be beguiled by my crude chirps. They probably thought I was some strange ogre bird with a bad cold. I think their young family has already left the nest. The family was twins. They (the twins) looked solemnly over the edge of the nest at me the few times I visited them, and vouchsafed no remarks, friendly or otherwise. They did not even open their beaks and hint for me to pass out some food as I have seen less well-bred young birds do. Good luck to them! May they find cats scarce and worms plentiful for the remainder of the season! By that time they'll be strong enough to migrate in case of a worm and bug drought.

You ought to have seen the funny procession which sported about our lawn the other day. First there came a pompous, inflated gentleman whose stomach would have done credit to a Dutch saloon keeper. He was clothed in a

gorgeous red jacket, and his back was brown. This was Papa Robin. Next there came, with vigorous, but rather wobbly hops, Robin Jr. Then Mrs. Robin brought up the rear, flying from side to side and anxiously chirping a long string of instructions to her young hopeful. Occasionally she would alight beside him and then flit onto a branch of a nearby bush, trying to get the youngster to follow her. He would look up, flap his wings and sink back as if to say, "I can't do it, mamma." Three dogs came prancing across the lawn and the two old robins became greatly excited. They flew from one side to the other and chirped instructions fast and hard. Robin Jr. hopped close to the foot of a low growing shrub and almost completely hid himself in the undergrowth. Then he kept very still, and the old robins flew away for a short distance and quieted down.

. . .

I SAW another equally interesting comedy (or drama) in bird life this spring. A large, prosperous looking robin, with a very cheerful, self-satisfied air, had found a particularly lengthy and juicy worm which he was engaged in extracting from the lawn. Ranged close about the robin in an exact semi-circle were six hungry sparrows, gazing at him with bulging, envious eyes, while they seemed to say, "Gee! I wish I could pull

worms like that," or, "I wish he'd give me a piece of that worm." The robin seemed to reply, "Aw, go on kids. You ain't big enough to eat worms. They're a man's meat."

When you were a kid, did you ever have a tummie ache and lie abed and drink pennyroyal tea? Or did you ever go out in the oat field, after the oats were cut, and walk right into a bed of pennyroyal? If so you know how sweet and herby it smells. Well, a few years ago we found one or two pennyroyal plants and set them out on our rockery near the cabin. I supposed the dry seasons had killed the plants, but the other day I noticed the rockery was completely covered with tiny pennyroyal sprouts, odorous and luxuriant on account of the recent heavy rains. The original plants had increased and multiplied like guinea pigs.

Speaking of guinea pigs reminds me of rabbits. There are many small brown rabbits around Netop — bunnies we used to call them up in the country. They are frivolous, stupid little creatures, gentle and harmless as kittens. When frightened they give a little mouse-like squeak, run a few feet perhaps, and then sit up and gaze at danger with wide, staring eyes. The other day when I got off the car and struck into the corner of Netop woods I scared up a family of these little brown fellows. They squeaked and scampered, sat up, then scampered again like a lot of kittens. The woods seemed full of them

for a moment, but I guess there were only two or three. I remembered the story of the hunter who saw a coon in every tree he looked at. Repeated firing failed to bring down the game. Finally he put his hand up to his eye and brushed away a wood louse which had got lodged in his line of vision.

* * *

EACH afternoon that I work in the garden there comes a mysterious rustling and scratching about in the woods down toward the car track. It begins about five o'clock. Soft, padded little feet pit-pat over the dry leaves on the ground, carrying the owner on wonderful secret errands, I expect. The bushes sway and rustle. Finally, when speculation as to the cause is about exhausted, a red, bushy tail appears against the trunk of a maple. Then you see that the tail is the property of a lithe, slender, wiry, red squirrel who has come out for his evening meal and to get some needed exercise. He has brought along the companion of his joys and sorrows, and the two of them have been making all the disturbance. They live in the nearby hemlocks, I think.

At times they are disposed to dispute. They heap chattering abuse, apparently, upon someone or something. Whether their remarks are aimed at me or at each other I am unable to determine.

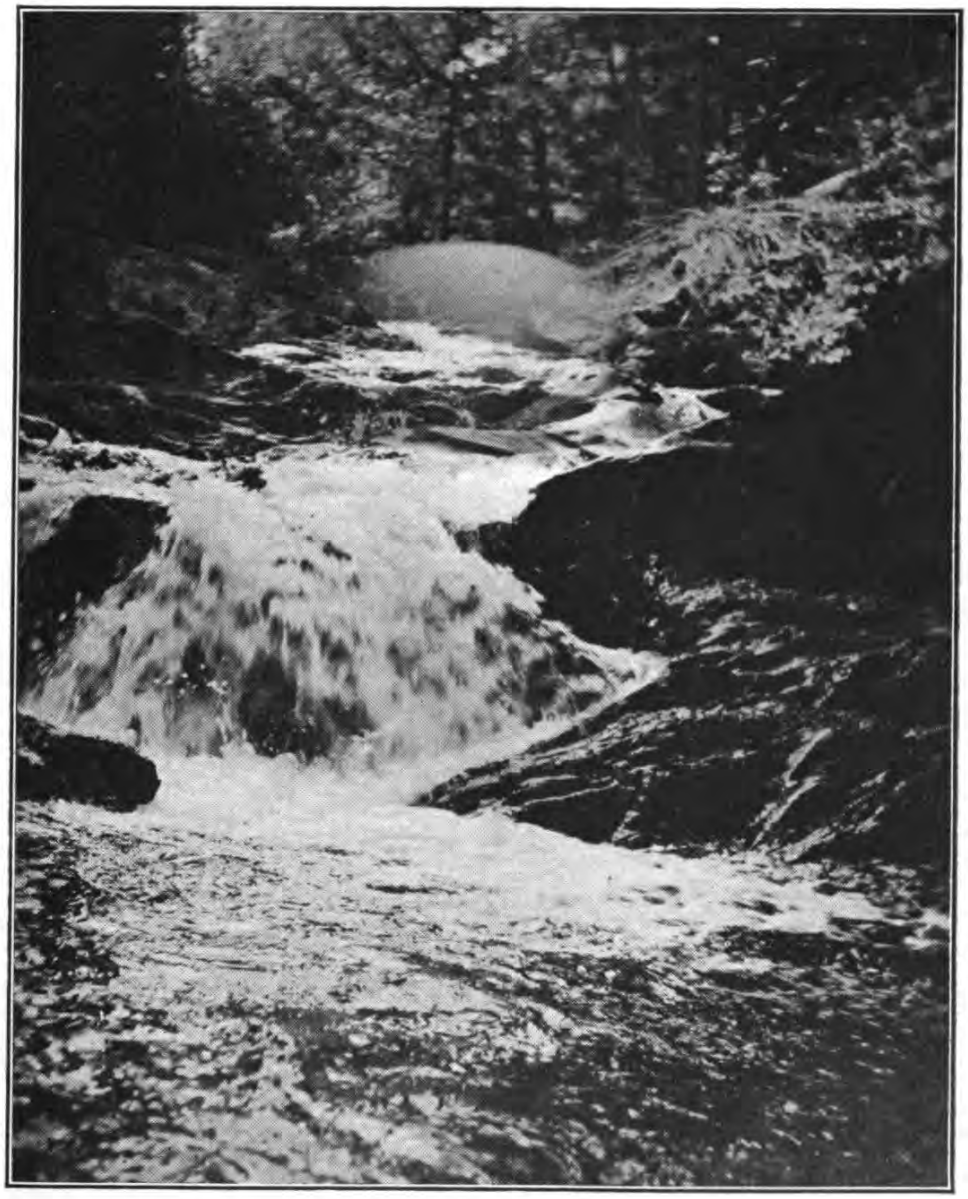
Sometimes I am visited by meek, little, striped chipmunks. There is none of the aggressive quality in the chipmunk such as characterizes his red brother. The chipmunk says little and saws wood. When corn and nuts are in season he is an especially busy person. I have watched him, all through the autumn afternoon, carrying acorns from the trees to his winter quarters. At this season he is not so much in evidence. Sometimes I see just a little streak of red and white as he flashes into his hole when I pass. A few times I have caught him taking a drink. He got it from the full rain barrel at the corner of the cabin.

* * *

THE editor-ess hasn't shown an awful lot of enthusiasm this year for country life. I did get her to go to Netop one afternoon on the plea that we would go fishing in a nice, shady brook which she had never visited before. We took one pole and one can of fat worms. I carried both, of course. We trekked back on the highway for a mile, then turned aside into a pasture. The pasture was fenced with wire. The wire had barbs. It required some connubiating to separate the wires far enough to permit of our crawling through. Then we followed an old wood road through the pasture, and there on the opposite side was another wire fence — or rather it was an extension of the same fence. The wires had

been cut to permit the owner to drive his team through and sled his winter's wood to the house. The ends of the wires had been roughly rejoined by twisting them together. It was easy to untwist them. Of course we were careful to rejoin the wires once we were on the other side. From this point the road ran for a quarter mile through arching trees and around rough mossy ledges. The brook was only a few rods below the road, running parallel with it in a kind of ravine. Finally we came to a wet place in the road, and the editor-ess decided to wait for me there. She had brought along the New York *Tribune* — it was when Teddy and Taft were scrapping vigorously for the primaries states, and news was news — a copy of William Marion Reedy's *Mirror* and another magazine or two with which to assist in the fishing.

Returning in about twenty minutes (without any fish, I didn't expect to get any anyhow), I found my partner had already deserted her post. But she was waiting at the barbed wire fence for my assistance!



WHATELY GLEN

CHAPTER XVII

ELIZABETH PLANS A SLAUGHTER

THE other night Elizabeth stood on the porch at Netop and gazed contemplatively out through the "vista," which she cleared last year, toward the Granby hills and the white spire of the Granby church which, like so many New England churches, stands upon a hill.

It was a beautiful scene. The trees were just at the point where the leaves were reaching their full growth. All vegetation was fresh and clean as if newly created over night. The earth was carpeted with green grass, and here and there patches of violets or bluets lent color to the scene. Around the cabin were the delicate, magenta colored blossoms of the fringed milkwort, a few snow-white rue-anemones, with here and there a cluster of violets. Down on the garden fence two honeysuckle vines were filled with blossoms. From the carpet of dead leaves the brilliant red partridge berries looked forth to gladden the eye.

As I started to tell you, Elizabeth stood upon the porch and gazed upon this peaceful scene in silence. Alas! It seems to be characteristic of typical Americans (and Elizabeth is a typical American) that they cannot look upon the beautiful face of Nature in her wild state without

immediately desiring to introduce a few improvements! They want to polish up the rough places, dig out the stones, level the hillocks and cut the trees. So when Elizabeth's gaze began to wander from side to side, I knew what was in her mind! Right before her lay some of the mute evidence of similar thinking (followed by action) on her part; for there were half a dozen dead trunks of scrub oak, walnut and maple trees (of small diameter, to be sure) which she had cut down last fall while developing the "vista" and improving the face of Nature.

In the vain hope of diverting action I suggested that if she *must* cut more trees, it would be a nice plan to start down at the far end of Netop, near the highway, and leave those trees alive which stood near the cabin. But Elizabeth only chuckled. And by the far-away look in her eye I knew that she was planning new "vistas" whenever the time, the place and the axe should afford her the opportunity.

However, thus far the opportunity hasn't come, because I have been busy serving on a criminal jury. I don't want you to infer that the members of the jury were criminals, although we might about as well have been, so far as our privileges of communicating with the outside world were concerned during those periods when we were incarcerated while deliberating upon the evidence. We certainly were deliberate all right, in one instance to the extent of seven hours, less

a half hour during which the deputy sheriff herded us out to dinner.

That dead pine that I have been working on for a year (off and on) in the effort to reduce it to firewood, is so full of pitch that one of the Netop buck saws (the first one I tried) can hardly be shoved back and forth through the logs. The other saw is set a little wider and runs a little easier. The last time I sawed a log I heard wood borers working in one of the other logs. The borers made a sound not unlike a pair of squeaky shoes, only it was a little duller. A similar sound is made by a bit boring into wood.

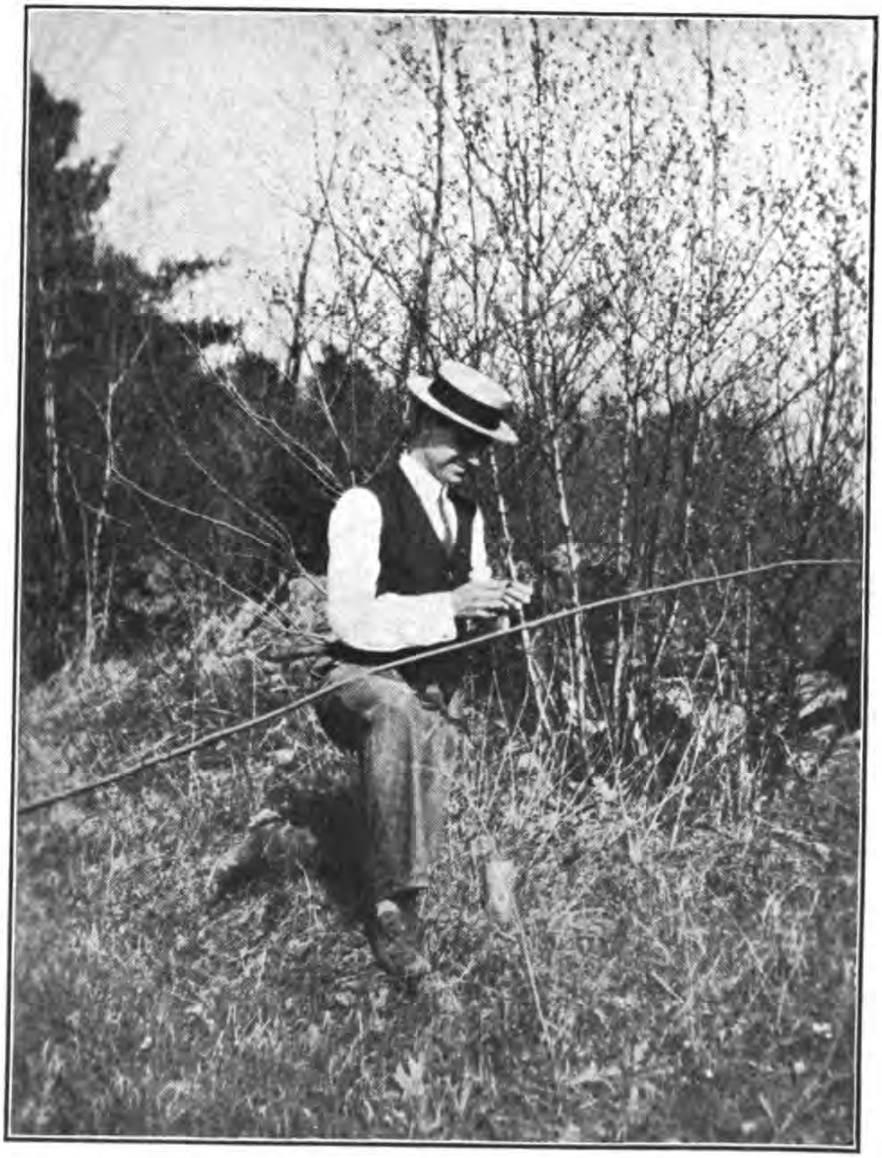
A saucy, pert looking red squirrel sat on top of the corner post to the porch the last time I visited Netop. He gazed at me with his bright little eyes and seemed to say, "What are *you* doing here?" Not until I approached within six feet did he make a sound. Then he uttered a startled little squeak and flashed out of sight on the farther side of a pine tree.

I have the red windmill mounted on a pole in the corner of the garden where it chatters and squeaks cheerfully whenever there is a slight breeze. Oscar, the ancient scarecrow man (somewhat weatherbeaten from exposure to the winds and snows of several winters), keeps watch of the potatoes which are just coming through the earth.

If you should visit Netop about six o'clock in the afternoon you would hear the sweet, wild song of the hermit thrush ringing through the trees,

and (after an interval of silence) quite likely an answering call from the wooded hill across the road. You would look out through the "vista" (if the sun was shining) and see the Granby hills clothed with a wonderful soft blue haze, with stretches of open pasture and dark green woods in between. You would see the group of graceful white birches, at the foot of the garden, swaying in the wind and hear the rustle of their leaves as the branches gently rubbed against each other. You would hear the weird, mystic sighing of the wind in the big pine over the porch. And you would agree that here was a place where one could indeed commune with Nature and relax from the strenuousness of everyday life.

BOOK II: SUMMER



PUTTING ON THE WORM

BOOK II: SUMMER

CHAPTER I

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH AT NETOP

I'm going to my own hearth-stone
Bosomed in yon green hills, alone,
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green the livelong day
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

EMERSON

FOUR families were represented in our Fourth of July family picnic at Netop.

Two of the representers did not talk much. They lay on the bed, in the cabin, and joyously and triumphantly waved their legs and arms in the air, or quietly slept away the warm hours. Every few minutes you might hear some such one-sided conversation as this:

"Now, mother, you keep *out* of there and let him go to sleep."

Or, "*Ed*, they were just going off to sleep and

mother waked them up, about a minute ago. Keep *out* of there."

Or, "Catherine, he's pulling down the mosquito netting and tucking it into his mouth."

About noon we took the two favorite members of the party outside the cabin and placed each of them on a little mattress in the shade of the trees. We covered them with a canopy of mosquito netting. Loving papas and mammas and grandmammas kept the bugs and flies and grasshoppers from getting under or over or through the netting to disturb the afternoon naps of the babies — who were the two favorites referred to, and who acted in the capacity of star attractions all day long, whether asleep or awake.

Early in the morning Chester and I went fishing. It was a mere formality which we observed, for we knew there were very, very few fish to be found. All we brought home was a good appetite for dinner and a few mosquito bites. The impressive part of the ceremony was digging the worms. The hot, dry weather had driven them deep into the earth. We found a damp place down near the spring, where a prodigious amount of digging brought forth a few scrawny worms, quite sufficient for our needs.

It was about a two-mile walk to the brook we had in mind; down the dusty road for a little way, through a pretty bit of pine woods, across a newly-cleared pasture filled with burnt stumps, and finally up a long, shady wood road to an open

pasture, where was the particular pool in which we proposed to try our luck.

Just as we started into the wood road a beautiful gray squirrel slipped silently across the road ahead, and a moment later a partridge flew from the underbrush close by, making noise enough for a turkey. Farther on we scared up two more partridges, evidently young ones, as they lay quietly hidden until we were within a few feet of them — something an old partridge in this part of the world will never do.

We *saw* one lonesome fish. But he remained right in his own little private pool. The intensely hot, dry weather for several weeks previous had caused the brook to shrink to a mere silvery thread. It was but a shadow of the roaring torrent of a few weeks before.

I caught a momentary glimpse of a large, plump snake, as it glided beneath a big pile of brush. It was about four feet long and thick through the middle. We decided it might be a rattler. This was about two miles from Netop. Have seen only two snakes near there in seven years (you see we drink only water as a rule), both small green ones.

Our dinner (or luncheon, if you are city bred) was a more formal affair than our laurel-trip supper. This time we carried the table out under the hemlock by the garden and set it (the table) in due state, with a white tablecloth and porcelain plates and saucers. The chief items on the menu

were green peas — the first of the season —sandwiches, pickles, raspberry preserves, marshmallows and coffee. We had ordered ice cream but failed to make connections with the car on which it was sent out and it was taken right back to South Hadley.

After dinner we sat around on the ground and in hammocks, and told stories and talked politics — especially about Teddy and the new party, for which the sentiment was very strong with most of us.

CHAPTER II

WHEN ELIZABETH MOVES

ELIZABETH has finished sawing the pile of wood down in the hollow where the star anemones and the laurel bloom.

Each time she finishes a pile we have to go through quite a ceremony. Her saw horse is pinned to the earth by four long stakes with hooked ends. One of these stakes is driven into the earth close by each one of the legs of the saw horse until the hooks grip the crosspieces and firmly pin the saw horse down. When it comes time to move, the stakes have to be rapped back and forth with an axe until they are loosened enough to be drawn out. Then the saw horse and stakes are carried to the new location, the

saw horse is moved around half a dozen times to get it manoeuvered into the best position, and finally the stakes are driven in again.

From the hollow Elizabeth moved to a woodpile close by the branch road where we back the car in from the highway. It was right by this road that our largest tree — an immense old chestnut some three feet and a half in diameter — was sacrificed along with the other chestnuts last fall. There was quite a respectable pile of wood there made up from the top and limbs of this old forest monarch.

It was here that the girls had a sawing wood contest the day of our spring hike. Eighteen girls, who had never sawed wood before, cut off eighteen little sections from a round stick while I kept a time record for each. I wrote the initials of each girl on the end of her stick and took into consideration the straightness and smoothness of the cut, as well as the time, when awarding the prize.

Hazel won the prize — two handmade doilies. She made nearly twice as good time as her nearest competitor. I think her success must be due to the fact that she has an aptitude for mechanics.

Then we had a naming trees contest. I went about through Netop woods and wrote down the names of a dozen trees I knew, numbering them in order. The girls followed and wrote down names for the same trees in the same order. Then they exchanged papers. I read off the

names of the trees, the papers were marked with the total number of correct names and the prize awarded to the one with the highest total. Lina was an easy winner because she lives at the Country Club close by the Mount Tom Reservation and has been getting acquainted with trees.

A few days later the Hampden County Progressive Women's League held a picnic and meeting at Netop, and they had similar contests.

The new porch is finished, with the exception of the rustic railing. Young Mr. Dibble came out from Holyoke one afternoon with some two-by-four stuff and built the frame.

Then we went around to Mr. Bourbonnais' little sawmill on Batchellor's brook (about a mile from Netop), where our chestnut trees were sawed into boards and planks, and brought back a load of boards. We had to make several trips to get enough to complete the porch. On two trips we brought wide two-inch planks for a seat around the edge of the porch and for the long steps clear across one end.

A rustic railing extends along the front of the porch and makes a back for the seat. Elizabeth planed the plank seats, and while he was waiting for us to get ready to go home, Joe trimmed off the end of some of the board flooring, so the porch was really a composite piece of work.

The most difficult part of the work, and that which took the most time, was making the broad stairway of four steps leading up to the porch

THE STEPS THAT WILLIAM BUILT

"GRAND BABIES," 1915

from the end toward the garden. If you have ever cut out of solid chestnut plank a zigzag frame for stairs, using only a rather small hand-saw, you know that it requires a goodly supply of time and patience. And it isn't the easiest thing in the world to get your measurements and angles all correct when you have no pattern to go by. One or two minor errors necessitated an hour's extra work with the saw.

One afternoon, while Elizabeth was busy sawing wood and I was hammering away on the porch, we kept hearing the musical tinkle of a cow bell. It came from one of Mr. Newell's cows down in the pasture the other side of Netop brook. Little Catharine was with us, and her curiosity was aroused by the sound and she wanted to know how it was produced. I explained to her that the bell was fastened about the cow's neck, and that whenever the cow moved the bell rang. Catharine waited a few moments and said, "Garper, I want to see that cow with the necklace on."

This has certainly been an ideal season for the garden — no woodchucks and plenty of rain. The cut worms did eat most of our new fangled Chinese cabbages, but Dr. Dixon, who has grown them, says they are coarse and not very palatable, so we should worry. He also advised us that we could protect plants from cut worms by putting a three-inch stiff paper collar around them and heaping a little earth against the outside of the

collar, but I was too busy building the porch to attend to the cabbages in time.

CHAPTER III

A SURE REMEDY FOR WOODCHUCKS

THE little brook in the swamp is not much more than a trickle now. Its banks are over-grown with lush swampgrass, flowers and shrubbery. You cannot see the thread of silvery water except where the railway men have kept a path open to the spring.

Where the path crosses the brook there is a board laid for a bridge. On this I kneel and with a wash basin bail out pailful after pailful of cold water to be used in watering the garden vegetables. In the bottom of the little pool is a mud turtle of gorgeous coloring. He is black with orange colored spots all over his back. Underneath he is more of a slate color. As fast as I turn him carefully on his back he rights himself like those patent toys for children, so weighted that they flop to an upright position no matter how you lay them down. Apparently this turtle did not appreciate our interest in him, for he shortly disappeared.

As I lean over the little stream, at about six o'clock in the afternoon, cool, dank odors come up from it. There is the smell of damp earth, muddy water and herbs all combined. On a

willow not ten feet away I catch a glimpse of a yellow warbler. He looks almost like an escaped canary. An instant he stays and then darts away.

A few rods down the road another little Quaker-garbed bird — a vireo — is expressing great alarm in excited "cheeps." The cause is not far away. In the topmost fork of a young butternut tree close by sits a baby vireo, not yet fully feathered. He is evidently afraid to fly. His twig sways madly in the strong wind and his mother keeps up her distracted "cheep, cheep, cheep," with the regularity of a clock ticking. A half hour later there are no signs of mother or child.

Having filled the water pails we stroll leisurely along the road toward Netop cabin and the garden. (For Netop is a place for recreation only.) The bushes along the roadside are powdered with dust. The grass is burned brown and crisp, this being the season of drought. The soil around Netop is dry and sandy, and all moisture drains off and dries out quickly after a rain.

Right by the big chestnut, where we back in the automobile when we wish to turn around toward town, we leave the road, climb a shrub-lined path to the cabin and pass between the cabin and the big pine to the garden.

By the way, let me record here that we seem to have discovered a sure remedy for woodchucks. Or is it only chance? You shall judge. Someone wrote me that a piece of stovepipe, about three

feet long, stood up in a garden would positively keep woodchucks away. So this year I tried it. And this is the first season, in the eight years we have owned Netop, that the woodchucks haven't destroyed our vegetables long before this time of the year.

We also dressed the scarecrow in a new suit and set him in the center of the garden. In previous years he has not proved effective, so far as woodchucks are concerned, and so we ascribe virtue to the stovepipe. There is a woodchuck living within two rods of the garden.

In the garden the sweet corn is curling its leaves tightly for want of water. Also it is bravely thrusting up its tassels before it has reached much more than half its normal height for blossoming. A shower and some forty pailfuls of water bring temporary relief and the leaves begin to uncurl. The one lone squash vine and the three hills of cucumbers are — so far — thriving under irrigation.

Along the roadside the golden-rod is just ready to burst into dusky yellow bloom. By this token we know that the summer — our delightful summer, with its cool breezes and beating showers and bird song galore, is drawing to a close. The Joe Pye weed is beginning to unfold its magenta colored blossoms, and down in the swamp the tall and stately meadow rue sways in every breeze that blows. The daisy flea bane — which isn't baneful to fleas at all, they say — nods its white heads

A Chestnut Log that Elizabeth Sawed

sleepily. By the roadside the yellow St. Johnswort dwells. In the edge of every thicket you may see the downy heads of the wild snowball. And along the old stone wall back of the spring is a wealth of the pinkish white blossoms of the meadowsweet.

As the sun sinks out of sight behind Mount Holyoke and it grows dusky among the chestnuts and birches, we hear the melodious, flowing, minor song of the whippoorwill. Sometimes it is close by the cabin, sometimes it is far up on the wooded hillside toward the mountain. Usually one whippoorwill's song brings out another's, far away like an echo.

Just after sunset I drag Elizabeth away from her fever of chopping down little trees to make room for the larger ones to breathe and stretch at the tops, letting in sunlight to coax up new seedlings at their roots. We eat our supper of post-toasties and milk and fruit while we listen to the whippoorwills in the dusk, calling ever closer and closer to the cabin.

Just at dark we turn on the electric headlights and the little red tail light of our car and go riding softly homeward through the woods, the fireflies flitting and the breezes fanning us gently. Out over the fine state road we roll, past Mount Holyoke's lovely campus, lights gleaming about us, Mount Tom's illuminated summit house in the distance like a jewel in the night on the swelling breast of Mother Earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUFFED GROUSE VISIT US

QUIT, *quit, quit,* came in quick, half-frightened tones to our sleepy ears one Sunday morning at Netop.

We lay still a few moments considering what it could be that was abroad so early. Then, as the sound continued, we got out of bed, looked from the broad, open window at the back of the cabin (the shutter swings out, leaving a six-foot opening), and there, less than five feet away, we saw a brown bunny gazing at us with bright eyes and a not very frightened expression.

While we were looking at him we heard a sharper *quit, quit,* at the left, and looking in that direction saw two half-grown partridges (ruffed grouse) standing close together and evidently discussing the rabbit. It was their conversation which had aroused us. As soon as the partridges saw us looking at them, they flew into the woods at the back of the cabin with a prodigious whir of wings. A partridge's wings are short, not built for airy flight, and he makes about as much noise getting under headway as a steam shovel. Looking down among the undergrowth we saw another young partridge stalking away and *quit, quitting* in a soft, frightened way.

I think there must be a mother grouse who raises her brood each year in the vicinity of Netop, for I scared up a lot of half-grown grouse last year while picking raspberries.

Speaking of raspberries, they are extra fine and abundant at Netop this year. Both black and red ones grow quite plentifully in the vicinity, and the frequent rains this season have caused the berries to be larger than usual and more juicy.

Chester and I went out last night to a piece of cleared land where the old growth had been cut off, and in fifteen minutes picked enough red raspberries for the family supper. We found a place where the bushes grew thick and close, and had not picked over a space of more than ten square feet before our dish was heaping.

There were lots of sumachs in the vicinity, just coming into bloom, and over our heads the wild bees kept up a continual hum, working among the sumach blossoms.

The squashes seem especially prolific this year. One of our vines has grown from one side of the garden almost to the other, a distance of fifteen or twenty feet. I placed a stick at the end of the runner one afternoon, and in twenty-four hours the vine had grown eight inches. Each separate vine seems to have from four to six squashes forming on it, and I am preparing to thin them out.

Our string beans grew so rank that part of the vines broke down, but there are plenty left. We

have had several messes — great, long, podded, clean, yellow fellows they are, "positively rust proof" the seed catalog says. And they really are.

Our lima beans have climbed the length of the poles and overrun them. I have pinched off the ends of the vines, and they have since filled out all up and down the pole.

We spent the night of July 3 at Netop, Ed and Catherine being our guests. On the morning of the 4th we took pictures, picked green peas in the garden and enjoyed ourselves generally.

In the afternoon Ed demonstrated his mechanical ability (which his wife had somewhat questioned) by constructing a rustic chair. This was so much of a success that Catherine swelled with pride at her husband's prowess and wondered how she ever came to doubt it.

(It is almost always the desire to please some woman that spurs on the man to achievement.)

CHAPTER V

AN AFTERNOON WHEN THINGS HAPPENED

ISN'T it funny how "things happen" thick and fast some days, and then everything runs on smoothly and quietly again. It seems as if Nature is like a clearing house, where events accumulate like checks, and then on a certain day a balance is struck and everything is sorted out to its proper place.

Last Saturday (June 29) was one of the days when "things happened" for us. We have been without a housekeeper for a week or so, and have taken most of our dinners at the Franklin (the boarding hotel where Elizabeth and I lived for the first five months after our marriage and carried on our business and published *Nautilus* from the one room we had there). On Saturday we came home from dinner and about three o'clock started for Netop. The first thing that "happened" was that we missed our car and had to wait at the city hall for twenty-five minutes. We improved the time by doing a little shopping, and when the next Amherst car came along we were in possession of an alarm clock, some supplies for my new camera, some steel pens for Carolyn and a bottle of Jamaica ginger, the

latter being a household necessity wherever girls and ice water come into conjunction.

It was rather late in the day for picture-taking when we arrived at Netop, and the sun was under a cloud. But I was very anxious to secure a picture of Elizabeth standing at the foot of a big chestnut tree, surrounded by green leaves and shrubs. So as soon as we got off the car I started in to shoot with the camera. I had it loaded with a four exposure film, and took four pictures of Elizabeth, one after the other, so as to insure getting at least one good one. I was very careful about the stops, and the length of exposure, and paid great attention to aiming the camera; but when I developed the pictures that evening I found I had completely forgotten to look at the focus, and as a consequence none of the pictures were even recognizable!

That was another thing that happened on Saturday, June 29.

Well, Elizabeth had a great working streak on, and as we expect to stay at Netop July 4th and have company there, she started in to slick up things generally. She draped curtains over the clothes and hats which were hanging on the walls, using little walnut sticks, with the bark peeled off, for curtain rods. Then she scrubbed the floor, every inch of it, and blacked the stove with a new kind of liquid blacking which made it shine better than new.

I put in my time bushing late peas and doing

other work in the garden. We expect to have our first early peas July 4th (in fact, they are ready to pick at the present time).

While we were thus engaged on Saturday afternoon, about two hundred Holyoke girls, under the auspices of the Y. W. C. A., were holding a picnic all about Netop and vicinity. It began to rain gently about the middle of the afternoon, but that didn't seem to dampen their joy in the least.

We had our supper of peanut butter sandwiches and milk, and by the time we were ready to start for home it was almost dark. The rails were wet, and as there is quite a grade where we take the car, the motorman ran by some distance before he could stop his car. Elizabeth had on her new silk dress (for the purpose of having her picture taken) and wouldn't follow the car through the wet grass, so she called, "Come back," and the motorman obligingly reversed the power and slowly backed up to the crossing where we got aboard.

The car crept down the South Hadley hills until just before reaching the Center, and at the top of quite a long grade a woman signaled the motorman, and again the slippery rails made it impossible for him to stop until the foot of the grade was reached. While the conductor and motorman were consulting as to whether or not they should go back for their passenger, and peering through the darkness to see if she was coming, she suddenly bobbed up under the rail

on the wrong side of the car and sang out "Go ahead." She had sprinted after the car and almost kept pace with it, and was somewhat out of breath. As soon as she got her breath she told some of her troubles to the conductor, and he was afterwards kind enough to pass some of them on to us. It seems that about thirty people had met at a certain house that evening to give a surprise party to the inmates, and were somewhat surprised themselves to find the house dark and the people gone to Mountain Park, some ten miles distant. The lady sprinter was on her way to the nearest telephone to see if she could get in touch with the surprisees.

CHAPTER VI

THE WHIPPOORWILL'S NEST

(With a Special Postscript by Elizabeth)

OUR bird families were more plentiful this year than usual. Perhaps we were more active in looking them up. At any rate, we have been watching them with a great deal of interest at times.

You see, there are great climaxes in the lives of these families, and as the drama unfolds from day to day it is far more amusing, once you become interested in watching it, than any stage production.

First, there was the robin family, which we discerned in the cherry tree, right on a level with our dining room windows. (This was at home.) There were four babies in the family, already well-grown when we first noticed the nest. Mrs. Robin was busy, apparently, during all her waking hours, carrying cherries, worms and similar delectable dainties, and poking them down the throats of the babies. They were never left alone more than a few minutes at a time, that we could discover, and their appetites never faltered, for their mouths were wide stretched at the first rustle of the leaves over their nest.

A day or two after our discovery of the nest we noticed one of the young members of the family sitting disconsolately on a limb some distance below the nest. He had the air of a reckless, somewhat defiant and considerably unhappy bad boy who wished he hadn't. His head was rather drooping, yet his bill was cocked at a most independent angle. Every few minutes he rose carefully on his toes and stretched one wing, then the other, much as an athlete might examine his biceps. Then he would hitch a few inches farther up or down the limb. Whenever his mother flew over his head to the nest, he gave a hopeful little squawk, but apparently he was being punished for disobedience. When we thought he was about faint enough to fall off the limb (fully ten minutes having elapsed, we were sure, since he had been fed), Mrs. Robin alighted by his side and carefully deposited a cherry far down the baby's throat. He stuck his head straight up in the air, stretched his neck to its utmost capacity and gulped ecstatically two or three times, then opened his mouth and the process was repeated.

I decided it would be just the proper caper to take a photograph of the nest. The sun would be right for this purpose about noon the next day. So I hopefully ordered plates for my camera and made all necessary preparations.

About nine o'clock the next morning I carefully investigated the nest from the dining room windows, and lo! It was empty! The family had

"folded their tents like the Arabs and silently stolen away."

Later in the day I went out on the lawn and found our friend who stood on the limb the previous day (or his brother) sitting close up to the house. He eyed me in a dispassionate, somewhat critical manner, but didn't seem to think I was worth moving for. I advised him that his tail was too short for a grown-up robin's and that there were wicked pussy cats who delighted to lie in wait for tender chaps like him. But he was impervious alike to ridicule and good advice. So I approached carefully, put my hat over him, reached under it and clasped him closely in my hand. He awoke to the exigencies of the occasion and shrieked for mamma, flapping his wings vigorously. But I carried him into the house, a meek, inglorious captive, where he gazed at the girls in the same indifferent and somewhat bored manner.

After I had taken him outside and was looking for a safe place in which to free him (I did not suppose he could fly), he settled the matter by flying away suddenly, with perfectly appalling vigor. Straight across the street he sailed for a distance of eight or ten rods, with all the reckless abandon of the grown-up birds, then his wings grew tired and down he flopped with a thud, almost on the sidewalk. And I have not seen him since.

Then there was the whippoorwill family at Netop.

On a bright afternoon we visited the jungle on the hillside where the timid Mrs. Whippoorwill was patiently sitting on two brown-speckled eggs and found the eggs gone and in their place two yellow downy chicks. They were not yet old enough to have much fear of us, and calmly closed their eyes and went to sleep while we were visiting them.

But the mother bird — how she did worry on our first visit. She flew away for a short distance and begged us by every means in her power to go away. She flapped her wings convulsively, every once in a while crying *whit* and starting straight into the air with each cry as if she *must* do *something* about it. We soon left them and the next day carried back some food, such as we thought might please the whippoorwill fancy. It all disappeared, but whether by the aid of the chipmunk volunteers or the birds themselves we do not know.

Every time we went back to the hillside jungle the mother had moved her family up the hillside deeper into the woods. It was not long before one of the chicks, who seemed less vital than the other, was missing. We do not know anything of the details of his disappearance. Possibly the family movings were partially responsible for it.

Upon the occasion of our last visit to the hillside jungle we thought the whippoorwills had removed beyond our reach, for we could not locate them for sometime. We circled wider and wider about the place where they were last seen, and at last

the mother bird revealed her hiding place by darting away from the chick. She seemed a trifle less anxious than at first, and the baby bird had become so vigorous that he could run and hide on his own account.

The mother whippoorwill flew ahead each time when we were ready to leave and escorted us down to the highway. Apparently she was under the impression that she was tolling us away from the chick.

I made a very hurried acquaintance last Sunday morning at Netop with a family of partridges (ruffed grouse). I first saw the old bird standing by the roadside up beyond the spring towards the mountain. Her head was away up in the air, and she was trying to decide whether I had seen her or not. I began to approach slowly and cautiously, and she suddenly ducked her head close to the ground and ran across the road like a woman caught in the rain without an umbrella. The fact that she did not fly was an indication that she had a family near. As I approached the place where she had disappeared into the thick bushes by the roadside, I heard a worried *quit, quit, quit,* and then suddenly from the other side of the road there flew in all directions a brood of young partridges who were the size of robins. The youngsters set up frightened little cries, and from a distance up the road the old bird ran bravely out, with neck feathers ruffled, to see what the trouble was. Then the mother and

babies held an animated conversation in low, quick tones and I was obliged to leave them at a most interesting point in order to get the next car home.

The last night we stayed at Netop I was awakened about midnight by some animal tramping about in the dead leaves and holding a low-voiced conversation with himself or mate. He soon went away and I could not tell from his voice to what species he belonged. Possibly a hedgehog or skunk.

* * *

POSTSCRIPT BY ELIZABETH

YOU should have seen that mother whippoorwill when we found her babies! She flew off about fifteen feet from the nest, flopped on the ground and pretended to be hurt. As I approached she flopped ahead, whirring and towhitting in the most injured fashion. The moment I turned back toward the babies she flew *straight* toward the nest, — which was no nest at all — as close as she dared.

She certainly tried to toll us away from her babies, tried it many times. William declares she didn't know what she was doing! — that only partridges are smart enough to pretend injury to toll away the enemy, and that Teddy'll get me for a nature faker if I don't watch out. But I don't care! — she did do it, she did!

She repeated the performance every time we

went there, and kept it up as long as we would notice or follow her. The last time I went she showed much less fear, and would sit on a limb and to-whit mournfully in answer to my soft baby talk of reassurance. And every convulsive little to-whit seemed to come clear from her toes, and nearly shake her off her perch. William says whippoorwills have funny feet and can't perch like other birds, but sit crouched on broad limbs like young chickens.

The night after our first visit to the whippoorwill her mate came and sang on a tree not ten feet from our door. "Do you suppose he is warning us what will happen if we don't let his babies alone?" queried William. And he calls me a nature faker!

William sees more birds! Yesterday Mr. and Mrs. Partridge and half a dozen little baby partridges crossed his path and scurried into the brush.

You should see William's garden. It is the nicest he has had yet, and he never lets a weed show its head. His corn is twice as tall as any other we have seen, and we shall have peas a week before the Fourth. Gardening is lots of fun for both of us — for I like mine by proxy!

— ELIZABETH.

CHAPTER VII

NETOP IN AUGUST

EVERYTHING in the country indicates that Fall is coming.

The cricket proclaims it with his drowsy chirping as night approaches.

The fields of yellow ripening grain announce it.

So does the silking corn.

So does the blossoming phlox and the other late blooming wild flowers.

So does the sleek, fat calf, taking his afternoon siesta where he is picketed in the meadow. He is too large and plump for any earlier season than late summer.

A few belated farmers are finishing their haying. The hay looks dark and overripe and exceedingly woody in quality. Luckily animals are less liable to indigestion than men, but the cows cannot give much milk on such tough, late cut fodder.

On the particular August afternoon to which this chapter refers the sky was a clear, bright blue, with here and there a drifting fleece of cloud. Cool, still, not a breath of wind blowing, while that hushed, indescribable drowsiness of late summer and early fall was omnipresent. It seemed as if all nature had spent her force in the lavishness of spring and early summer, and was simply resting.

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

Locusts were singing along the highway. The soft, lazy caw of young crows could be heard from the pasture hillside, mingled with the harsher, sharper and more enterprising calls of their elders. And through all other sounds we could distinguish the steady, musical tinkle of the cow bell down in Byron Smith's pasture.

I half expected that the dry weather would have ruined the Netop garden, or that during my absence the woodchucks would have forced an entry and destroyed the vegetables. Instead, the late rains had prepared a pleasing surprise. The garden was flourishing. The lettuce especially looked as green and fresh as it should have looked in June. It was small and tender, but in reality about two months late.

And the corn! Who doesn't love growing corn in full blossom? The brown pollen rattled from the tassels at every movement, however slight, and sifted over my hands and clothes. The silk is just forming and the ears are shaping. You can almost see the tassels unfold. If you were to listen carefully on a warm, still, moist night, you could really hear the gentle rustle of the unfolding leaves.

Right under the garden gate I found a neat little pile of earth and stones thrown up by a woodchuck who had attempted to force an entrance. A plank sunk beneath the gate last year for just such emergencies discouraged him. He was less persistent than his relatives who visited us last summer.

Elizabeth established herself in the hammock with a volume of the "Penny Classics," while I loaded my pockets with three plate holders and started out to snapshot any likely view or object of possible interest.

Mr. Smith's cows had just come up to the brook for an afternoon drink. They gazed at me as if I were an interloper. I tried to persuade them to have their pictures taken in a group. They raised heads and tails and departed. All but one, whose feminine curiosity overcame her fear of the camera. She consented to pose, but only on condition that I stay upon the opposite side of the brook from herself. As a consequence I got a picture of a very large expanse of pasture with a very small cow in the center.

After using up what plates I had with me I went back to the cabin for more, and found Elizabeth waiting to spring on me a half dozen sayings of Marcus, which she thought I needed to hear. I told her if I could spare the time I'd find more than half a dozen sayings of Marcus that would apply to her.

After a little she hunted up the marvelous red axe which she bought last year for personal use. (I objected to her using my axe because she tried to cut stones with it.) This red axe would do credit to a French Canadian woodchopper. It weighs enough to please a giant. Armed with this and the pruning shears she proceeded to discourage some of the bushes that were growing too fast.

I split wood, carried away the brush which Elizabeth cut, broke up wasp nests in the cabin, put up the ladder and sawed some high-up dead limbs from the chestnut, and did various other things.

Each of the young trees and shrubs shows several feet of new growth. The foliage, washed clean by recent rains, does not look at all bedraggled as it frequently does at this season.

In the air, the nature lover senses the approach of Fall and catches gentle murmurs, or is conscious of significant silences, which betoken it.

The songs of the phoebe family are no longer heard. The children grown, the family may have already started on their journey south, or they may simply have migrated to the deeper woods.

As I live, there is my old friend Joe Pye over there! He never comes around until it is getting well on toward Fall. Early in September is his favorite time of arrival. He must be a little ahead of time this year. He rises beside the dusty road and in the edges of the swamp and solemnly waves his softly fringed magenta colored blossoms in greeting. (Joe Pye weed is so named from a once famous Indian medicine man who lived in New England.)

It is not yet too late for wild raspberries. But time is short and I must wait a few days before I hunt them.

CHAPTER VIII

WE VISIT THE HILL TOWNS

THE big pine which I cut weeks ago, because it seemed to be nearly dead, has furnished fill-in work whenever needed. Elizabeth continues to thin out the small scrub oaks, maples and chestnuts, with here and there a bass wood and pig walnut.

This is a great season for Joe Pye weed. The dark, purplish flowers are larger and more gorgeous than ever, probably on account of the frequent rains. The golden-rod, too, has come in great abundance to remind us that Fall is near. As night draws on at Netop the steady chirping of numerous crickets is another reminder that summer is nearly spent. Then the way the birds flock together and hold big and noisy conventions about things which are undoubtedly of great importance to them, but of which we understand little — this, too, is an omen of Fall.

Still another reminder of the ripeness of the season is the spicy odor of herbs down by the Netop brook. Here flourishes the thoroughwort, with its tall stalks and white rayed flowers. It used to be considered a sovereign stomach tonic in the days of our great grandmothers, and in many a country garret you will still find generous

bunches of dried thoroughwort hanging beneath the rafters ready to be brought out whenever Johnny or Mary gives any indication of a failing appetite or an upset stomach.

Elizabeth has been doing some organization work among the women who are pledging themselves to help Mr. Hoover conserve the food supply. This has taken us into most of the small towns in Hampden county and prevented frequent visits to Netop.

We start out about four o'clock in the afternoon, armed with credentials and arguments, for some little country village where Elizabeth interviews the leader of some women's club, one of the selectmen or some other leading citizen whose name has been given her for the purpose, the object being to arouse interest and secure pledges for the conservation of food movement instituted by the government.

Usually we have to spend half the allotted time in finding the desired person, and our experience will run somewhat like this: As we near the town, E. will hail the driver of a farm wagon or anyone else that happens to be handy:

"Do you know where Mr. S. lives?"

"No, I don't; but you might find out at the post office, about a mile down the road."

We inquire at the post office and find that Mr. S. lives "somewhere" about two and one-half miles back on the road we have just come over.

"Go back to the bridge, turn to the left and follow the trolley," is the instruction.

We go back to the bridge and follow the trolley, and when we get near what we think is the place we again inquire for Mr. S.

"Waal, you might find him at his barber shop down the street and to the left."

Three more inquiries enable us to locate the shop where we learn that "maybe" we can find Mr. S. at his house. "If you see his Ford standing outside you'll know he's home."

We find the Ford and Mr. S., only to learn that he is turning over all such matters of organization as we are interested in to the leader of the women's clubs, Mrs. Y., who lives near the post office (two and one-half miles away) from which we have just come!

BOOK III: AUTUMN

AROUND THE CORNER AT NETOP

CARRYING IN THE WOOD

BOOK III: AUTUMN

CHAPTER I

MACBETH AT NETOP

The lands are lit
With all the autumn blaze of Golden Rod;
And everywhere the Purple Astors nod
And bend and wave and flit.

HELEN HUNT

IT was cloudy.

It looked likely to rain any minute.

But October often brings cold weather, so the Fall Netop hike was pushed through on Saturday afternoon, September 20. Nearly everybody from the *Nautilus* office went along.

First, there was the Committee of Five (who had been rushed to death for two days preparing a program and menu for the occasion), together with their costumes, the refreshments, etc., to be transported to Netop an hour ahead of the crowd. Our automobile was pressed into service, the assistant editor acting as chauffeur. (Louis was supposed to be having a half holiday, so he could take part in the hike, and, of course, couldn't do any chauffeuring.)

We were a little late getting started, because

someone got ahead of us at the shop where we had to stop for gasoline.

Therefore, the South Hadley Center speed limit was stretched several times on the way back to town after a second load. We had agreed to come back and meet the crowd at city hall and take as many more as possible in the motor, but we got only as far as Dwight street hill when we met the trolley car.

A quick transfer to the auto was made by the editor, managing editor, Olea and Miss Quinn.

Then we had to stop on Main street for a five-gallon bottle of Mount Holyoke spring water. We boosted the big crate of water into the tonneau, the managing editor elevating his legs to a comfortable angle of forty-five degrees to make room for it, and went joyfully on our way in the wake of the trolley.

John (the kid who comes after school to sweep the offices) and the girls who went out on the trolley, sort of depended upon Louis to give the signal when it was time to get off. But Louis was day-dreaming of his sweetheart in England and they nearly got carried up to the Notch.

We found the Committee of Five in a quandary. For a part of the evening entertainment, around the open camp fire, they had planned an adapted (very much adapted) act from Macbeth, Act I, Scene III, and one who was to take part had failed to come. So the writer volunteered to play the part of witch number three.

Lina assured me it was very easy.

All I had to do was to go sneaking ghost-wise through the woods astride a broom, carrying a tin can in one hand and a stick in the other, and take up a position by the corner of the garden.

When Lina had finished her opening spiel (something about dropping back into hades as I recall it) and blew her whistle, it was time to beat the tin can for one minute. Then a second whistle and the rest of us witches were to rush madly into the center, gallop three times around the fire and proceed with the dialogue.

Two hasty rehearsals were held, but even then, when the real act came, Hazel was mixed as to whether she had been feeding the swine or killing them, and Elin omitted a long speech which included my second cue, thereby leaving me hung up in great mental suspense until the end of the act.

But I am anticipating.

The first feature on the program was a three-mile hike, this being the serious purpose of the gathering. We started down the road toward South Hadley, in reverse direction from our route at the previous hike. We intended to go through a pasture and along an old wood road leading up toward Mt. Holyoke, where the scenery is rugged and beautiful. In the pasture, however, were some cows and calves and Grace was a little timid. She met some cows on her vacation last summer and seemed to doubt the good intentions and

sincerity of the whole cow family, so we just walked along the edge of the pasture, outside the fence. Along the sides of the path was plenty of golden-rod, wild asters and ferns, and one lone fringed gentian was discovered. As we penetrated deeper into the woods we expected every moment to hear the whir of a partridge or to see a gray squirrel, but perhaps the cloudy weather prevented.

It was almost dusk when we got back to the cabin. A fire was lighted in the stove, water was put to boil for the coffee and an open fire was started out under the hemlock by the garden. The benches were carried out and arranged directly under the hemlock facing the open fire. The thick branches of the tree served as an almost complete protection from the occasional light showers that fell. The fire gave all the light and warmth that was needed.

Then came the refreshments, consisting of baked beans, piping hot, rolls, toasted sausage (or bacon for those who preferred it), the toasting being done over the open fire. For dessert, macaroons and lady fingers, strawberry jam and hot coffee.

No one minded much the occasional spatters of rain and the thick fog that came on. The leaping, crackling flames against the background of dark green hemlock boughs and the circle of cheerful faces prevented anybody present from feeling very serious.

A Netop Hike: Gathering Sand Violets

The refreshment stage being over, the exercises on the program were taken up.

First was the *pièce de résistance*, the adapted act from Macbeth already described. Then followed a duet by Louis and John; an original poem of four lines by Olea; a speech by Mrs. Towne; the recital of one of her own poems by Miss Quinn; the singing of Sweet Genevieve by Louis; a song by the Elmwood quartette, the whole concluding with a free-for-all singfest.

These were the main features of the occasion, although this is by no means a complete list of events.

Don't you wish you had been along?

CHAPTER II

THE THUNDER SHOWER

BUGS!

Forty-eight of them from seventy-five potato hills. And this was just one picking.

Someone asked me recently how potato bugs could find a secluded little patch of potatoes, hidden in the woods, and a mile from any other cultivated land. I suppose it is by the same faculty of instinct which enables a cat who is carried in a dark bag nine miles from home to go straight back as soon as she is released. At any rate, wherever there is a potato hill, however remote, there you will find the bug dutifully attending to his job. If we humans were just as successful in attending to our work — well, you wouldn't recognize the world in a little while.

Last Saturday afternoon Elizabeth and I started out after dinner on one of those long roundabout rides to Netop. We had been in the office every day for weeks, going out to Netop in the late afternoon, so this long ride through the beautiful Connecticut Valley and over the hills of the Mount Holyoke range, seemed like quite a lark.

Being in a restful rather than active mood, we jogged along up the river road toward North-

ampton at about fifteen miles an hour. The road followed close to the left bank of the river for miles. At some points we could look far up the river and catch its broad, silvery sweep between the forest-clad hills of Mount Holyoke on one side and the line of trees and green meadows on the opposite bank.

This particular view always inspires Elizabeth to quote the following bit of poetry. I do not know the author, or the title of the poem from which it is taken. The complete poem was in one of my old school readers, and I passed this much on to Elizabeth: —

"Girt 'round with rugged mountains the fair Lake Constance lies,
And in her blue heart, reflected, shine back the starry skies.
And, watching each white cloudlet float silently and slow,
You'd think a piece of Heaven lay on our earth below."

It was a lazy afternoon. The air was humid. Heavy clouds hung around the horizon, threatening thunder showers, and frequently obscured the brightness of the sun.

We drifted into Northampton, up the hill past Smith College and made a sharp turn to the right that took us up on a still higher hill, where there was a beautiful outlook upon Northampton and the valley. By roundabout and unfamiliar streets we finally accomplished a complete circle, without intending to, and found ourselves right back in front of Smith College.

NEXT we started out the broad street, shaded with magnificent elms, that leads to Old Hadley, a village rich in the romance of early colonial days, the scene of many an Indian fight, and where one may still find the quaintest old houses of the colonial period. In the center of the town there is an immense green common. This was used as a cow pasture by the early inhabitants, when the whole village was surrounded by palisades as a protection against Indians. In Hadley, as in most other old Massachusetts towns, the streets are lined with enormous old elms.

Without stopping, we passed on through Old Hadley to Amherst. We had intended to return from Amherst directly over the Notch past Netop, but it was still so early and we were having such a good time, that we decided to make a wide detour and go on past some pastures, where we gathered many quarts of blueberries last year, finally coming out on to the Belchertown-Granby state road.

By this time the dense black clouds of a big thunder storm were piling up in the west. We stopped to pick some pink sheep laurel that grew under a big maple by the roadside. I suggested putting up the top, but with unfailing optimism, and a less extended experience than mine with eastern thunder storms, Elizabeth argued that the wind was favorable to us, inasmuch as the

storm would have to beat against the wind before it reached us, and that we ought to be able to keep ahead of the shower,

We were now on a lonely country road, where the sand was deep and the houses few and far between. We climbed a long, sandy hill where we could look back toward the west for many miles and see the rain sweeping along the north side of Mt. Holyoke in a dense gray mass. On each side of the road a forest fire had burned the trees to a charred crisp. As we reached the top of the hill we could plainly hear the roar of the oncoming storm. We hastily began to put the top up. A weird, twisting, writhing wind, the immediate forerunner of the rain, made the charred limbs of the trees crack and rattle. Then, while I was on the running board of the car, adjusting the fastenings of the top to the wind shield, the deluge came. In about one second I was pretty thoroughly drenched, even before I could get under the cover.

By this time it was black as night. The wind soon died out, but the rain continued to pour in torrents. We adjusted the side curtains, and presently we were as snug as the proverbial bug in a rug. The sandy ruts in the narrow country road were now filled with flowing streams of water. We picked our way gingerly along at eight miles an hour so as to avoid splashing the water up into the carbureter or timer, as this would stall us, perhaps for hours, miles from

nowhere. It was quite warm and not at all unpleasant riding in the rain, especially after the downpour became more gentle. When we finally came out on the state road, we made a beeline for home and did not pass Netop at all.

The next morning (Sunday), at about eleven o'clock, we made a visit to Netop to see how the garden looked after the rain. Everything along the road was as fresh and clean as on the morning of creation. The hills were a beautiful blue, covered with a thin veil of soft haze. Everywhere, as we rode along through the prosperous farms of South Hadley, the odor of moist earth was in the air.

All nature seemed glorified, and the quiet and peace of Sunday seemed to have entered into the landscape.

It wasn't "Apple Blossom Time in Normandy" that inspired Elizabeth's musical sense this morning, but a selection from (I believe) one of Verdi's operas. At any rate she kept singing, under her breath, "Oh, Italia, Italia, beloved land of liberty, beauty and song." She seems to select only one motif for one drive!

At one place we always slow up to watch for a very young colt who lives with his mother in a pasture by the roadside. A little farther on, close by a farmhouse, we usually see a prosperous looking family of goats. It comprises a white papa goat, a black and white mamma goat, and just recently the brightest, liveliest black and

white baby goat, the exact image of his mother, has come upon the scene.

When we got to Netop everything looked rejuvenated after the rain. The forget-me-nots by the brook had about doubled in size. Elizabeth harvested her roses in the garden; we cut a large lot of asparagus beet greens and then hurried home to Sunday dinner (at 1.30 P.M.).

CHAPTER III

OVER THE MOHAWK TRAIL

THE honeysuckle at the corner of the cabin is in full bloom. At the opposite corner the polygonum baldschuanicum, which is a very rapid grower, has already climbed to the eaves. The crimson rambler, which Elizabeth transplanted in the garden last year, has been blossoming for several weeks, although it is no larger than when first set out — just a scrubby little plant about fourteen inches high.

Our car was laid up in the Franklin hospital for ten days, and we have been learning to play golf (a game which I have always associated with the superannuated and feeble-minded or mentally deficient). To these two apparently unrelated facts it is due that we did not visit Netop for two or three weeks, and when we did resume our visits we were most agreeably surprised to find

the new state highway completed right to our back door. All the steep grades have been reduced and the road is open over the Notch to Amherst and nearly completed. The Italian workmen are still camped up toward the Notch and are putting a few last finishing touches here and there. When we are at the cabin we still hear them going home at five P.M., singing or whistling snatches of grand opera. When we pass their camp at dusk they usually wave a forkful of macaroni in friendly greeting.

Saturday afternoon at two o'clock Elizabeth and I fared forth in the Franklin for Bennington, Vt., — eighty-six miles from Holyoke. We followed a newly-created highway through the Berkshires, known as the Mohawk Trail. The "trail" is "blazed" (as we learned from the smiling traffic policeman at Greenfield) with broad bands of red paint trimmed with narrow bands of white around the telephone poles along the way, with similarly decorated signs at every junction point.

To quote from the Blue Book: "This route constitutes the famous Mohawk Trail, which is reputed to have been blazed by the Indians in King Philip's time, and used by them as a thoroughfare between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers. . . . The scenery is very wild and thickly wooded. . . . The views from the top of the mountain are magnificent, especially to the west, northwest and southwest, where one

may see the entire expanse of the Berkshires with Mt. Greylock always prominent in the foreground; the blue tops of the Catskills one hundred miles away, and the Green Mountains of Vermont, across the open valley. Right below us nestles the town of North Adams."

It had been raining heavily the night before and was still hot, sultry and showery when we started. We left the automobile top down, hoping to escape showers. To keep perfectly comfortable I took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves. We got almost as far as Old Deerfield before the showers caught us, and then how easily the water did spill out of the heavens! We hustled the top up so as to protect Elizabeth's hat and the silk suit which Mrs. Service made for her. (Later on we put the top down, and later still we put it up again!)

. . .

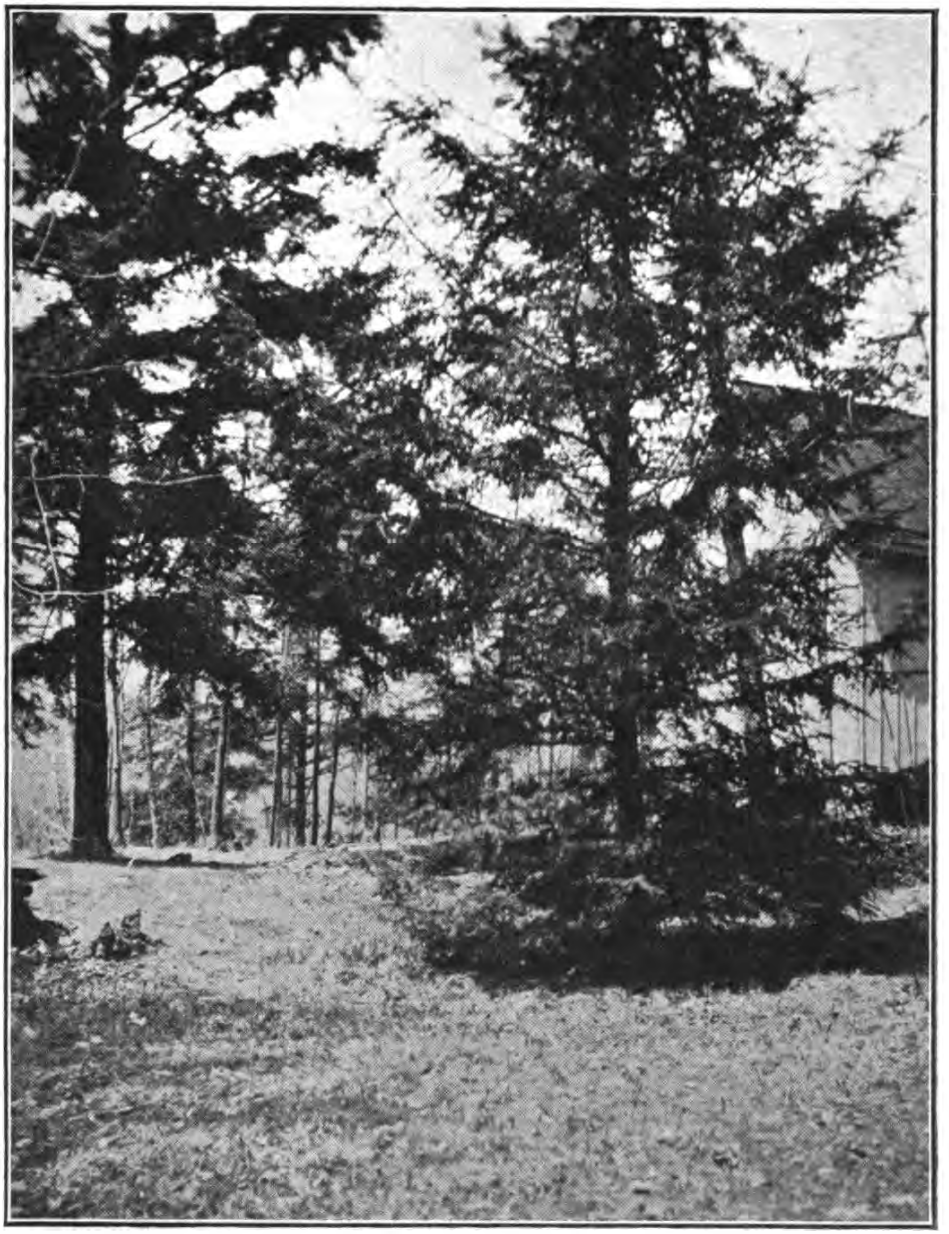
SOMEWHERE near Shelburne Falls they are resurfacing the road, and we had to make a detour over a rough, narrow, hilly road which made us take first speed in one place. At the top of a hill we waited for two young women coming up. The driver shouted, "Look out, down below! There's a car in the ditch." We crept cautiously down the hill and around a curve and, sure enough, there was a car stuck fast in the mud at one side of the road, with

quite a respectable little gathering of people around it. A Ford was standing on the opposite side of the road and (as it seemed to our somewhat excited imagination) farmers were coming from all directions with their teams of horses to pull the mired car from the ditch.

A little further on in Shelburne Falls we came to the roadside store where a delectable confection called Maple Sweethearts is offered to the dusty public. Sweethearts are made of pure maple sugar, beaten like an egg to make it light and fluffy. Each piece is cut heart-shape and some are decorated with butternuts. The Sweethearts are packed in maple brown boxes, tied with brown string and brown cardboard is placed between the pieces to keep them from sticking to each other. A big brown sign, showing two immense hearts in a state of propinquity, decorates the front of the store. Alice Brown is the name given in the advertising as the proprietress of the Sweethearts. Whether this is a real name or simply a name selected by a male proprietor with clever advertising ideas anent a brown color scheme, I do not know.

Someone has shown much originality and initiative in making and selling this article right on its native heath. What young couple riding over the Trail could resist the big double heart sign? What woman could resist the suggestive deliciousness of the name?

From Whitcomb Summit we could look over



THE HEMLOCKS THREE YEARS AGO

a vast expanse of beautiful hills clothed in soft blue haze, while at the base were patches of vivid green marking the farms, and in the midst of it all nestled the little city of North Adams. It gave one almost an uncanny feeling to read a sign at one place which said: "1,060 feet below this point is Hoosac Tunnel, the longest tunnel in America."

Williamstown is a college town, beautifully situated on the hills. The streets are lined with wonderful old elms and maples. We rode around by Williams' Inn to see if we could get a room in case we did not find accommodations at Bennington, thirteen miles further on, but every room in the house was taken. They told us the road to Bennington was "terrible," but after we got two or three miles out of Williamstown we found it fine. The endless panorama of blue hills, green fields and brilliant wild flowers by the roadside was a delight. So much rain has fallen this year that all nature is fresh and green to a very unusual degree.

A hard shower came up a few miles out of Williamstown. We stopped under a big maple near a farmhouse and a red and white calf, and for the second time that afternoon put up the automobile top.

BENNINGTON is a beautiful little city among the hills. Walloomsac Inn, our home for the night, is about a mile from the center of the town, on a hill near the battle monument.

We were given a splendid large room with two French windows opening onto a private porch.

The proprietor was a typical Vermont Yankee and reminded me of the story of an actor who went up in Maine to spend a few weeks at a country hotel. This actor was about a fourth-rate man and so was very proud of his speaking acquaintance with John Drew. In the course of a brief conversation Drew had recommended this little country hotel in Maine as being a good place to spend the summer. Upon his arrival, the actor hunted up the proprietor, a tall, lean, wizened, down-east Yankee, and said: "Mr. John Drew recommended your place very highly to me." The proprietor, somewhat to the disappointment of the actor, did not seem greatly impressed. Thinking his statement might not have been fully understood, the actor a little later again approached the busy proprietor and said: "You understood, didn't you, that it was Mr. John Drew who sent me here." Slightly irritated the old fellow gazed at him sharply and drawled, "Waal, what d'ye want me to do, kiss ye?"

The showers had cooled the air and after supper we walked up the hill, over sidewalks made of

marble slabs, to the battle monument glistening in the moonlight. My great-great-grandfather was killed at the battle of Bennington and I had long held a desire to see the monument. I hoped to find a record giving the names of the soldiers who lost their lives in the battle, but so far as I could discover no such record exists.

We slept soundly and awoke early to hear a perfect medley of bird songs interspersed with the lusty crowing of a Bennington chanticleer. A delicious breakfast of home grown bacon, fragrant coffee with thick cream, muffins and muskmelon started us off in the right mood to enjoy the day.

* * *

OUR route for the day led directly east over the back of the Green Mountains. Elizabeth buried her nose in the Blue Book, sometimes missing some of the scenery I am afraid, and read the instructions to me at each turn. The forks and crossroads came so frequently that she was reading: "End of road, bear right down grade over railroad tracks," etc., etc., most of the time.

She surprised me at one point by directing a sharp turn to the right over a little bridge and into a narrow and little traveled road. It didn't look right, but Elizabeth insisted we were following the Blue Book. A few miles further on we came to a muddy stretch of road, and our wheels

went down, down, until our mud guards almost touched the earth. We went slower and slower, the engine labored harder and harder, we went into second speed and then into first and finally came to a stop right in the center of the mudhole. I reversed and backed two feet and then gained about the same distance forward.

You have seen a snowplough on a railway in winter bunting its way through a big drift? Well, that was the exact method we followed and it soon brought us to dry land. Then our Blue Book directions didn't seem to fit the turns in the road, and we grew more and more suspicious until we finally stopped at a farmhouse to make inquiries and learned we were on our way to North Adams instead of Brattleboro.

There was nothing for it but to reverse our route and plug back through Mountain Mills to the little bridge. The muddy place looked formidable as we approached it the second time, but we had evidently broken a path the first time, for we now went through with speed very little diminished.

Up and up we climbed until we came to a big sign which said:

SLOW DOWN.
YOU ARE NOW
APPROACHING —

Of course we slowed down and were very curious to discover just what danger we were approaching.

Our curiosity was only partly satisfied when we saw a second sign a little further on reading —

SOME OF THE
GRANDEST SCENERY
ON EARTH —

And a little further on a third sign advised us that if we wanted to rest and refresh ourselves we could do so at the tea room just ahead. As for the scenery it came up to the preliminary announcement.

* * *

AT the summit of Hogback Mountain, 2200 feet above sea level, we brought the car to a stop, stepped out and crawled under an ancient barbed wire fence into a rough pasture overgrown with brakes and small spruce trees. To the east and south a goodly section of the eastern slope of the Green Mountains, a part of the Connecticut Valley and in the distance, across the river, the hills of New Hampshire lay before us. A soft blue haze clothed the hills. Close at hand the green spruces, Christmas tree size, made a charming feature of the scene, and over all floated the prettiest clear, white, fleecy clouds. Peace and quiet pervaded everything. We were far from any human habitation, and only the breeze, the birds and squirrels, and the moving clouds were our companions for the moment.

And going down the eastern slope of the moun-

tains what a coast we had! It seemed as if we coasted most of the way from the summit of Hogback to Brattleboro. Much of the way the grade was so even that only a touch of the brake now and then was sufficient to keep the car down to a speed of twenty-five miles an hour.

At South Deerfield we made a detour through Sunderland and Amherst to avoid a bad detour just out of Northampton where a short piece of road has been under construction for about two years. At Amherst College we got out of the car, took cushions and blankets, and lay down in the shade of a big beech tree upon the campus to drowse and read the Sunday papers for an hour. Then home by way of The Notch and Netop.

CHAPTER IV

SQUASHES AND GOLF

SQUASHES seem to be about the only sure crop at Netop. Last year I raised one (or was it two), and this year I managed to grow one small green squash, of the Mother Hubbard variety, which nevertheless, and in spite of its size and greenness, possessed a pleasing quality of taste after Bridget had cooked and seasoned it.

The sweet corn grew to a marvelous height, but the ears were very small and scarce, and

between the Golf Club and the I. N. T. A. Congress I missed picking what few there were.

If the vegetables were scarce this year the wasps were not. After I had destroyed a dozen or so nests, the wasps created a concentration camp within the cabin. They gathered in a big black mass on the wall. When Mildred and some friends went out one afternoon and built a fire in the stove, the wasps thought spring had surely come and became exceedingly friendly, even flying beneath the hands of the tea drinkers sitting at the table.

But as I was saying, Netop has been sadly neglected this summer for golf. Elizabeth and I both play badly — how badly only God and Mr. Brown (the club professional) — can tell. Mr. Brown used to watch us sadly in the early days and give us a few badly-needed pointers when our playing pained him too intensely. Also he taught us to call our niblick by its proper name instead of referring to it as a "spoon," and under the influence of the same inspired instructor our "lofter" became a mashie.

You will observe that I say "our" in referring to the family golf irons. As yet we have only one set of clubs and irons between us; but Elizabeth saw advertised, and immediately ordered, a patent adjustable iron with five different adjustments, and this she now uses altogether, except when driving off the tee. From the tee she uses a brassie, while I use the regular driver.

We have had the usual experience of beginners in losing balls. At the right of the second hole there is an old orchard where the golfers and caddies go to find balls and incidentally hook a few apples. On one occasion I drove a ball into this orchard twice in succession. We lost three balls that afternoon.

It is surprising with what persistency the new player will search for a lost ball. A poet writing for the New York *Tribune* voiced our feelings exactly in this little verse:

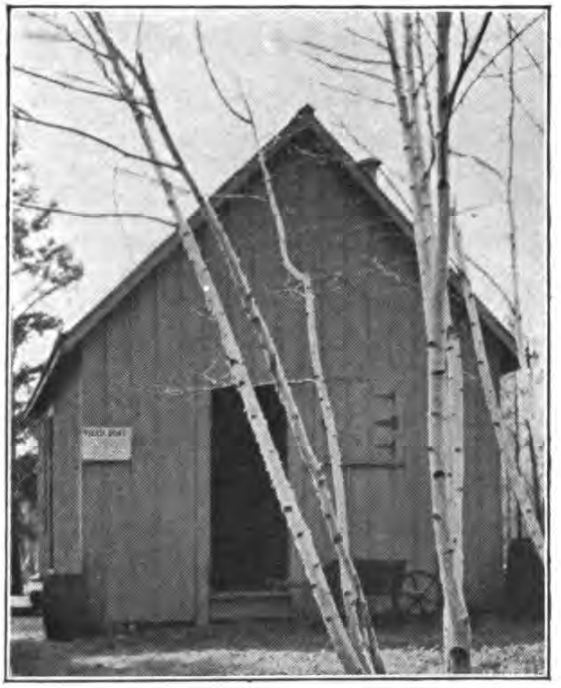
> *"I shot a golf ball into the air.*
> *It fell to earth, I know not where.*
> *I only know, with woe immense,*
> *That sixty cents is sixty cents."*

* * *

NEAR the tee on the sixth hole there is a small pond which has served as a graveyard for many of our balls. One day we hired a caddie to fish for a lost ball, and he recovered it. Another time Elizabeth fished for a ball in the shallow water and found it. My! how we loved those balls.

Elizabeth says that I drive without aiming. I reply that I had rather drive without aiming and make nine holes in 64 than drive with aim and take 94 for the same nine holes!

It is more exciting than one who has never tried it would guess, to pit your brain and muscle



THE CABIN IN NOVEMBER

WHEN MARCH CAME IN

against the resistance of a little rubber covered ball and liberal sections of space — even if you do make but slow headway in overcoming the inert.

CHAPTER V

BITTERSWEET

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JOE: *Chauffeur.*
SAM: *High School Boy who tidies up offices after school hours.*
RACHEL: *Assistant to W. E. T.*
MARGARET: *Second Assistant to W. E. T.*
HAZEL: *Flexotypist.*
M. WILLIAMS: *Subscription Department.*
MR. BAILEY: *Husband of Mrs. Towne's Secretary.*
PEARL: *Order Department.*

DID you ever see bittersweet berries? As a matter of fact they are not berries at all. The seeds are wrapped in a beautiful yellow husk, making what looks like a round yellow berry about the size of a small cranberry. When a branch of bittersweet has been picked for a few days the yellow husk folds neatly and tightly back, revealing what appears to be a very brilliant scarlet berry, but which is really the aril or inner covering for the seeds.

The bittersweet is a climbing shrub and grows along woodland borders and in shady roadside nooks by old stone walls.

We discovered a lot of bitter-sweet the other day on the edge of Netop woods down by the car track.

And on the afternoon of the hike some of the girls went down by Maple brook, near the Byron Smith farm, and came back with big armfuls of bittersweet.

Others gathered large bunches of yellow and scarlet tinted autumn leaves, mixed in some instances with evergreen pine boughs.

Our walk on the afternoon of this year's annual Fall hike led up through the woods toward the mountain. It was a trail that we have often followed before, butsome of the girls had only been in the office a short time and had never attended one of our hikes, and many of the others didn't remember the path.

As usual, there was lots of fun and snapshotting during the walk. When we came to the big granite stone that marks a corner of the boundary line between Granby and South Hadley Center, Margaret and Rachel were hoisted to the top of the stone, with Joe's expert assistance, the others gathered around the base, and several more pictures were added to the collection.

After a while we came out of the woods on the top of quite a high hill, where there was a splendid view of Mt. Tom in the distance.

On one side of the trail was a barbed wire fence and beyond a few mild mannered cows were quietly feeding. I was carrying a big bunch of pine boughs and autumn leaves belonging to M. Williams, and in order to make me forget that I was getting my hands covered with a thick

coating of pitch, she told me a harrowing tale about a cow she met in the country while on her summer vacation. It seems the cow looked at her and shook "his" head (so M. said), whereupon M. ran for the nearest fence, which happened (like the fence beside us) to be of barbed wire. M. was hastily climbing between the upper and nether millstones of wire when her waist caught and was ripped almost from top to bottom. All because an innocent cow simply shook "his" head at her! It reminded me of the small boy who hit another boy in the eye and started a fight because he was "almost sure" the other boy intended to hit him.

. . .

AFTER we got back to the cabin Elizabeth harvested the seven big Hubbard squashes from Netop garden and stowed them safely away in the new Franklin car. Chester and I were going up into New Hampshire on a hunting trip and she wanted to make sure they didn't freeze before our return.

Others of the party marked off a course in the road and started some hotly contested sprinting. Margaret beat Pearl in a sixteen-rod dash, and I beat Margaret in a shorter sprint. However, at the time she was out of breath from the first race, so I didn't get much glory. Then Joe and Sam ran a race. Sam was all dressed up in his

best clothes (this is his first hike, you see), and didn't want to get any dust on himself, so Joe was an easy winner.

Next, some of the baseball fans started a game in the road with a soft ball and a bat made from a pine board. Every few moments, usually in the midst of a home run, a warning cry would be raised as a jitney or touring car whizzed around the corner from Amherst, and everybody made for the side of the road.

Meanwhile the entertainment committee, with the help of Rachel, who is too conscientious to play much, were working like beavers to butter the sandwiches and make preparations for the picnic supper by the open fire.

Elizabeth made the coffee over the oil stove in the cabin. She used a big twenty-quart pail for the purpose. A full pound of coffee was sewed up in a cheese-cloth bag, the pail was nearly filled with water — two cupfuls for each person present — the coffee placed in the pail and the water brought to the boiling point.

When Elizabeth announced that the coffee was nearly ready, Joe and Sam carried the wooden benches out under the hemlock tree by the garden, while I kindled the fire. We had some wood from a dead pine tree which was heavily loaded with resin and which burned with a bright, steady flame like a torch. Everyone gathered around the blaze and toasted "dogs." A few had strips of bacon fried in a small pan held over

the open blaze. There were ham sandwiches and plain sandwiches, pickles, olives, crackers, salted peanuts, gum, raspberry jam and crullers. And perhaps the coffee and cream didn't taste good!

After supper came the regular program of the evening. Some leading numbers were omitted because several girls couldn't come on the hike — the date having been set forward a week on account of the weather.

There were games and congregational singing — not to mention several solos by Mr. Bailey, who has a fine baritone voice and sings in a church choir each Sunday, and a gem of a song by a quartette of our most distinguished artists.

In closing everybody sang the Netop song (words adapted by W. E. T. and music discovered by Mrs. Bailey).

Then the benches were hustled into the cabin, two pails of water were dashed over the glowing embers of the fire, the girls ran for their bunches of bittersweet and autumn leaves, and I took the lantern and led the procession down the dark path to the car line.

When the last laughing girl was safely aboard the car I returned to the cabin, locked up, loaded the picnic paraphernalia into the car, and Elizabeth, Mr. and Mrs. Bailey and myself enjoyed a most beautiful moonlight drive back to the city, making a detour by Bourbonnais' mill because the road was torn up just below Netop.

CHAPTER VI

AUTUMN LEAVES

THE autumn leaves around Netop have been unusually brilliant this fall. The scrub oak took on beautiful shades of scarlet and deep rich wine color. The scrub oak leaves remain on the trees far into the winter, but, of course, they keep their bright coloring only a short while.

One of the prettiest roads to Netop is by way of Granby. Granby is a typical little New England town, every house and yard neat as a pin, and one lone white church sitting high on a hill. The village is about two miles south of Netop.

There is a big chicken farm between the village and Netop, near which the road turns sharply to the left, facing the west. A tangle of lilac bushes prevents one seeing a foot ahead. The road is always cluttered with chickens, and we have to go around that corner at something slower than a walk, blowing the horn continuously to clear a way between the chickens.

The last time we passed that corner the slanting rays of the setting sun were focused upon a lot of scrub oak bushes along the roadside, and they looked almost like bright red flames. We stopped and gathered enough to decorate the house for a Sunday dinner. Evidently the bushes had been

mowed down early in the season and the new growth of leaves was splashed with a more brilliant coloring than the older trees.

All kinds of wild flowers have disappeared. Even the autumn leaves have faded to dull browns. We can still get masses of green laurel leaves, ferns, ground pine, etc., but that is about all.

Everything in nature seems prepared for winter. So, a few days ago, I emptied the rain barrels at Netop and put them in the cabin, took off the screen doors and packed them away against the wall behind the bed, and covered the top of the stove with newspapers to keep it from rusting. The drainage is very good at Netop, the soil being light and sandy, and nothing in the cabin would mold or rust except for the fact that there are one or two small holes in the roof, through which the rain drips when an especially driving storm comes along.

The same day I made these rather solemn preparations for the cold, stormy months, when we shall have to live near steam radiators most of the time and cannot visit Netop, Elizabeth completed sawing her pile of chestnut four-foot sticks. She has sawed several cords of wood this summer, even though we were away from home two months. There is now about one cord of unsawed wood, and we are now negotiating with a teamster to bring this to Holyoke and put it in our basement. Then Elizabeth can saw it this winter while the weather is unfavorable for out-

of-doors activity. She has just purchased a Whiteley exerciser, with which she manages to get quite a good imitation of wood sawing right in her bedroom each morning.

You should have seen the big yellow 20-pound prize squash that I grew at Netop this summer. The seed from which this squash grew "planted itself," i.e., it was mixed in with fertilizer used on the garden, and came up as a surprise to me, directly in the center of the garden. It thrived marvelously and sent out a thick, strong vine, which ran to the edge of the garden and up on the wire fence. One yellow blossom on that part of the vine which was on the fence became fertilized and developed into the 20-pound squash. So strong was the vine, and so closely did its tendrils cling to the meshes of the fence, that even twenty pounds weight did not loosen their hold.

BOOK IV: WINTER

THE FIRST SNOW

BOOK IV: WINTER

CHAPTER I

WHEN THE SNOW STILL LINGERS

All nature feels the renovating force
Of winter, only to the thoughtless eye
Is ruin seen. The frost-contracted glebe
Draws in abundant vegetable soul,
And gathers vigor for the coming year.

THOMSON

A VERY different atmosphere surrounds the Netop woods in March than in December. The sense of life withdrawn has passed, and we now get the impression of life poised and waiting for the moment of expression.

It isn't that things *look* so much different, but there is a different *feel* in the air. Everything is more "pert." The wind has a more cheery note in its whistle. The mountain laurel looks more hopeful and seems to take on a brighter green as if preparing for the joyous rioting that comes with May. The boughs on the hemlocks wave lightly and cheerfully because they are now

released from the burden of snow under which they were straining on the occasion of my last visit to Netop in December.

Away down deep in the ground every little rootlet is listening, listening to the soft and gentle whisper of the beautiful Spring as she awakens from her long sleep.

On the north side of the cabin the snow and ice still linger. Where the ground slopes to the north the snow deepens, and everywhere the earth shows white beneath the trees.

But Spring is already warming the earth. The highway on the west side of Netop is traversed today by hundreds of little rivulets fed by melting snow.

A window pane broken at the time of my last visit has furnished an excuse for a little house-cleaning today. The net result of my sweeping was half a pint of broken glass mixed with lethargic wasps and flies. The wasps and flies kicked a little in discouraged fashion and then relapsed into winter slumber as I deposited the sweepings underneath the house.

Off in the deeper woods I hear the cheerful conversation of those self-reliant birds, the chickadees, as they discuss their afternoon meal. Chickadees are hardy youngsters, disdaining to go south for the winter. They are loyal New Englanders.

The sun looks down from a cloudless sky and blesses the quiet woods. Half an hour ago I

built a fire in the wood burning stove, and for once it did not throw out into the room the slightest trace of smoke. The seasoned chestnut sticks with which I am feeding the fire seem to melt away with a rapidity really amazing to one who has not, for the past fifteen years, kept in touch with wood fires.

In the garden is a mingling of snow and mud. Oscar, the scarecrow man, was overlooked in the fall round-up, and he still stands on guard in the garden with one arm hanging dejectedly at his side.

The clean white birches at the end of the garden tempt me to use a camera on them for about the eighth time. Then I go back to the cabin and seat myself by the red-hot stove to pencil these notes and read the latest number of *The Fra.* It would just put the finishing touch to my happiness if a little new melted maple sugar were at hand to be cooled on a panful of the clean white snow outside the north door.

After all, what resident of New England would want to always live where there is no winter? Henry Harrison Brown visited Holyoke the other day and told us that at the Nowfolk home in Glenwood (California) they were making gardens when he left in January. It sounds tempting when the wind is howling sixty miles an hour and the snow is drifting into every exposed corner, and yet I think it would prove rather flat and tasteless as a steady diet.

David Harum said that a reasonable amount of fleas was good for a dog because it kept him from meditating too much on the fact that he was a dog. So it may be that the reasonable ruggedness of our climate is good for us New Englanders and keeps us from degenerating into too great a satisfaction with ourselves. It is the races born and bred in northern climates who are strong, rugged, energetic, and masterful. The region of the equator has not yet generated a nation of leaders.

* * *

THERE! — I heard the lazy, far-away "caw! caw!" of our friend the crow. The sound carries with it a reminder of Spring. One can almost feel the balmy air of a warm May morning and see the green shoots of tender corn, with Mr. Crow busily at work (at about the hour of 4) reducing the number of shoots.

The heat from the stove has been creating an artificial spring for the flies. Several have got their wings into working order and are buzzing at the window panes right merrily. The homely sound is not ungrateful to one who was country born and bred.

Three crows, north bound, just passed over Netop woods. There goes a straggler tagging along far behind the others, with his incessant "caw! caw!"

Away to the southward comes a series of answering calls. It really begins to *sound* like Spring here at Netop.

THE END