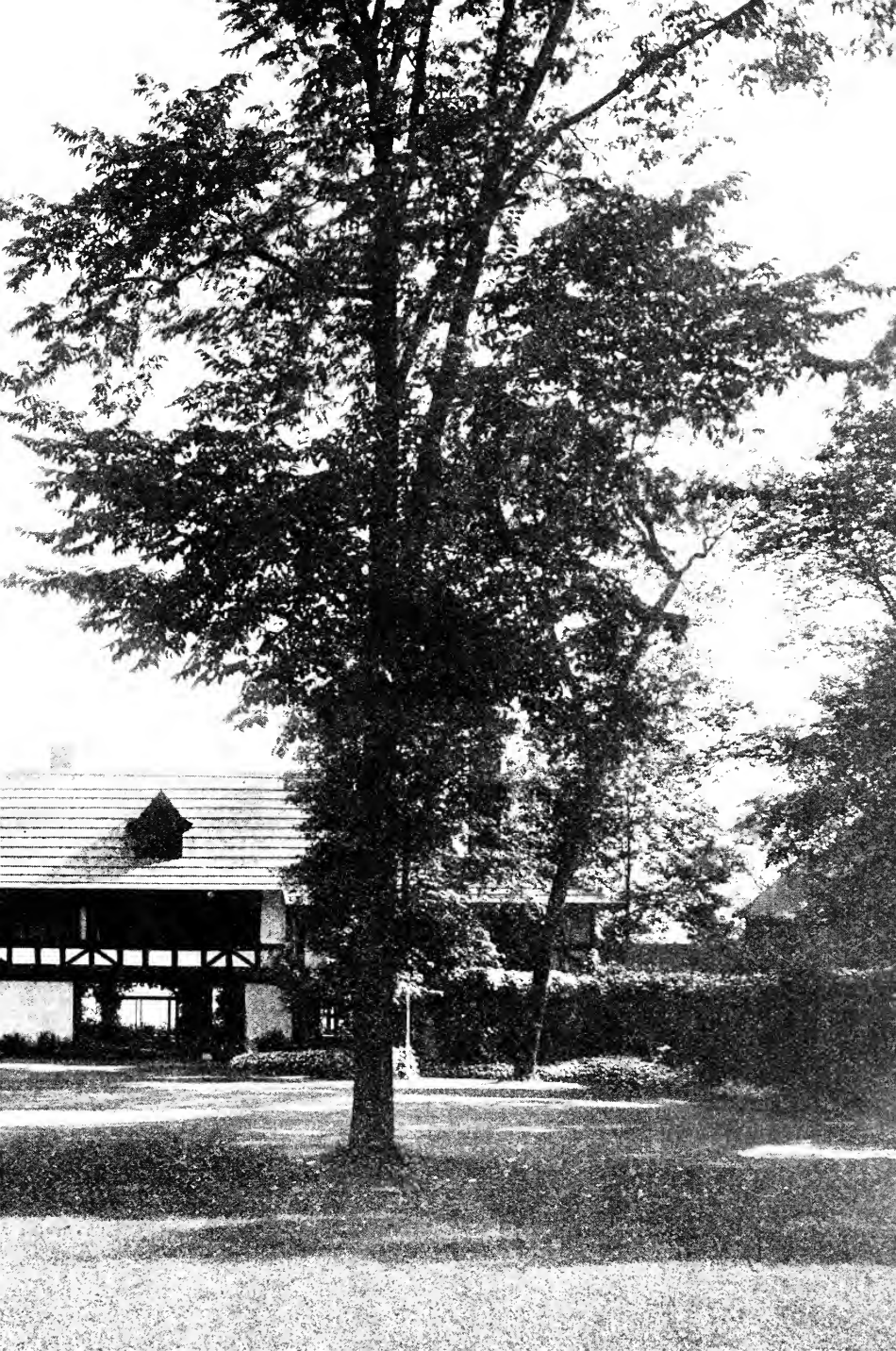


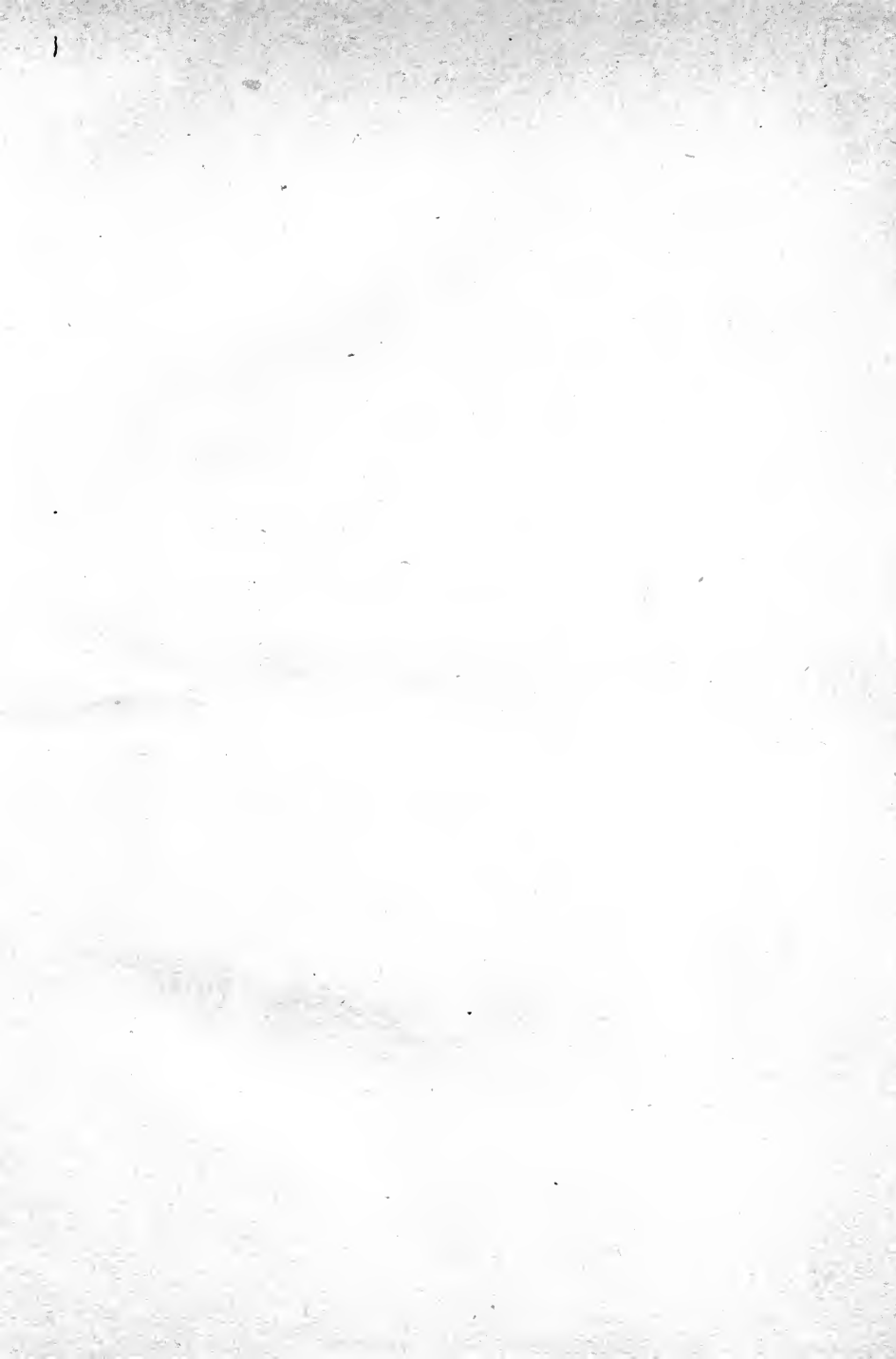
Our  
Country  
Life

Frances Kinsley Hutchinson











# Our Country Life









"GOD'S GLORIOUS OUT-OF-DOORS"

# Our Country Life

BY

FRANCES KINSLEY HUTCHINSON

AUTHOR OF "OUR COUNTRY HOME," AND  
"MOTORING IN THE BALKANS"



CHICAGO  
A. C. McCLURG & CO.  
1912

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TO  
THE CONSTANT IMPROVER  
MAY 26, 1912

"He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast."

"He prayed best who loveth best  
All things both great and small."



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## PROEM

“**H**EAVEN and earth are threads of the same loom.” Standing in the glory of the setting sun, the earth and sky enveloped in rosy flames, this phrase shot across my consciousness. My emotions had risen almost to the breaking point with the rapture of crimson oak against azure sky, sunshine on forests of golden maples, hillsides of sumac and dogwood reflected in still waters, the fragrance of falling leaves, the faint melodies of passing birds, the piercing sweetness of the whitethroat’s song, and now this crowning glory! Heaven and earth met in golden splendor. One could almost see the serried ranks of angels which Fra Angelico loved to paint, and hear the celestial harmonies beyond those dazzling forms which men call clouds.

This feeling of expansion, of freedom which comes from great open spaces, this joy in the full rounded

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## PROEM

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firmament, nothing of this had we conceived until taught by our life in the country. How could we guess the wonderful colors of land and sky until we had watched them ourselves through many a changing season? How could we know the marvelous formation of even the humblest weed until we had watched it develop hour by hour and day by day. The extraordinary intricacy of animal life was a hidden world to us until revealed by patient, practiced observation. Yes, there lies the secret! "Practiced observation." Eyes trained to see, nostrils sensitive to woodland odors, ears quickened to faintest forest sounds. Not alone the organ notes of the storm, nor the boom of ice-bound lake, nor the melody of wild birds, nor the chattering of squirrel and chipmunk; but those frail murmurs which come to the listening ear,—the rat-tat of the woodpecker in the tree-top, the patter of the squirrel's scramble over the shingles, low twitters from a warbler's nest, the dropping of acorns, the whispering of leaves, the gentle splash on the pebbly beach, the gurgle of leaping fish, the rustle of harmless reptile.

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## PROEM

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It seems to be almost a sixth sense, this aliveness to Nature's secrets, this keenness of vision, this superhuman delicacy of hearing and scent. Primitive man had it; it belonged to us, but alas! we have bartered our birthright for a mess of pottage.

Let us seek it anew patiently, lovingly, in God's glorious Out-of-Doors. Here our half-dormant faculties shall regain their normal functions, we shall come into our own again, and at last we shall wholly live.





# OUR COUNTRY LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### AFTER TEN YEARS

**W**ELL I remember the voice of the scoffers who said: "Let be. What is this babble about a country life? A novel toy, a passing fad whose glamour will soon fade. How old a possession is it, this country home of our friends?"

And the enthusiasts answered meekly: "It is true that only five years ago we began this new existence, but we feel that it will be our life work."

The scoffers smiled pityingly at such sublime if mistaken confidence: "Have we not heard these tales from the beginning? So it is with every new thing. It never lasts; neither will this one."

With a triumphant air the enthusiasts now face the scoffers. After ten years their joy in this glorious task is greater, their plans for the future increasing each

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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year, and their delight in past accomplishment keen beyond belief.

“How long have you had this place?” is a usual question when we are showing visitors the various parts of the estate, endeavoring to select and emphasize those details which will appeal most to their particular outlook. Lately I have noticed, when the answer has been “Ten years,” a look of surprise accompanying the reply, “Oh, really!”—quite an emphatic “really.” I try to control my enthusiasm and wonder what my visitor is thinking, as we go from one fascinating sight to another.

As I look back over the flying months it does not seem possible that it is ten whole years since we came into possession of our country home, although what occupied our minds before that is an equal mystery! Instead of exhausting its possibilities and becoming tired of its perplexities, we feel that we have just begun to realize a small part of its pleasures; not only have we our *faits accomplis* to gloat over, but there are an infinite number before us still to be accomplished. After all, were these “perplexities” anything more than delightful



THE HOUSE AFTER TEN YEARS



THE LAWN AFTER TEN YEARS

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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problems to work out? I know many charming women who enjoy a game of solitaire. This is our solitaire. I know one remarkable intellect who scorns solitaire but takes the keenest delight in deciphering and unraveling the intricacies of Bradshaw and the Continental time-tables. That is her pet game, as this adorable and unending riddle of a country place is ours.

At the skeptical friend who said, "We 'll give you five years of it," we cast a look of reproach; whereupon he added: "Well, say ten at the outside. After ten years of this sort of thing"—vaguely waving his hands over our wonderful shrubs with a background of sparkling water—"after ten years of this you 'll be like all the rest, you 'll want something new."

We reply frankly: "We do like something new, we are fond of variety, and we have found it here. The five years you gave us went by so swiftly that we never had time to count them; and now ten golden years have passed since first we entered our paradise. We are not peculiar folk: we do not crave monotony or loneliness; we like a varied existence, and all this we

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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have here at our doors. Here, before our opened eyes and unstopped ears, here is variety unending; here are new worlds to conquer. Never are two days alike; and from that first moment when the humming birds waken us until the crickets' merry chorus sings us to sleep, a constant succession of problems stirs us to new effort, a constant succession of achievements brings us joy."

With what real affection we contemplate a certain seedling elm, which ten years ago stood even with our eyes but now swings branches thirty feet above us. Those maples which we planted close to the house and watched anxiously through two summers are now so splendidly flourishing that an acquaintance, seeing the place for the first time, asked how we managed to build the house without injuring those fine trees. We treasured that compliment. Gone are the wires which held them; gone are the ragged ends of the branches so much appreciated as lookouts by the hummers; and in their place stand symmetrical masses of greenery.

As for trials and disappointments, they only add

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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variety. The seventeen-year locusts hummed like an army of bees in the forest one whole summer through; they did not eat every leaf, as I fully expected they would, but they laid their eggs in the ends of new branches which soon withered and hung lifeless, a sorry sight throughout the woods. Our optimistic gardener refused to let this state of affairs affect his spirits.

“It is Nature’s pruning,” he asserted, “next year the trees will be better than ever.”

And they were.

Another radiant springtime our smiles were turned to tears by a May frost, which did its deadly work so completely with the wonderful wealth of bloom that fifty shrubs—privets, rhodotypus, and viburnums—were killed to the roots; every leaf fell from the trees, and every climbing rose died to the ground! Of course we had no fruit that year either for ourselves or for the birds; but it made a new experience, and the aftergrowth of vines and shrubs from the healthy roots disclosed a totally unexpected beauty. For what

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Nature will do with the plans of man is always an interesting problem. The very uncertainty whets the imagination and stimulates to further effort. There are times when the effect is not at all what one anticipated, and new methods must be tried.

One year we planted twelve thousand crocus bulbs in the woods; and when the spring came they were a lovely sight, running like little tongues of flame into the forest, disappearing gradually in a dip of the ground or in the brown leaves. The effect was absolutely natural. In the fall when the bulbs ripened, the chipmunks discovered the new delicacy and diligently honeycombed the earth wherever the crocuses were planted. Only about two hundred survived out of our generous supply, but we are going to try again and see if we cannot protect them better.

One often hears of a friendship garden, a beautiful place in which to linger and to remember. With us the entire estate is sown with memories, for one comes upon the souvenirs of thoughtful fellow-workers in every direction. The striped wild violet sent as



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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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a freak by a schoolmate has taken kindly to its location under the honeysuckle bushes, has increased to a small plantation, and is keeping true to its acquired character. The blue chicory and bouncing bets which came from one who knows and loves this place of ours almost as we do ourselves are slowly spreading in the wild garden, although the soil is a bit richer than the railroad embankments on which they thrive so well. From a well-known horticulturist came our *Prunus Mackii* or Manchurian cherry which has doubled in size. This friend has given us not only many and varied plants, but much good advice pertaining thereto. To him are we especially indebted for our *Rosa altaica*, that pure white blossom with rich foliage which increases here with marvelous rapidity. When this guest is with us, woe for the unlucky wight who cares naught for horticulture, as he will get nothing else! With a delight only equaled by our own he examines every shrub, every leaf and flower, commenting on their characteristics and suggesting new varieties which we *must* have.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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A slip from the clinging Virginia creeper which came from the house of one of our oldest and dearest friends now adorns our own roof-tree. Among the dwarf pines and cedars in the gravel pit flourishes a blue columbine from Colorado, which we owe to a well-known geologist; we thank him also for a plantation of wild ginger down by the spring. I never see its heart-shaped leaves but a memory of that hot summer day comes to me with the picture of a stalwart form carefully carrying a heavy basket along narrow foot-paths in a glen and through high grass in open meadows.

Ragged Robin from England, and cyclamen from the Alban Hills, remind us of a Boston lady whose acquaintance we made in Italy one never-to-be-forgotten springtime. Gorse from the Friendly Architect brings to mind Ireland and the English cliffs in June. Foxgloves, too, are from the same generous hand. Of what do our trumpet vines remind us, spreading in such vigorous health over the end of the pergola? Can we not see the luxuriant fertility of that Indiana farm from which they came, so highly prized as a precious heritage



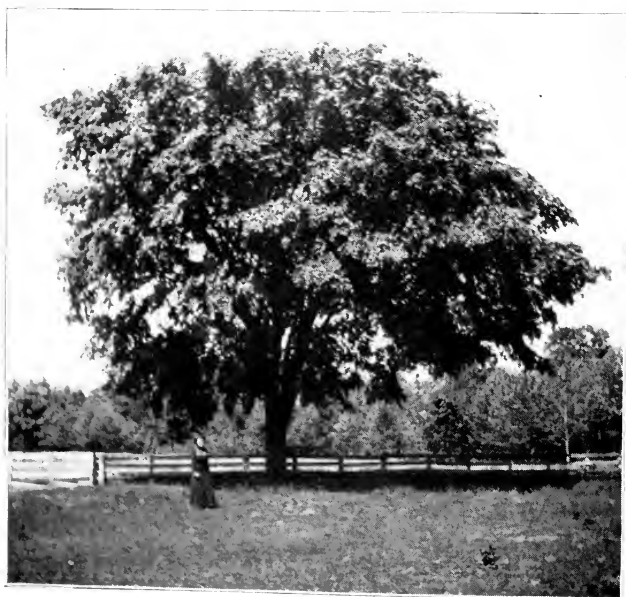
THE BLUE COLUMBINE FROM COLORADO



ONE OF THE INDIAN "METATAS"



THE MANCHURIAN CHERRY OR PRUNUS MACKII AFTER FIVE YEARS



AN OLD ELM ON THE INDIANA FARM

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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by its possessor? And the *Mertensia Virginica* from the White Mountains—its pale blue flowers transplanted from the rocks have flourished even as the friendship to which we owe them. How pleased we were to receive from a lady learned in the haunts of flowers and birds a plant to cover bare places in the shade—the moneywort. Those splendid bushes of scarlet and rose hibiscus came from a former neighbor. What a pleasure they are from June to October, although each individual flower lasts but a day! Our two fine maples close to the terrace wall recall the early days at our dear lake before we knew the comfort of ownership, those days of joy and gladness at Bonnie Brae; for these are offerings from that beautiful spot.

The list is a long one, far too long to complete here, but each separate gift is as sincerely prized and tended as if it were our only possession. Nor are our garden treasures confined to trees and plants and seeds. Those mossy boulders, strangely carved by centuries of glacial action, are precious to us as the big heart of their gracious donor. If, wandering in the woods, one

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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stumbles upon a comfortable wooden bench beneath a giant oak, be sure to make obeisance to this same beneficent being, who is never happier than when sharing his clever conceptions.

On arriving in July one year we found two hollowed-out granite bowlders about two feet in diameter on the floor of the dog-trot. Curiously smooth was the inside, and their purpose was so evident that I exclaimed at once, "What beautiful bird-baths! But where did they come from?"

Upon investigation we learned that they had a name and a history. In the early days of California, as elsewhere, the Indian women ground their corn on granite stones called *metatas*, which in the course of years grew hollow with the work. But let our good friend tell us in his own words how and where he found them: "We went down shooting quail—about eight miles on the trolley and about as far driving—before sunrise, in the Tia Juana valley south of San Diego. There had been a heavy fog in the night. When the sun rose, as far as the eye could see, every blade of grass and

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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every leaf of the mesquite bush hung heavy with drops of rainbow-tinted dew. The meadow larks were nesting in the grass, and from the higher branches lifted up their voices in exquisite rejoicing. Not one or two at intervals along the way, but a whole continuous orchestra accompanied us, their songs blending and rising and falling, and rising again! It was one of the memorable days of our forty-six years of married life!"

"Yes, but the *metatas?*" I venture, as he stops.

"Well, they lay in perhaps four places, half a dozen or so, in the tall grass, denoting so many villages that had been deserted. For when the San Diego Mission was established—you know, by Junipera Serra—in 1765, the converted Pueblos within a radius of fifty or sixty miles left their villages and clustered around the church for mutual protection. As these rocks were too cumbersome to move, they were left beside the wigwams."

Here they had remained for nearly a hundred and fifty years, to be discovered by this wandering tourist, who was also a born collector. With avidity he seized

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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the Indian relics, carried them swiftly to the eastward, and distributed them with a liberal hand among his many friends. So we accepted the *metatas*, these tokens of a bygone civilization, as precious treasures and put them at once to practical use. The Indian woman busily preparing her midday meal little imagined that she was carving bird-baths for a Wisconsin woodland some thousands of miles away; but I am sure that she would approve their present use, half sunk in the ground and filled with clear water.

After ten years of country life what have we accomplished?

From a wild woodland we have evolved a house with attendant garage and lodge; a water system, greenhouse, and woodshed; vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens of various kinds; a lawn and roads and paths disturbing as little as possible the native forest. This is the material result.

Unconsciously we have made for ourselves an absorbing interest, an endless source of entertainment, and—the most important of all—an ever-ready refuge



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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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in time of need. Not only in the spring and summer, but any week-end during the winter when brains and bodies are exhausted with the stress and strain of city life, do we run away to the peace and comfort of our country home. Its very existence saves us from discouragement. It stands ready to receive us with welcoming arms, to soothe our tired nerves, to cool our fevered brains, to teach us the wholesomeness of solitude. After hours of tramping through snowy woods, after great draughts of icy, sunlit air, after a good dinner before an open fire, the worst case of insomnia succumbs. What a delicious sense of liberty! What absolute freedom to follow one's own desires! No set hours for engagements, no interruption from telephone or doorbell! One does not *have* to do anything at all! Is that the reason why work in the country always has such a glamour of play about it?

"What are you going to do in the country at this time of year?" asked a bewildered lady on overhearing my resolve to go up to the lake one cold January day after a particularly strenuous season, when the

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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social world was scattering for Florida and California, for Europe and Africa. *I* had no tiresome railroad journey—or worse, waterway—to go through; my refuge lay close at hand and it enclosed within its broad acres every element of restfulness, of interest, and of pleasure for me that these seekers after diversion would find in their varied quests.

“I am going to work on the gardens of course,” *I* replied, willfully enjoying her mystification.

She looked at me keenly,—was *I* joking or merely crazy? *I* presume that she thought *I* meant the actual spading of earth, under several inches of snow, a difficult as well as fruitless task. But to the wise in garden lore the winter brings its own work of selection, experiment, and rearrangement; for each effect, to be successful, must be carefully planned on paper, and there is always some part of the estate to be improved or developed. Now is the hour for the irresistible glories of the seed catalogue; now with what thrills of anticipation do we choose our new plants, reject past mistakes, and lay fresh schemes!

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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In these ten years we feel that we have just touched the edges of a new kingdom—wild-flower cultivation. Not only must we devote space to our own woodland favorites, but to the acclimatizing of great masses of bloom from every part of our country and even from across the sea, selecting the ones hardy enough for our severe climate. It is a fascinating and stimulating study with endless possibilities. Wild flowers must be massed to get an effect, but they respond to a little care with peculiar zest and produce an impression of astonishing beauty. Never shall I forget that picture of a high railroad embankment in Germany, half a mile of giant sapphire lupins!

I must confess that many of our best results are due to accident, or rather, let us acknowledge, to Nature's methods of planting. She is our great teacher and shows us not only the most practical and sensible mode of procedure, but how to achieve captivating results.

"What is that lovely bloom in the Forsythias," asked a well-informed visitor one September morning, looking from her chamber window; "there among the roses too,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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and there again in the bayberries! That delicate pale-blue mass—can't you see it? What bush can it be?"

I gazed out in bewilderment; I had not seen that particular effect before, and we rushed out together to discover the new bush. But it was not a bush, merely the wood aster—planted by the birds—which, rising to the light and air, adorned with its exquisite tones the green masses of shrubbery before the house.

It is difficult for us now to imagine our existence without the absorbing interest of our country home. But a wise philosopher once said that no one should be a slave to his possessions; that the mere fact of having a corner exclusively his own should not necessarily tie him forever to one spot or keep him from roving when the spirit moves him. This is a difficult lesson for the Enthusiast to learn, but by dint of practice she has discovered that other countries have glorious springtimes, and other lands grow gorgeous wild flowers; and this very roving has made the homestead dearer. The exchange of ideas draws us into contact with other minds working out the same problems, makes us appreciate

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## AFTER TEN YEARS

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what others have done in the same direction, shows us countless phases hitherto unseen, and brings us back to our own peaceful roof overflowing with new thoughts and full of thanksgiving. Moreover, country life has taught us two opposite truths: it has revealed to us the charm of solitude, and it has given to us the opportunity to become better acquainted with our kind.

## CHAPTER II

### DAILY DOINGS

**T**O most of us, accustomed as we are to the hideous noises of the city, the atmosphere of the country is at first blank; very restful for a day or two, but after that very dull. By that time, if the mind is receptive, small echoes, insignificant utterances gradually become audible, and interest is aroused in their source. Once started, the way is easy and the ramifications endless.

“Which one shall I take this morning?” will be the query, instead of “What shall I do with myself today?”

To develop our own senses as we see them developed in the wild creatures about us, is the goal we fain would reach. To learn is the great incentive of living. Is that why each one of us demands the right to learn by experience the common truths of the ages? Would not there be enough to fill one's waking hours, if each new generation could but begin on that level of knowl-

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## DAILY DOINGS

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edge where the father stopped? I presume that in a large way each generation does begin on a higher level of knowledge; certainly the child of the present is familiar in everyday life with phenomena which would have been called witchcraft and magic in the olden time. Now that we have learned to utilize the waves of ether for carrying our messages, nothing seems too wonderful to believe. Let us not forget in this great era of mechanical inventions, that it is Nature that has been the chief teacher, and that she still holds precious secrets for the future man.

But if she jealously guards her deeper thoughts and hedges the path thereto with endless difficulties, she spreads a feast of delight to the casual intelligence and fills his restless spirit with her blessed balm of peace.

There are no marvelous events to chronicle in our simple country life, but it is astonishing how full the days are and how rapidly they pass. A glance at the line-a-day book brings more forcibly to my mind our daily doings.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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January 1. We counted twenty-five robins on our snow-covered lawn this morning. We haven't seen them until today. Have they come down from colder climates in search of food? For the winter has been unusually severe.

January 23. After a wonderful crimson glow changing gradually to primrose, comes the round red ball of the sun in a burst of heavenly glory. The lake is frozen in long undulations where deep blue shadows lie; the heaped-up blocks of ice on the sandbar are reflected in mirrors which yesterday were water; the farther hills are still swathed in the misty garments of the dawn; high above us in the clear sky the horned crescent of the moon grows ever fainter; hoar frost sparkles from every exposed surface; the snow is receding gradually from shrub and tree root, leaving moist patches of earth for the delectation of Master Junco and his kind. The stray Bohemian waxwing, which has been visiting me for a week, appears on his lookout, the top branches of the south maple, then darts down to his breakfast of haws on the prairie rose be-



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## DAILY DOINGS

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neath my window. The snapping of the pony's feet as he touches the crisp ice, taking the children to school in the small cart, is the only sound that disturbs the stillness; and that is soon lost as they disappear behind the fishing village. "Cheep," cries the chickadee on the sill, and the nuthatch grunts a bit to inform me of his presence. Yes, the food is fresh and to his taste, also to the taste of the blue jay, who has to be frightened off with threatening gestures. Although the nuthatch permits no relative to eat on the dish with him, occasionally he relaxes his strict rules and carries a morsel to his waiting mate upon the tree; and when he succeeds in getting away with a particularly big piece of suet, I notice that the other bird follows him with celerity instead of coming to the table herself. How dexterously she darts after the bit of nut dropped from his bill, and with what beauty of action she seizes it in mid-air!

January 24. Thermometer 45°. The wild geese calling at twilight. Yesterday we found a snowdrop. Is the spring so near?

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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February 9. I wonder whether the sun is really more brilliant in winter. Or does the snow give a crystalline clearness to the atmosphere? Certainly never before has the downy woodpecker's black and white coat seemed half so striking. He gives us ample opportunity to admire him, slowly swaying on the suet hung under the food-bell at my western window, or slipping down the maple in the out-of-doors dining-room. This German food-bell consists of a glass jar with screw top like our Mason jars, holding about five pounds of canary and rape seed. The food slipping automatically into a tiny dish below is protected from rain and snow by a bell-like cover. Suspended on brackets far enough from the tree so that only birds can reach it, this ingenious contrivance not only furnishes supplies for all seed-eating and suet-eating birds but furnishes us with entertainment at almost any hour of the day. The hairy woodpecker, too, peers from the other side of the tree cautiously reconnoitering; with the exception of the blue jay he is our largest winter visitor, but he is also the most timid one. The juncos

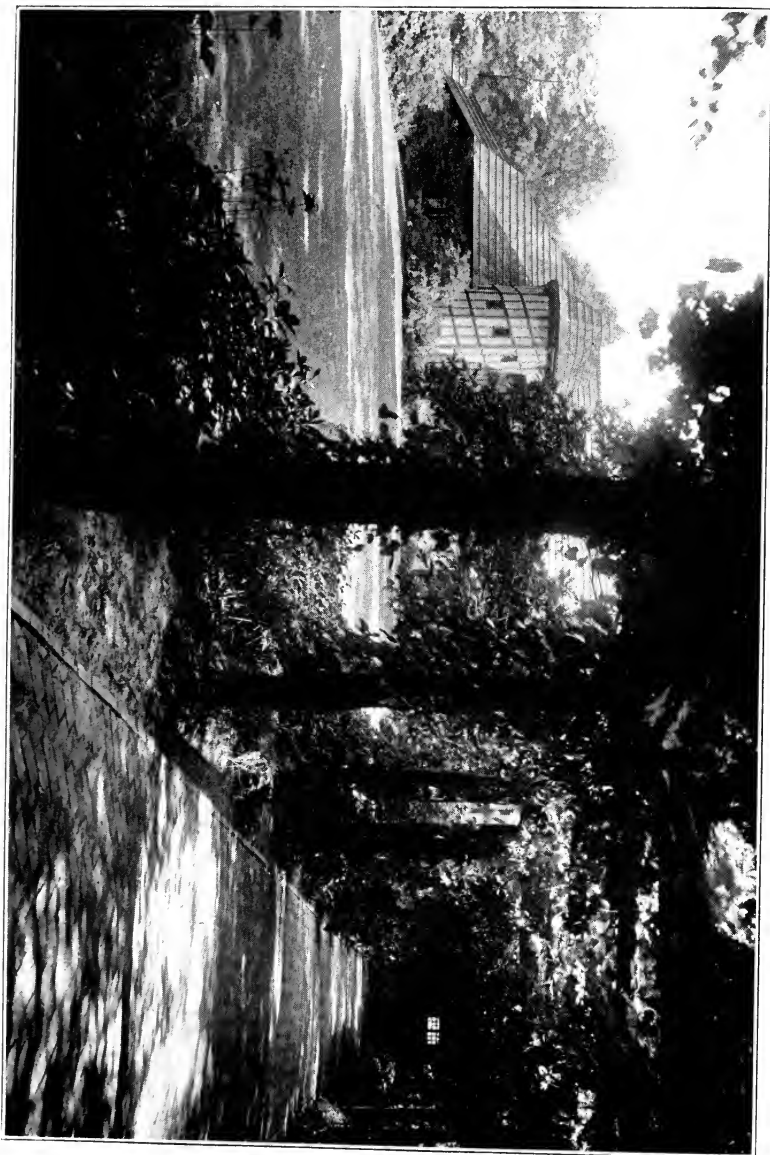


TWO OF THE BERLEPSCH BIRD BOXES



THE GERMAN AUTOMATIC FOOD-BELL

THE ROBINS' RENDEZVOUS



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## DAILY DOINGS

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hop along the snowy terrace after the freshly sprinkled seed, and to our surprise a white-crowned sparrow appears among them. The nuthatches, and especially the chickadees, always claim our interest, so that our luncheon party is a lively and diverting function.

March 3. Although February is the proper time to put up the Berlepsch bird boxes, ours, arriving late, were installed today. Those bird boxes for all hole-nesting birds have been carefully evolved by Baron von Berlepsch after thirty years of study and they have been most successful in Germany where the natural nesting places have been cleared away. It remains to be proven whether there is the same need for them in this country. In suburban towns, flickers, woodpeckers, wrens, bluebirds and chickadees have accepted them eagerly. In the illustration is shown one of the wren boxes under the eaves and a box suitable for woodpeckers.

April 22. A red letter day! A new bird for Wychwood! What a sensation was that first sight of a woodcock this afternoon; I might better say *sound*,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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for the sight was so quickly over. I turned breathlessly to my companion and exclaimed: "What was it?"

"Don't you know? Nothing makes a whistling sound like that except a woodcock."

"A woodcock here? But I thought that they were very shy birds."

"Well, they evidently feel that they are protected here."

By searching we found their characteristic borings for food, and the marks of their feet in the moist earth.

April 23. We flushed a woodcock again from beside the brook. Was it the same individual or is there a pair? What joy if they were to nest here!

May 3. My wild wish has actually come true! The woodcock was even then nesting in the deep woods that border our lawn within two hundred feet of the house, and this morning we discovered the nest quite by accident; in fact I just missed stepping on it. Four pointed speckled eggs lay apex to center in a little hollow of pressed-down dead leaves at the foot

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## DAILY DOINGS

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of a slim bush. Later we went back hoping to catch the mother; and I assure you that to find the nest when by itself was one thing, but to find that nest when the adult bird was on it was quite another. Such a marvelous blending of feathers into leaves! Such absolute immobility! Although you knew that by standing at a certain spot and sighting the base of a certain sapling you must look straight at the woodcock nestled into the brown leaves, still you failed to see the bird! As to taking pictures, of course we tried it; no one could resist the temptation, and we hoped that the sensitive film might reveal what we wished to see. There was not the least difficulty about arranging the tripod or long exposure, for the clever bird sat like a statue. But the results were nil.

May 7. Yesterday we counted thirty-four species of birds on our place: towhee, golden-crowned kinglet, humming bird, kingfisher, Bonaparte gulls, phœbe, Baltimore oriole, rose-breasted grosbeak, indigo bunting, redstart, Maryland yellowthroat, a female palm warbler, myrtle and chestnut-sided warblers, flickers,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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red-headed, hairy, and downy woodpeckers, white-throat, chipping sparrows, English sparrows, and a long sparrow not identified, robins, wood thrushes, blue jays, white-eyed vireos, brown creepers, crows, yellow warblers in flocks, cat birds, a woodcock on her nest, six bluebills in the bay, cedar birds and cowbirds. No one can be sure what any day may bring forth, or even what day the warblers will arrive; some come earlier than others, but in this location the first half of May and from the ninth to the twenty-ninth of September, there are sure to be some warblers about. According to a late theory they take advantage of a strong wind and come up from the south or down from the north on its wings. Certainly we have noticed that a still morning after a gale is the very best time to look for the wanderers. In the spring as there are no immature birds and the plumage is much more brilliant, their identification is easier. But migration time, whether in spring or fall, means great excitement and anticipation in our country home, and we try to have with us then friends who will most enjoy this sur-



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## DAILY DOINGS

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prising spectacle. From Mr. Chapman's list of seventy-four kinds of warblers in America we have counted twenty-five at different times on our place.

May 9. We witnessed a rare sight today. It was one of those perfectly quiet mornings, the sky slightly overcast; and all unknowing of the treat before us we started down the shore path, a merry party, to walk to the village. Of course the enthusiasts were armed with field glasses, a usual precaution. We had scarcely left our place before we saw an army of the tiny warblers in all the brilliancy of their spring plumage flitting over the ground before us. "The warblers!" we cried softly in concert. Begging those who wished for exercise not to wait for us, we stood still, our glasses glued to our eyes, as, after the disappearance of the merry party, one by one those winged dots of sunset hues drifted daintily back to their feast on the moist earth. If I only knew what it was that they found so much to their liking, I would certainly provide it for them each year. To see the magnolia warbler with his bright yellow rump and white-edged

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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tail, or the olive back of the white-throated green warbler, or the brilliant chestnut-sided warbler disappearing among the branches of the trees is a pleasure, but a tantalizing one. Here "these fascinating sprites of the tree-tops," as Mr. Chapman calls them, were within fifteen feet of us, in the bright light of noon-day, perfectly fearless, apparently unconscious of our presence, stepping delicately hither and thither or clinging to low shrubs like pendent jewels. Here the unmistakable and well-named black and white warbler consorted with the more somber Kentucky; there the chestnut crown indicated the palm warbler; and beyond, a group of Canadians with their jetted necklaces over yellow. Beside us the Cape May warbler expanded his striped chest, and that gray bird, turning, disclosed the black throat and yellow spots of the golden-winged. As we named each new one we felt new sensations of delight, or if we did not recognize one, out must come the notebook for a minute description. The splendid Blackburnian once seen can never be forgotten. But the wonderful bit of the sky

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## DAILY DOINGS

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dropped down to earth, there beside the path! what bird is that? Can it be the rare cerulean warbler? None other. To my surprise I discover later that it nests not far from here at Lake Koshkonung. Butler says that this warbler "is seldom found nearer the ground than twenty feet, ranging from this height to the tops of the tallest trees." Now why, on the edge of deep woods did this multitude of tree-loving birds stay cheerfully upon the ground for over an hour busily helping themselves to all manner of unknown delicacies and voicing their happiness in countless trills and carols? The myrtle warblers are old friends, and the yellow warblers are with us in flocks all summer, so little heed was paid to them; the redstart too is one of our intimates; but the Maryland yellowthroat with his black mask visits us only on these semiannual occasions on his way to the neighboring swamps to nest or to join his companions for the fall migration.

A large bird new to us seemed to be accepted on terms of equality in this wandering company, a bird as big as a junco, with his white outer tail feathers,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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too; but the streaked spots on the breast and the more brownish tinge marked it as an American pipit or titlark. Six or seven of them tipping their tails as they walked, mingled with the warblers, and later two or three Baltimore orioles added more color to the dazzling picture. It was a thrilling experience.

May 11. Today we took a snapshot of the baby woodcocks in their dead-leaf cradle. So brand-new were they that the down was scarcely dry on their wee backs. Three hours later they were off and away to the brook, I suppose, for there was no trace of them to be found near the nest. The babies were beauties in their soft down distinctly striped dark-brown and tan.

May 17. A woodland tragedy! One of our first resolves on taking possession of the place was to let Nature have her way and not to interfere with the nice balance which she keeps. One advised us to kill off the squirrels; "you'll never have birds with those enemies around." But we have birds and the severe winters keep the crop of squirrels within bounds. An-



TWO BABY WOODCOCK IN NEST



THE YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS A DAY OLD



THE NEST AND EGG OF A HUMMING BIRD



EGG AND NEST OF COOPER HAWK

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## DAILY DOINGS

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other advised us to shoot the blue jays and cowbirds. We have learned by experience the wisdom of this warning. Then with the quantity of small birds who learned that they would find protection in our woods came their worst foes, the Cooper hawks. Very slyly and very early in the season two pair built nests in the deepest part of the woods, and while awaiting the warblers, found plenty of refreshment in our neighbor's poultry plants! Great was the excitement of the crows at this invasion of their domain; fierce battles took place but the hawks stayed. Wary creatures are these denizens of the forest and it took weeks to get two of them shot.

This morning in a secluded dell we spied an oven bird walking through the grass, and from the tree-top at the same moment came "Teacher, Teacher," in eager repetition. We searched the ground, but fruitlessly; any one of those leafy mounds might be the long-sought-for nest; to find an oven bird's home had been my dream for years. Finally we decided to sit down quietly at some distance and watch.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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A new trill diverted us, and a cerulean warbler ventured near. How exquisite his blue coat flashed in the sunlight! A tiny "cheep" still nearer and we turned to see his mate fly across the path not ten feet from the ground. Swift as an arrow darted a huge bird toward the warbler, caught it in his talons and bore it to the ground, then frightened at our approach flew to a tree-top.

"The hawk!" we cried in horrified accents.

"Run for the gun. I'll watch," gasped my companion. And stumbling over the rough surface of the forest I finally gained the road and sped toward the garage. It seemed ages before we could load the gun, climb into the motor and return. The hawk had not waited for us but we discovered her nest and later on succeeded in shooting her. The nest was brought down from its crotch in the tree some fifty feet above the ground and the three blue-white eggs which positively identified her destroyed. We could not have Cooper hawks, the very worst of the species, enjoying our hospitality.



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## DAILY DOINGS

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June 14. Down at the end of the lawn where the ground dips into a sudden hollow, where the underbrush is thick and the brambles wave effectively their thorny branches, I discovered to my great delight a yellow-billed cuckoo's nest with four eggs in it this morning. The coarse nest lay about three feet from the ground in a beautiful tangle, and the mother bird flew only six feet or so away uttering her soft protests apologetically at my intrusion. Three years ago almost to a day we watched a cuckoo feeding her young within twenty-five feet of this nest. The next morning when I brought down my kodak two tiny birds were in the nest and one was just coming out of the shell. It did look odd to see such young birds entirely covered with pin feathers. I longed to linger and watch the little family but the poor mother cuckoo was so unhappy and anxious that I went away.

June 15. Among my other June duties is the one of removing the cowbird's egg from the various nests where the unnatural mother places them. I go from bush to bush each morning looking

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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out for all such unwelcome guests. The poor little yellow warblers are so helpless under this burden! Sometimes they do lay a new floor over the cowbird's egg and build another nest on top of it, but as a rule they have their own eggs to consider, and unless relieved by outside help, patiently proceed with their brooding until the horrid interloper hatches and smothers the other little ones. The wood thrush is far too sweet-tempered to rebel against the cowbird's actions; in two days I have taken five cowbird's eggs out of the same thrushes' nest! Even the catbird is at times a victim. Once to my horror I saw a cowbird actually eating a catbird's egg! After that I gave orders that the cowbirds must be shot.

June 18. At times I have in charge between twenty and thirty nests, and one can easily imagine that it takes many hours of my summer days. In this manner we get really acquainted with our feathered neighbors, and they learn to have great confidence in us. I remember a terrible commotion one morning down in the oval. Upon investigation I found that the yellow warbler's

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## DAILY DOINGS

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nest in a low rosebush had been turned upside down by a high wind in the night, and the four precious eggs were lying scattered about on the ground. Luckily they were unbroken; so we righted the rose and tied it up securely, then carefully replaced the eggs under the watchful eye of the anxious mother who immediately took her place on the nest and in due time the little ones one after another came blithely forth to the joy and pride of the tiny parents.

June 28. In what lovely curves the humming bird dips as he woos the fair lady of his dreams sitting apparently oblivious on the trumpet vine close by. Down in a half-circle and up again swings my gay cavalier twenty-five times in succession. Is it a test of endurance, I wonder, or a traditional mode of courtship? My maple is a favorite rendezvous of the humming birds; almost any hour one may, by looking closely, perceive a tiny bunch which suddenly resolves itself into a misty whirl of iridescence as the deep cups of the trumpet flower attract him. Another beloved blossom is the old-fashioned bee-balm (Monarda

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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didyma) ; over this scarlet mass of bloom we counted more than twenty hummers wheeling and fluttering in excited competition.

“We will make the bed twice as large next year,” cries the Constant Improver.

July 1. What is the small wren scolding about? I hear his insistent notes as, scissors in hand, I stand over the snapdragons, and as it continues I must search out the cause of the disturbance. Usually it is nothing more important than the too close proximity of a pert chipmunk. Evidently her little ones have made their first flight, or possibly one may still be in the box just under the eaves at my west window.

We had been in the house five years before any of the wrens deigned to accept the offers that we made them to come and live with us. In vain we nailed up comfortable boxes with an entrance cut just the right size, in the most desirable places; fruitlessly we put out birch-bark wigwams and hollow gourds recommended by interested friends. Down by the brook,

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## DAILY DOINGS

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away in the hollow, their merry song frequently betrayed them. It is still a mystery why they hesitated so long to have confidence in us.

Great was our rejoicing, then, one May when, on our arrival in the country we found not only that the wrens had moved into the box at my own west window but that they had accepted the birch-bark wigwam and also built a nest on the shelf of the tool-house and another under the eaves of the kitchen-house. We had plenty of melody that season, and each year since then the rollicking company has returned to us. This spring one took possession of an old woodpecker's nest in a log placed inside the dog-trot! When the screen had to be put up, the log was carefully moved in the night to a place under the eaves; but this particular wren disapproved of the change and took French leave.

A learned ornithologist informed us that our birds were Bewick wrens. Certainly no wrens could have more delicious notes or be more captivating in their daily life.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Her sight is short, she comes quite near ;  
A foot to me 's a mile to her ;  
And she is known as Jenny Wren,  
The smallest bird in England. When  
I heard that little bird at first,  
Methought her frame would surely burst  
With earnest song. Oft had I seen  
Her running under leaves so green,  
Or in the grass so fresh and wet,  
As though her wings she would forget.  
And, seeing this, I said to her—  
“My pretty runner, you prefer  
To be a thing to run unheard  
Through leaves and grass, and not a bird!”  
'T was then she burst, to prove me wrong,  
Into a sudden storm of song  
So very loud and earnest, I  
Feared she would break her heart and die.  
“Nay, nay,” I laughed, “be you no thing  
To run unheard, sweet scold, but sing!”  
O I could hear your voice near me,  
Above the din in that oak tree,  
When almost all the twigs on top  
Had starlings singing without stop.

July 28. A rainy dawn. I hear against a fugue of falling drops the song sparrow's soft cadences; the brisk trill of the busy wren encouraging his mate in her efforts to stop those pleading mouths; the whirl of the

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## DAILY DOINGS

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humming bird above the trumpet flower; the warning note of the hairy woodpecker and the low rumble of passing thunder. Very agreeable it is to lie in this cozy shelter out in the sweet-scented rain and listen to the morning melodies.

August 2. It is impossible to get lonely in the country, for one has ideal company always diverting and never a care. Today when within the screened porch I leisurely ate my melon fresh from its cunning hammock in the glasshouse, the hungry bees and wasps buzzed their displeasure outside; a pert young cat-bird alighted on her own table within a foot of mine and hastily grabbed the cocoanut with many a suspicious glance at me; a yellow warbler shook the shining drops from his wings as he reached the protecting bush over the bird-bath, and a redstart darted down to the tub for his turn.

August 10. We have seen the woodcock again. Seven of them have been counted wandering over the place, and at twilight this evening they came out boldly

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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on the grass in front of the house. We watched them from the windows of my room and they seemed astoundingly fearless.

August 23. The last fledgling of the last brood of wrens left my window box by six o'clock this morning. This was the second brood in the same nest this year, but whether or not the same pair of wrens, *quien sabe?* I shall miss their joyous trilling and the details of their housekeeping, which I have watched at such close quarters through so many months. How any birdlings can have the courage to leave the nest for the first flight is a continual mystery to me! The fluttering of wings at the sight of food is of course a kind of providential exercise preparing the muscles to bear later the full weight of the body.

September 15. A brilliant day. As I leaned far out of my window to drink in the delicious air of the morning, I saw a curious sight. Circling high over the lawn, far above the tallest trees were between forty and fifty big birds which I did not know. They were not gulls although their wings were wide, neither



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## DAILY DOINGS

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were they wild geese, nor herons. One or two came down low enough for me to see plainly with the glass, white breasts gleaming silvery in the sun, two black bars on the short rounded tails, and black edges to the otherwise white wings. Of course all these observations were from underneath. With slow motions they wheeled and circled in the blue sky. Hawks they must be, I concluded, but without more definite data I could not be sure whether they were Cooper hawks or not. Certainly they were an imposing group poised there just over our acre of lawn. I wonder whether they were gathered together for migration.

September 18. During the fall migrations small birds are often knocked senseless by flying against our windows. In this way we are able to examine minutely the little creatures and occasionally are able to restore their shattered senses. This morning a brightly marked bird was picked up just outside the dining-room and brought up to me. It was impossible to mistake it. I knew at once that it was a warbling vireo. He lay on my hand with beak open, and I gave

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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him water from the medicine dropper. That seemed to revive him a bit, so I took him down to the dog-trot; but as he still panted, I added to the water a wee drop of whisky. He had no sooner swallowed this than he spread out his wings and dashed to the ceiling. That would never do, for he would certainly hurt himself against the glass, so I caught him again. He did not seem afraid, possibly he might have been still dazed by his adventures; but the instant I opened my hand in the outer air away flew Mr. Vireo and was out of sight in a trice. This reminds me that last year a pair of warbling vireos built their nests in a maple tree close to our main entrance, and their delicious notes were a great addition to our summer chorus. I wonder where their dainty basket cradle hung this summer; for although we heard them often we failed to find their nursery.

October 28. Last night I heard a grating noise at my window, and looking out, perceived plainly the pointed nose of a field mouse rapidly enlarging the hole of the wren box to suit his larger bulk. This morn-

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## DAILY DOINGS

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ing the entrance was twice as big as it should be. This did not please me at all, the quarters were too near my own for comfort and I had the man take down the box, tear out the mouse's dwelling and put a new front on with a hole the proper size for wrens. On my return from a brief visit in town I found that Mr. Mouse, not at all discouraged, had reënlarged the entrance hole and was very comfortably fixed inside for the winter.

"What can we do?" I asked in despair of our resourceful gardener.

"A bit of tin might be a good thing," he suggested, "he can't gnaw that."

So the mouse's warm coverings of softest yellow fluff were mercilessly thrown out, even the wren's tiny twigs cleared away, another front put in reënforced with tin carefully smoothed on the edges to avoid hurting the feathers of a bird and the fresh box was replaced ready for the first spring visitor.

October 31. At six in the morning an orange sunrise reflected in the still lake, a faint morning star in a gleaming sky and then a fiery ball appears above the

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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hilltop sending its rosy path across the water to our chamber windows; hoar frost veils the green grass, a junco's feeble chirp is heard, then a light picking and a squeak. It is a pair of robins after the woodbine berries over the southern windows, a belated pair of robins who evidently have decided not to migrate this year but to trust in the full provision of our berry garden for their winter's sustenance. Suddenly a sharp patter on the housetop, a confused scrambling on the roof, then a silence as the tree is attained and a gentle scratching on my screen informs me that it is time for breakfast according to Mr. Squirrel. His hunger appeased he begins to carry away the nuts to store in secret places of the lawn; then the blue jays gather and caw in derision. Back and forth runs the industrious squirrel providing for the coming winter; over him flies the thieving blue jay also keen upon his winter store. No sooner has Mr. Squirrel safely hidden his precious nut in the soft dirt than down sweeps Captain Blue Jay, digs it up and flies away with it. Against such tactics what defense has Master Squirrel? With

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## DAILY DOINGS

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a flirt of his tail he leaps to the tree-trunk and dashes after his tormentors, but they only fly away, shouting, "Jay, jay, jay, jay!"

Tomorrow we close the house for the season.

## CHAPTER III

### EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

OUR first parents were created in a garden; so as we grow older our hearts turn naturally toward the open gateway of a garden. Not only to enjoy its sights and sounds, passively to accept its delights, but to labor in its behalf, to produce new effects—that is the joy of gardening. Is it heresy to imagine that the mere fact of idleness may have had something to do with the fall of our poor Mother Eve? Who was put in the garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it”? Adam. Whose duty was it to till the earth that it should bring forth fruit? Adam’s. Who was designated to give a name to each living organism? Adam. These occupations must have been absorbing as well as inspiring, and would easily fill his waking hours to overflowing. He had no leisure at that time for temptation. No wonder that he felt the need of a helpmeet

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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with whom to discuss all he had done. But Eve, poor thing! evidently had no particular work laid out for her aside from listening to Adam. If she had only been of a systematic nature and made elaborate records or even kept a line-a-day book! With no maternal or housekeeping duties, no clothing of any kind to keep in order, her days may have seemed a bit long. But the modern Eve has small chance for ennui if she really loves her garden and lives in it.

“How do you fill your time? What have you been doing today?” asks a casual caller. Dazed by the effort to remember all the small doings of my well-filled hours and knowing that a too detailed answer is neither expected nor desired, I search to eliminate everything but the obvious, to relate in large terms my petty joys.

How can I explain that when I opened my eyes and saw the humming bird poised over a trumpet flower but two feet from me, I breathed more softly in silent ecstasy; that as the sun flooded the lake in silvery sheen, my whole being rejoiced; that each bird note gave me

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

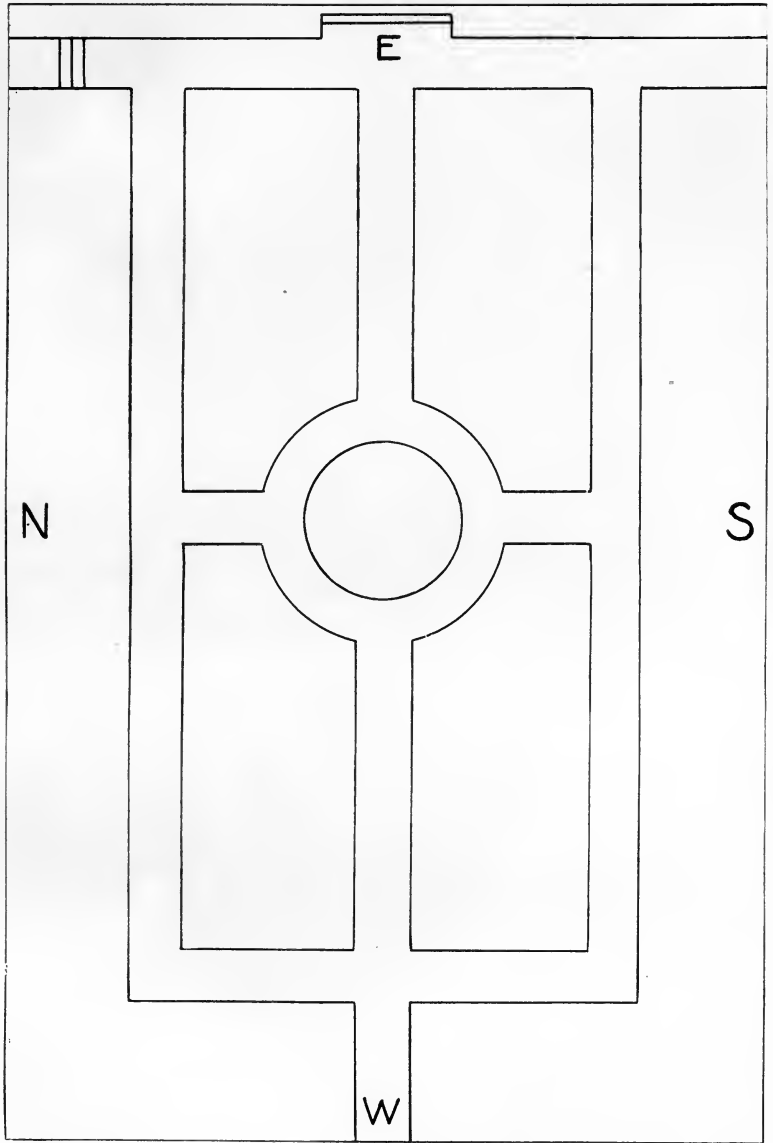
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a sense of companionship with Nature which only life in the country can bring; that as I wandered through the shrubbery freeing a choice bush from the too friendly grape, digging up a burdock or spying out a hidden thistle, pulling the ragweed or clipping along the path, my only regret was that I had not another pair of eyes to take advantage of earth and sky? The study of Nature tends to diffuseness rather than to concentration. No matter with what determination you start out, no matter how interested you may be in that particular branch, I defy you to shut your eyes to other passing beauties, to countless other beguiling sights.

“Pause a bit,” they seem to say, “stop and realize the joy of living. Let not the love of order keep you from the love of us. Be still, relax, lay down that learned book, that well-thumbed list, those shears and fly-whisk deft. Come sit in quiet contemplation at our feet.”

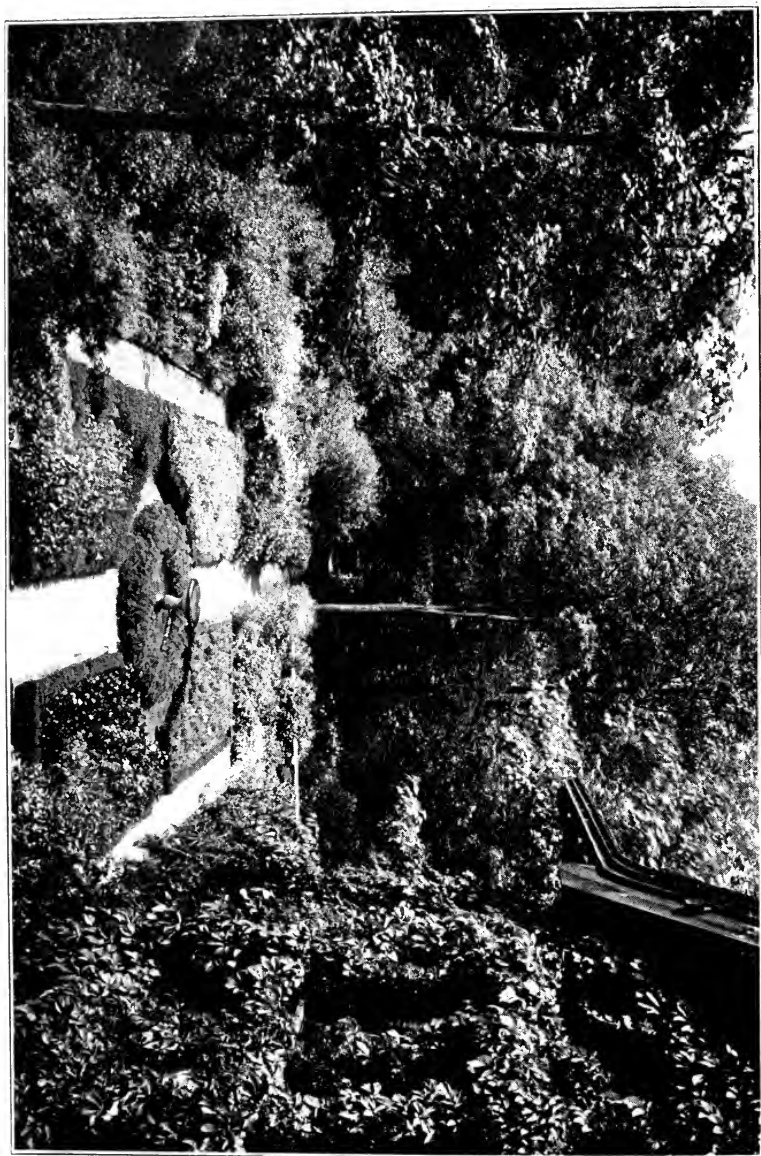
Few parts of our estate have had more careful thought and none proved of more educational value than the bit of ground, fifty by sixty feet, known as our formal garden. It seemed a perfectly simple proposition,





THE FORMAL GARDEN (50 x 60 FEET)

THE FORMAL GARDEN



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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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just "plenty of flowers" was all I demanded. The location was faultless, facing due south and shielded on the north by the kitchen-house and on the west by the woods. A glance at the plan will explain its design. Surrounded by a bowlder wall three and a half feet high with four entrances, the paths paved with brick, as it lay empty beneath my chamber window, it offered material for many an experiment and many a pleasant dream.

After we had decided upon the dimensions, we searched for a fountain the right size to put in the center. Wandering through the hill towns of Italy, many a fountain did we photograph and many elaborate ones did we see, but when at last we found one to please us, it was in an unexpected place. Instead of being tucked away in an inaccessible corner of the country, it stood in the busiest piazza in Rome; and we had looked at it for many years without ever really seeing it until, with this conception in our minds, we came upon it. Where the Corso passes before the towering column of Marcus Aurelius (perhaps this may explain

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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our former blindness!), in the middle of a large, rather awkward basin stands this lovely "tazza" brimming with water,—a constant libation to the memory of the great Emperor General.

Could we have it copied? Nothing easier. So a duplicate was made in the beautiful travertine stone which cuts like cheese and hardens as the years go by, growing darker under the action of the water, until early it has the aspect of age. With what impatience we awaited its coming, with what glee we greeted its arrival, and with what satisfaction we installed it above the shallow basin! That part of the garden, at least, is permanent,—through all its variations the fountain has preserved its charm.

The floral border about it, too, has never caused us any misgivings. Tulips in the springtime are a blaze of color;—mixed tulips, crimson, orange, and dark purple, cast fantastic reflections upon the rippling water. After they have passed, rose geraniums fill the narrow space to overflowing, stretching above the edge of the basin and affording cool shadows in which the goldfish

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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love to linger—a thrifty, fragrant, unvarying circle until the late frost.

On three sides of the garden the ten feet of border are given over to perennials with only the necessary number of annuals to fill empty places. With curious pleasure we greet the first red fingers of the peonies as they push upward to the light in early May, and how effective in the garden a month later are their great globes of dark red, rose, and white! Beneath their spreading leaves hide lily bulbs which later in the season burst into curving chalices of Oriental incense. *Nicotiana* too reminds one of some Eastern odalisque as she lifts her drooping head toward evening, opens her starry eyes and anoints herself with choicest perfumes for the night-moth's coming. Hers is not the olive beauty of the Orient, hers is the fairness of the Georgian maid, pure white or blushing deeply under too ardent a regard.

Whenever I think of the most beautiful blue flower in the world, the Chinese larkspur with its delicate stem of quivering blooms comes to my mind. Such

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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living blue! Such daintiness of form! So lightly poised are they that it seems they must sail away on the wings of every passing zephyr. But no; they only bob their small curtsies and settle back somewhat breathless as the breeze departs.

What would a garden be without phlox, the inevitable, the incomparable, the old-fashioned yet ever-desirable phlox? White, cherry, rose, and a kind called blue, it fulfills its mission in our sunny border with an abundance, a freedom which cheers the heart of the Enthusiast. Dependable, with no roving tendencies, at the same time almost to a day each year it appears above the black earth and blossoms until blighted by the frost. One big group has reverted to its original magenta, but its flowers are so large and the heads so luxuriant that I cannot bear to remove it. If it blossoms at the same time as its cherry neighbors, I mercilessly cut it all back, thus providing myself with a huge brass bowl of gorgeous color for the house; and later in the fall, when the cherry phlox has gone, my magenta flowers make a fine show beside the pale



THE FIRST SNOW



HOW WE PROTECTED THE BOX



A SELF-SOWN COLUMBINE



THE IVORY-WHITE COMELINESS OF THE JAPANESE ANEMONE



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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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boltonias. A white phlox near by has acquired a beautiful pink center, and its petals have a faint rosy tinge in the morning sun.

What the Cherokee rose is to California and the South, what the cistus is to the arid plains of Italy, such is the ivory white comeliness of the Japanese anemone to our northern gardens. Promptly on the first day of September it opens its folded petals, and, growing more and more confident under the hot sun and cool nights of autumn, it expands in numberless exquisite flowers vying with the single dahlias for the leading place in our affections.

The two Japanese quinces planted at the east end of the borders grew so large after six years that clipping was in vain and they had to be transplanted to other fields of usefulness. The great clump of elms, which we found in the north border and could not bear to dislodge as it shaded so perfectly the kitchen-house, became so overwhelming that it too had to go. I know that it is only a question of time when the white crushy rose known as the "Blanc double de

Coubert," which has flourished so gayly at each side of the forest gate, will have to find more space in which to extend its thorny branches.

The boltonias against the wall in the west border are so like wild flowers that they make a connecting link between the phlox and anemone within and the rudbeckias of various kinds without the little garden. The vagaries of plants! One year we had hollyhocks just outside the wall; evidently they regarded the flowers inside with envious eyes, for ever since then, hollyhocks, pink, white, and crimson, have appeared in places unconventional within the small enclosure. When they thus select their own abode they seem to think that they must justify themselves in order to be let alone, so they expand with unusual beauty. Who could have the heart to disturb that staff of rosy bloom springing, alas! too near the border's edge? "We will leave it just this season," we say, hoping that next year it will choose another spot.

The pale blue salvia (farinaceous) too,—planted quite properly beside the wall,—what would a foreign

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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gardener say to its present position, waving its slender stalks from the extremest corner of the bed? Every week with string and stakes I tie it back, and every week its delicate arms seem to stretch out more greedily across the path. Through the long summer it looms above the fringed stokesia and blue lobelia until rosy lilies spring to keep it company and anemones o'ertop it and dahlias form a compact screen behind it.

When we cut down the clump of elms within the northern border, the plants beneath its spreading branches responded so quickly to the sun's hot rays that instead of remaining a low proper growth of ten inches or so, they ran riot in all directions. The frail, ladylike African daisy became fairly intoxicated with her liberty; she grew from ten inches to more than two feet, lopping against her neighbors and sprawling over the bricks in really a disgraceful fashion. Gentle persuasion having failed to guide her back into the path of rectitude, we were obliged to part company. The cockscomb, too, flaunted its gorgeous banners, orange, claret, and crimson, three feet above the earth

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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and that on the border's edge! It is far too splendid to suppress; we will try it in another place next year. *Ageratum*, the "true blue" is generally a favorite with gardeners, and I can see the reason. It does bloom persistently the entire summer. I hardly know why I do not like it, but to me it lacks character as well as scent. Possibly we have not yet discovered its proper environment.

Entirely around the border of the garden against the wall are planted dahlias; these I think are a fixture. Some seasons they begin to bear as early as July, and as the days grow shorter they increase their efforts, branching and budding and blooming until cold weather seizes them. There stands the old-fashioned stiff double dahlia in pink and yellow, white and crimson; there the cactus dahlia in bright red (the porcupine) or deep maroon (the Hagan); there the century or single dahlia, most effective of them all. From many seedlings we have chosen one to be our favorite, one to bear the name of Wychwood, and this flower with its white petals striped with a rich rose

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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encircling the quivering yellow center is a source of delight to each one who beholds it. Curiously enough this dahlia has the habit, even when cut, of partially closing at night until it resembles a tulip, but each morning it expands again.

Because I mention marigolds the last, one must not think that they are least within my heart; they light the darkest corner of the place and bloom unmoved by wind or rain. Before them as a border we use the sanvitalia, that sturdy, self-reliant plant whose cheery yellow flowers are always neat as wax. At all times it is ready for company, the faded blooms disappearing so quickly and so completely that I do not remember having seen one! I wish I knew its history, how and when it came from Mexico to the noble family in Parma who gave it their name. Some sea-captain relative or friend must have been fond of flowers to have chosen this tiny bloom instead of the more showy products of the tropics, and to have treasured these slips all the long distance across the sea. Was it an offering of affection to some fair lady which,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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placed in her very own garden, would always recall the far-off lover? Or did a son mindful of his mother's taste, take pleasure in thus ministering to her small joys? I know that each year I welcome its gay presence, its unquenchable spirit, its childlike brightness. Like most ambitious youth, however, it dislikes to conform to rule and at least once a fortnight the *santivitalia* and the *ageratum* with any other leaves which stray over the path have to be cut back to the raised brick border. It used actually to hurt me snipping that splendid growth, but the after-effect is so fine that my heart has become hardened. A formal garden must preserve a certain amount of formality especially as to its walks, and without this cruel curtailment there would soon be no walks.

In tiny crevices of the stone wall a yellow columbine seeded itself one year, and now season after season until frost, four separate plants bloom vigorously. Of course they have attention, a seed is never permitted to mature, but they repay our care tenfold. No garden is complete without *heliotrope*. Ours nestles into

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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a corner near the entrance, where it surprises the in-comer with its fragrance. Snapdragons and calendula with many kinds of lilies conclude the list of flowers in the garden's border which varies but slightly from year to year.

But those four center beds! The hours we have spent over their development, the different plants we have tried! To find anything which will bloom from June to October without cessation is no easy matter; and then the growth must be harmonious and the color satisfactory. One bed is entirely to our taste, the pink petunias. One year we have the "rosy dawn," the next perhaps "Bar Harbor beauties"; but pink petunias they are to me, and I am not offended if they shade to darker hues or come imprinted with an occasional star. Of course they require a firm hand over them and are not permitted to encroach upon the border or to fall—no matter how beguiling the spray—upon the path. They present a solid mass of bloom until the frost, and their delicious scent mounts to my casement window in the dusk.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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For one of the beds we tried pink snapdragons but they were not sufficiently bushy and they were too fond, even in the dwarf variety, of reclining along the ground, making a ragged and uneven appearance.

"Baby ramblers would look well for one of those beds," quoth the Constant Improver pensively one autumn.

"They do blossom all summer," assented his companion, "and when fresh are beautiful in color."

"When fresh" was the trouble. I could not bear to cut off any that showed a trace of beauty; in consequence, rarely was the bed in perfect condition and never thick enough. Dwarf roses, Cecil Brunners, Bon Silenes and Killarneys with a ground covering of mignonette, sounded ideal; but the mignonette in the enriched soil covered not only the ground but the roses, smothering any attempt at bloom, and the entire effect was dull and wanting.

China pinks we have had in one bed, and they are fairly satisfactory; they require a great deal of care to keep the seeds from forming, but they are striking



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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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in color and shade into wonderful tones. I had the curiosity one year to ascertain the actual number of blossoms in this bed on the eighth day of October. I acknowledge that the plants had thriven remarkably, covering the ground well, and I was delighted to find over eight hundred flowers with as many buds gracing an area eighteen feet, ten inches by ten feet with a corner taken out.

For the last two years we have had one bed of tuberous begonias (Sutton's single pink), and if planted thick enough they are really splendid. The rich shining leaf and delicate pink flower remain in apparently the same condition all summer long, only doubling in growth. A little weeding now and then, with plenty of water, is all that they ask.

I did so want one yellow bed, for I am afraid I must confess that is my favorite color, and this seemed a reasonable request. There are so many yellow flowers. For two years we had the "golden ball" chrysanthemums, which at their best are luminous with color; but they go off not later than the middle of August, and

we could n't have the aspect of the garden ruined thus early. One season we tried the California poppy, and it was a glorious sight in July; but neither did that last.

"Why not try marigolds, the Legion of Honor," I suggested, "with calendula in the middle?"

For I had kept calendula in bloom the whole summer in the border. So these were planted, but my arms were not long enough to reach the central pods; by September they were turning yellow and dying although the marigolds were crisp and bright about them. To eke out the remainder of the season we put in hardy chrysanthemums, which at least looked fresh and green.

"How would marigolds do alone next year?" inquired the Lady Gardener.

"Yes, they might do, but I believe that heliotrope in the center would be better," answered the Constant Improver. So that experiment is to be tested.

"A formal garden should have an edge of some low growth," continued the Constant Improver; "suppose

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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we try the variegated geranium or Pelargonium as the English call it? We might put it around the center beds only this year and see how we like the effect."

So it was done, but the critical eye of the Master found fault with the grayish shade; variegated leaves are not favorites of ours at any time, they have to our eyes an unnatural and sickly appearance.

"What can we have for an edging then?" demanded the Lady Gardener. "Up at Lake Minnetonka I saw a lovely fine-leaved plant which they called Jacob's Ladder. I wonder how that would do."

"I'm afraid it would n't last all the season," answered the Head of the House, "but we'll make inquiries."

"If you can keep the Polemonium from blossoming," returned our interested correspondent, "it will remain green and flourish, but as soon as it blooms the leaves turn yellow and die down."

"Well, let's try it," I agreed, and rich plants of Polemonium cæruleum were carefully placed about the four central beds. If I had realized the tenacity of purpose, the will-power and determination to multiply

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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of Madam Polemonium I might not have been so ready to undertake her culture! Gayly I pinched off the first flower stalks here and there along the border; cheerfully I searched for any indications of such purpose among the leaves; very beautiful was the shining, dark-green effect between the bricks and bright colors of the garden plots. Of course it cannot be supposed that Madam Polemonium consciously began to disguise her object in life, but certainly those flower stalks grew harder and harder to distinguish from the leaves, and I could almost hear her chuckle when I cut off one of the latter by mistake! Finally convinced that she was utterly discouraged I took a vacation for three days. The advantage she took of my absence was incredible. Nearly every plant had shot up a lovely stalk of pale-blue florets, and they made so charming a picture that I almost left them.

"This is too wrenching for my sensibilities," I confessed. "Don't let's have Polemonium next year."

"Well, you know there's nothing takes the place of box."

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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"Yes, of course, but I thought it winter-killed here."

"We might possibly protect it and then have some extra plants to insert in case a few died."

"It would be perfectly lovely," assented the Enthusiast; "we can but try it anyway."

So for two summers now we have had the only perfect edging for a formal garden, the old-fashioned box, kept clipped to a height of ten inches, fraught with numberless associations and aromatic with the memories of Italy.

I cannot end this story of the formal garden without some mention of the various growths on the low boulder wall which encloses it. Within the garden against the north wall we planted a gardenia rose. That simple statement hardly seems to warrant the thrill with which we contemplate its perfection or remember its wondrous efflorescence. Even when told that it is a hybrid *Wichuriana* produced by Dawson in 1890, our enthusiasm still seems unexpressed. Its almost thornless stems are pale green shading to rich claret; they bear clean-cut, shining leaves and semi-double

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roses, creamy fading to clear white. As it extends its sprays of exquisite blossoms for twenty feet along the wall, each one a perfect specimen with a dewdrop at its heart, we stand before it in admiration too deep for words. And its fragrance! Truly this rose combines the virtues of all roses, with none of their blemishes.

On the south side of the southern wall the Dorothy Perkins riots in a blushing abandon of indescribable beauty. Over the top of the wall and on to the bushes beyond she flings her rosy draperies until each July we think nothing can be more ravishing than this!

But by the middle of September, the clematis—that snowy, starry, spicy, clematis from Japan which no hard winter kills, no insect harms—the clematis has wound its delicate sprays around the entrance posts, enwreathed the neighboring shrubs, and drooped its flowery lengths along the rough stone wall. Then indeed we say, “This is the crowning glory of the year!”

But October comes apace, and the gray wall is crimson with the woodbine and purple in shadow with its pendent fruit; the leaves of the golden ash drop down,

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## EPOCHS OF THE FORMAL GARDEN

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torn from the trees by the wind's rough play. The flowers of fall are many and gay, and the sky is blue, and the air is soft—what can we do but again exclaim: “This is the very best of all. Now has the garden attained its prime; now at last are we satisfied!”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UPPER GARDEN

OUT from the formal garden, leading into the sunset by way of the deep woods, a path straight and narrow invites one to descend a little slope and watch the birds at play about a shallow pool. On one side under low, shadowy branches, lies a huge boulder scarred by glacial action in bygone ages, and over its wounded surface flows gently a healing stream. Mosses and lichens have crept into its crevices, and ferns touch softly its mottled contours. When the golden maples above it strew the ground with their mellow leaves, when the sun gleams on the clear water reflecting the sky in its depths, when the red of the woodbine leaflet glows like a gorgeous gem, so absolutely a part of the wilderness is it that Himself and I look at each other in glee.

A newcomer upon discovering this treasure usually



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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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exclaims, "How fortunate you were to find a spring in exactly the right place!"

Sometimes we smile politely and say nothing, but frequently we divulged our secret; for the truth is, it is not a spring, but water piped from an artesian well! Neither did we find the boulder there half sunken in the ground; it was given to us by a dear friend and had been placed experimentally in half a dozen different spots before it found its permanent abode in this shady dell. The gravelly hollow is really lined with cement, and the apparently tumbled collection of small granite rocks, pink and purple and mossy, carefully conceals the irregular edge of the basin. Does this remove the romance or make the place less lovely? Not in our eyes at least. Wild violets make a carpet between the flat stepping-stones; our own aralia droops her spray of dark-red berries over the water; the veined leaves of the native smilax mingle with the blue wood-aster; and from the earliest flower of spring to the wych-hazel in October one may always discover a new interest in this charmed retreat.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Beyond the spring, the path leads on to where great rocks form a right-angled seat. Here is the squirrels' rendezvous, for "cups and saucers," as we used to call them, telltale remnants of their acorn feast, are ever to be found here.

When we first began to make our paths throughout the woods, we unconsciously adopted the "natural method," winding in and out among the trees, so that one was constantly being surprised by a new point of view; but after visiting the more formal forests of France and Italy we began to appreciate the beauty of long vistas and narrow pathways between high green walls. Of course we could not have the ilex hedges or clipped yews, nor would either be desirable in our kind of a country place; but we became curious as to what effect we could produce with a long straight pathway through our woods.

Charmed by any new suggestion, the Constant Improver no sooner conceived than he put his plan into execution. From the great rock seat extending straight as an arrow for over seven hundred feet, a



THE BEAUTY OF NARROW PATHWAYS BETWEEN HIGH GREEN WALLS



A SPRING IN EXACTLY THE RIGHT PLACE



THE TRAIL

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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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path was cut and lightly graveled. Many bushes from the forest were planted on its sides, many wild flowers transferred to tracts upon its borders, and the trees bent over it tenderly, and the sun dappled it with shadows. The birds adopted at once its unfrequented nooks, and the squirrels ran merry races down its leafy lengths.

The effect of the long straight trail, as it steadily rises in wavering contours, is entrancing! Here is no green wall even in mid-summer but a suggestion of sylvan seclusion which is extremely restful. In the more open spaces taking advantage of the sunshine, grass from a hidden source has completely overlaid the stony footway, while even in the shade good Mother Nature has embellished our borders with a rich covering of moss; occasionally roots of great trees cross the path, affording refuge for curious fungous growth, and to the initiate each step brings a new beauty and a new delight. Here the bloodroot, spring beauties and masses of hepatica, pink, lavender, and white, star the brown earth in the greatest profusion;

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here the Jack-in-the-pulpit pops up his stiff young head and the May apple unfolds her bright umbrella leaf; here the white trillium nods her greeting to the breeze and the maidenhair sisters uncurl their tresses; here when the Indian pipe appears for its brief day and the viburnum changes to pale pink, when the hazel brush is rosy and only the bramble green, when the maple leaves form a rich tapestry upon the pathway, is our favorite retreat. Even in the winter, white with untrodden snow, crossed by the sharp shadows which the bare branches make, or marked by hieroglyphics which only the learned can read, it still has a beauty all its own and is to us a place of enchantment.

Many names have been suggested for this sequestered walk: "Charle's Way," "Lover's Lane," "The Indian Trail," among others less appropriate; but it has grown to be known simply as "The Trail." At the end of the long vista, the Trail turns abruptly and continues under a magnificent arching oak, across a brook guarded by great granite boulders, where beyond an open gate, lies the upper garden.

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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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It is a level piece of ground about an acre in extent, given over to fruit and flowers; in fact, a sort of "overflow meeting" for both the formal and the kitchen gardens. On one side is the woodshed and on another the small greenhouse for storing tender plants in winter and forcing chrysanthemums in summer. On the west, to hide the compost heap and garbage pit, we erected an original and highly ornamental rustic screen between eleven and twelve feet in height, on which to grow grapes. Behind the small greenhouse are sixty running feet of cold frames neatly made of cement, and the big greenhouse from which tomatoes in spring and melons in summer add a special flavor to our menu. By September this house, too, is overflowing with chrysanthemums, and even the cold frames are pressed into service so that we may have great quantities of these friendly and multicolored favorites in both country and city houses until Christmas. We do not attempt to grow the huge heads which one sees in the autumn flower shows, but confine our attention to the single, the pompon, and the anemone

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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varieties with a very few Chinese for early bloom.

Different kinds of strawberries take up fully one quarter of this garden, with constant need for new beds. As early as the seventh of June the Marshall and Senator Dunlap are ready to be picked; the Barrymore and President soon follow with the Gandy lasting until the eighteenth of July. I was agreeably surprised to discover only recently that the tiny Alpine strawberry, of which the French are so fond and which in flavor resembles our own wild strawberry, can be successfully grown in our own garden. This gives one the feeling of acquiring a new fruit. We have some cuttings of the new continuous-bearing strawberry, which is supposed to furnish a supply of fruit until October; and this summer will inform us still more fully as to its merits.

Gooseberries, the big English purple ones, and currants, black, white, and red, also flourish here; blackberries are comparatively unimportant compared to the golden and red raspberries. These delicious morsels are given a generous allotment of space in



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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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the upper garden ; but in order to enjoy them ourselves, we have to resort to strategy. Having seen bits of paper strung on tapes flapping over berry beds in France, we tried that clever device as a protection against our own greedy birds. Do you think that they were intimidated? Not in the least. They had the audacity actually to alight on the tapes, evidently regarding them as put there for their especial convenience. That failing, more drastic measures had to be taken. Immense lengths of mosquito netting were sewn together, spread over poles, then wired to the ground entirely around the raspberry bushes. I confess it did not add to the beauty of the garden, but it served its purpose and really prolonged our season, as the berries ripened more slowly under this thin covering.

It is only within the last two years that we have made the acquaintance of the *Physalis* family, two members of which now have their homes in our upper garden. The domestic *Physalis* (*pubescens*) or ground cherry, sometimes also called cherry tomato, in her modest khaki-colored garment and her humble attitude,

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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scarcely lifting her eyes above the ground, is in striking contrast to her Japanese relative with his upright carriage and flaunting hues. The one gives pleasure to our eyes, the other to our appetite.

The *Physalis pubescens* is very old-fashioned; indeed it is first described in 1774 as growing in Dr. Sherard's garden in Eltham, England, although no mention is made of its culinary uses. It is supposed to have come originally from the Barbados. In its dainty paper-like case it used to form the chief delicacy of my doll's parties, and the taste of it now brings back those halcyon days. Perhaps it is more for old association's sake than for its own peculiar flavor that we treasure it; although Professor Bailey encourages me by writing that "this plant is worthy a place in every home garden." Made into a pie it becomes a dessert which usually mystifies our guests.

This part of our country is not famous for its fruit, but we have planted in the upper garden in long rows on either side, cherry and plum trees, pear, apple, and crabs. I cannot say that they have made much

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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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growth or given us much of their produce. The birds have benefited by the cherries, and the trees in blossom are a joy to behold. Must we always be material? One year we had half a dozen delicious pears and about a dozen "wealthy" apples equally satisfying, besides about a peck of the "Duchess" variety. In time doubtless these young trees will repay us for their care.

Apropos of this let me digress a little from my upper garden to tell about an interesting experimental fruit farm which is being conducted on the lake by the State Horticultural Society. Five acres of land are offered by the owner, the two-year-old trees are donated by the institution, and full instructions as to their care are given to the farmer who does all the work.

Two or three times a year the orchard is visited by a committee from the Society, and the inspector is likely to drop in at any time. When and how to prune and to spray the trees is carefully explained to the farmer, and when at the end of five years the trees begin to bear, the produce is divided between the Society and the farmer for two years. Then at the end

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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of seven years the orchard belongs to the owner of the land. It is only about ten years since experimental work of this character was begun, and more orchards are being set out each season. Apples and cherries of different varieties are being tested on our lake but as the work is only eighteen months old, conclusions cannot yet be drawn. This experimental orchard is of great interest and value not only to the owner and his immediate neighbors, but to the entire community in which it is placed.

Not only fruit but flowers for cutting are grown in this upper garden; long *allées* of sweet peas, big clumps of peonies, wide tracts of lilies-of-the-valley, high growths of dahlias, variegated sweet williams, Achillea the pearl, and that huge, yellow daisy-like flower staggering under the heathenish name of *Bupthalmum speciosum*! Boltonias both pink and white, and the haughty "Miss Mellish" sunflower stand before the high grape screen with monkshood, phlox, and marigold.

Recently we have adopted a dainty stranger from



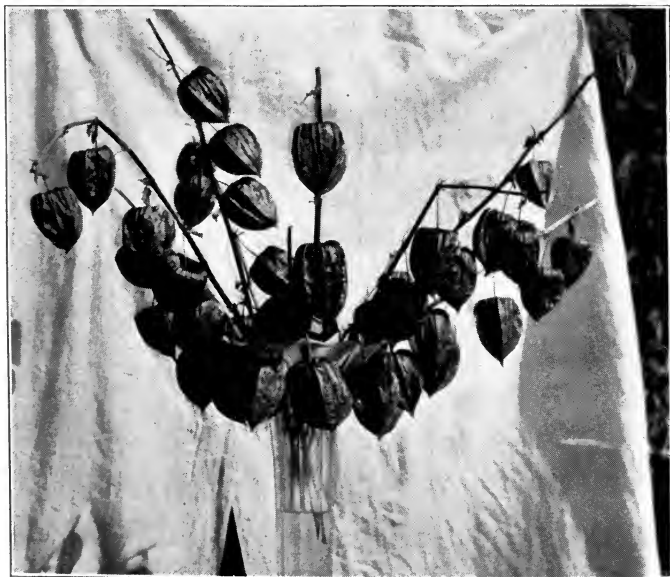
BEFORE THE GRAPE SCREEN ARE FLOWERS FOR CUTTING



THE ROSES IN WINTER HAVE A COMICAL ASPECT



FOXGLOVES, TOO



THE *PHYSALIS FRANCHETI*

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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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an Eastern land which we found sitting quaintly on the counter of our village drug-store. The vase of angled, orange-scarlet seed vessels dangling four or five along the length of the stem was a picture.

“What wonderful color!” I exclaimed. “What are they?”

“I don’t know their name,” responded the head of the establishment; but seeing my covetous eyes, I suppose, with his usual courteous helpfulness he added: “Won’t you take them?”

“Oh, no! Only one, then.” And I bore off my prize to look up its name and nature. The seeds so resembled the ground cherry in shape that we knew it must belong to the same family and soon found it in our catalogues. It was named the *Physalis Francheti* after the Frenchman who first described it, as recently as 1879. Why it should be called the Chinese lantern plant when it comes from Japan is one of the incongruities of nomenclature, although its lacquer tint and balloon-like shape certainly remind one of those gorgeous lights. The seed pods retain their color all

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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winter and arranged in a Japanese wall basket against the brown wood of the chimney piece, really make a striking effect.

I have said that the most beautiful blue flower in the world is the Chinese larkspur, but the bright blue salvia (patens) sometimes causes me to hesitate. There is a curious evanescent quality in the stem and leaves which throws into still stronger relief the splendid, velvet-blue of the bloom. In a corner of the garden made gay with yellow coneflowers, this plot of brilliant azure looks at a distance like a tiny pool.

Of all the coneflowers, the triloba is the most satisfactory. How inadequate are words to describe its color! Its petals are small but so vividly yellow shading to orange that the effect is dazzling in the sunlight. Doing well in half shade, when cut it brings the sunshine to the darkest corner of a room. Unlike many of the rudbeckias, it has the agreeable habit of keeping crisp and fresh for days in the house; and its blossoming period lasts from July to the first week of October. At first we planted it just outside the



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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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formal garden in a lovely tangle along the Trail, and here it gladdens our eyes still. Although a biennial, it sows itself and increases so generously that we take up many small plants in the fall and put them in other parts of the grounds. Every season we say, "Next year we'll have another plot of triloba," until now it greets us not only from the edge of the woods in the wild garden, but from the path leading to the gravel pit and from the oval before the east entrance, while from the driveway a great tongue of it extends into the forest.

But in my enthusiasm for the gay triloba I have wandered far from the upper garden! Here on each side of the path are gillyflowers and pink, purple, and white asters, not the stiff, zinnia-like variety but the feathery, loose growing kind. Salpiglossis with its blooms of every hue, and larkspur in varied shades of blue and pink; foxgloves speckled with indescribable shades, and the giant summer hyacinth (*Galtonia candicans*) with its fragrant, bell-like drops reminding one of fairy chimes; Shasta daisies and lilies of many kinds, snapdragons, mignonette and golden coxcomb, with

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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calliopsis, coreopsis and gladioli in great variety of bloom, follow each other in their seasons.

My life is really a series of Christmas Days. Each morning when I come in from my outdoor nest I wonder what new joy this dawn will bring. I glance at the desk to see if by chance a friendly letter has arrived, then if my dream comes true, I curl up on the *chaise longue* to read it *at once*. Is there a package? Perhaps the return of a botanical specimen with its proper name carefully explained by an expert of the University; perhaps only a needed supply of buttons from the, at times, convenient city; perhaps a book ordered so long ago that it has been forgotten, or possibly an offering from some compassionate relative, such as an adorable sunbonnet which unfolded in my hands the other day. I have never gotten over the childish joy of opening bundles; it remains like my taste for fairy tales. The morning that thrilling envelope arrives containing my recent exposures! Only the soul of a photographer can appreciate the feelings with which I unseal it and examine one by one, in

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## THE UPPER GARDEN

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fearful trepidation, the results of my last experiments. Or an innocent looking pamphlet lies at the bottom of my heap of business mail, a small pamphlet, loosely bound about with brown paper; but if the name of Horsford or Elliot or Meehan chances to be uppermost, I seize it with avidity; for this is that insinuating document known as "Summer Planting." Everyone acknowledges the fascinations of the seed catalogues which come to us in such tempting profusion in the fall. Their size alone is bewildering, and one can harden one's heart to their wiles at the beginning of the season; but I defy anyone to resist the pleading of that plausible and pleasant phrase "Summer Planting." Has not each one of us a bare corner where for some unaccountable reason the brilliant representations of the colored print have appeared only in sickly imitation, or where a late frost has blanched an enterprising early bloomer, or where some pest or other has devoured its favorite food quite regardless of its being your favorite flower too? All these corners must be filled with something, and it is for this very

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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reason that "Summer Planting" holds out helping hands. Of course in our cold frames we keep lilies ready to transplant where needed, and asters fill in acceptably late in August; but in this pamphlet are wonder-working possibilities. Who could resist them?

I suppose that everyone's flowers are more or less like his neighbor's, but whenever I look at mine spread before me like a glowing carpet in the upper garden or watch the gardener as he comes through the shadow and the sunshine of the long pergola carrying huge baskets overflowing with richly colored blossoms, I have a feeling of especial pleasure and exult in the thought that these are mine.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BANTAMS

**A** MAN always wants a farm. He may have everything else that mortal mind can imagine to keep him busy, to maintain his interest, to make him happy, but always in his most ecstatic dreams, he sees himself as a farmer. Why this should be, no mere woman can divine; but she learns its vital truth as the years progress. The only real cure for this aberration consists in acquiring that farm, sinking a fortune in its upkeep, and going through the anxious moments incidental to the various live stock with which it may be furnished. I do not find that any amount of money preserves the farmer from severe disappointment at blasted crops or diseased cattle or eggless chickens. I suppose it is the pride of man which dislikes ridicule and shrinks from failure.

To my secret joy, no land available for farming pur-

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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poses lay near our country place; and although we had plenty of opportunities—"rare opportunities"—presented by assiduous friends as well as by mere acquaintances, thus far we had escaped the toils. In my estimation we had already carefully selected all the desirable features of farm life and rejected its perplexities. The woodlot with comfortably simple house, the flower gardens, the kitchen gardens, the glass houses were ours; the crops and the live stock with their attendants and buildings were our neighbor's. It seemed to me an ideal arrangement. The waving fields of corn for which this Big Foot Prairie is famous, the rolling meadows of billowy grain outlining the contours of the land, the vivid green of the alfalfa harvest, were they not mine to look at and enjoy as well as the man's who owned them?

To most people life in the country would be inadequate without at least one cow; but as cows to us meant simply milk, and we never had any difficulty in acquiring that from our neighbors, we were content. I could and did enjoy my neighbor's cement,

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## THE BANTAMS

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screened and "awninged" barns with attending hay-lofts and silo towers, and dairy where modern mechanical devices amazed the uninitiated. Milking time at the Upland Farm, for instance, was quite a ceremony, and anyone bidden to witness it had to obey certain fixed rules. The first important one was that absolute silence must be maintained. Not only no loud talking but no talking of any kind was permitted, even the irritating sound of whispering was forbidden; for in order to get the best results, these fine animals must be undisturbed. Much impressed by these precautions, we tiptoed into the long barn where, disposed in two even rows, stood over a hundred superior Holsteins chewing their cuds in agreeable harmony, attended by white-robed farm-hands and being milked by machinery! Some three hundred feet away the gasoline engine was carefully secluded, and a soft whir was the only evidence of power. The clean floor, the fresh straw, the hay-scented air, the well-kept cattle, and the orderliness of all things might well inspire the owner with a righteous pride. We congratulated him upon

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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his success, but I felt no inclination to follow in his footsteps.

No one could be more enthusiastic than I really feel over the sheep on my neighbor's moors, whether nibbling the grass at noontime, their funny soft noses working busily, or gathered in masses by the gate at twilight, or moving along the highway in a whirl of sun-flecked dust. They always add a certain picturesqueness to the landscape. I even admire—in the distance—my neighbor's small pig-houses scattered over the sunny meadow, where pigs in all stages of development root vigorously. The poultry plant too—of my neighbor—I can appreciate with its carefully heated apartments, its rows of bins for food and cleansing materials, its brooders and incubators and specially arranged fattening coops. Ducks, geese, Guinea hens, turkeys, pigeons,—in all I take the keenest interest—at my neighbor's; but never with an envious heart.

So when the first mention of bantams was made to me, I agreed somewhat dubiously as to their charms. Chickens, even bantams, I felt persuaded would mean,



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## THE BANTAMS

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if not now, surely in the future, a chicken house and long wired runs which never could be made beautiful to anyone but a utilitarian. I confess the feat was accomplished in a most beguiling manner. One morning the Constant Improver casually mentioned that our neighbor Mr. H—— had some extremely pretty black bantams. This was in August. In September, he remarked that this same neighbor wanted to present us with a rooster and four hens.

“They won’t require any care or food,” he said, “they’ll just run around in the woods and look pretty.” It sounded attractive.

“Yes, they will be pretty,” I agreed, “if they don’t get into the garden.”

“Oh, no! They won’t get into the garden; Mr. H—— assures me they never do any mischief. And think of the nice fresh eggs we shall have, even if they are small.”

So the four black bantams escorted by their gamey little cock arrived and immediately took themselves to the woods, returning night and morning to the pad-

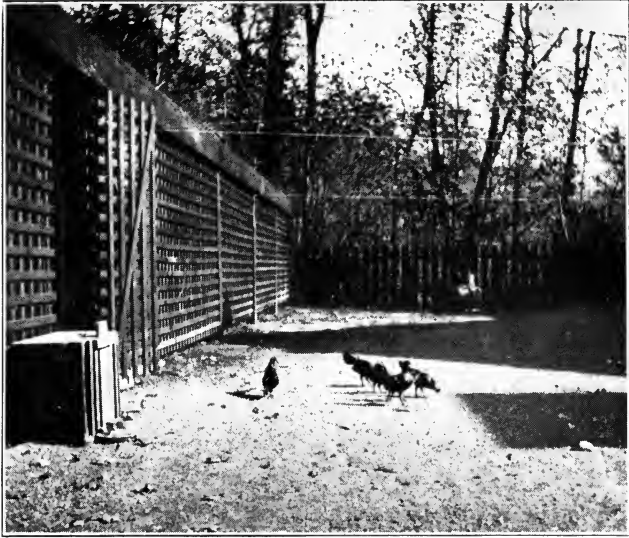
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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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dock to be fed. Now paddock may seem a queer name for a chicken yard but the graveled space adjoining the stable was always called the paddock, and so the name remained even when the stable was transformed into a garage and the graveled enclosure became a chicken yard. These bantams soon became monarchs of the estate, wandering not only through the woods but into the gardens at their pleasure, never doing any harm. They were indeed well-behaved, high-bred, aristocratic fowls, and they ate the grasshoppers and other noxious insects with a thoroughness approved of by the gardener.

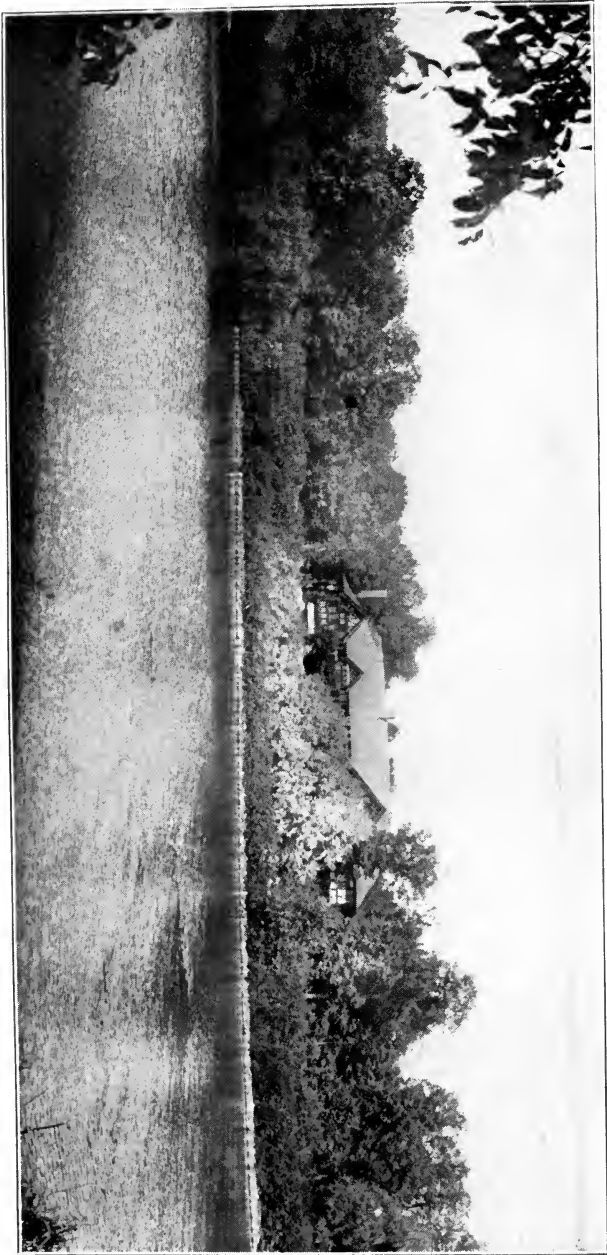
As if all the world had suddenly learned by some occult process that we kept bantams, we began to receive almost daily leaflets and pamphlets about chickens; advertisements of food for chickens; hints for their care; fantastically named germicides; all manner of paraphernalia for housing them and for breeding them; catalogues of sellers of fine stock and of famous eggs; lists of journals and magazines devoted to their culture. Books began to pour in upon us whether from earnest



THE PADDOCK



BANTAMS IN THE SNOW



THE WOODLOT WITH COMFORTABLY SIMPLE HOUSE WAS OURS

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## THE BANTAMS

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advisers or mischievous friends never could be discovered. We acquired quite a library, but fortunately no more chickens.

Finally after studying the practical needs of our bantams and the most approved nests and roosts, we built a house thirteen feet six inches by twenty-three feet, three sides of which were of brown stained ship-lap, with a slightly sloping roof covered with prepared tar-paper and gravel. Isn't ship-lap a picturesque word? One visualizes at once the ships of the olden time with their overlapping timbers. The front of the house was screened and had also glass partitions which could be lowered at will. Each of the two rooms was provided with a practical roost and three box nests. Besides tiny exits with chicken ladders toward the woods, a large door opened into the paddock. Big bushes and trees hid this small lean-to in the rear, and across the front of the house extending the entire length of the paddock was built a beautiful trellis also stained dark brown. In and out and under this screen would trot the baby bantams. But I am anticipating.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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When our new black pets arrived they found, already at home upon the estate, a yellow bantam rooster and eight hens with feathered anklets, belonging to our gardener's small boy. Never doubting that they would be friends, we made no attempt to separate the birds. But the black cock brooked no rival in the field; he made that yellow rooster's life a misery and finally killed him; then annexing his enemy's bewildered harem he strutted triumphantly off to the woods.

I arrived in the country rather late the next summer, and it seemed to me that wherever I went within one or two hundred feet of the chicken house, I would hear a gentle scuttling and see a black bantam or a yellow bantam or a mixed speckled bantam disappearing in the underbrush, while a chorus of baby crowings mingled with cluckings and cheepings pervaded the evening air.

At dinner I asked, quite innocently, "How many bantams have we now?"

A curious look came into the face of the Constant

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## THE BANTAMS

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Improver as he answered, a bit hesitatingly, "I believe—William says—there are a hundred and ten."

"A hundred and ten!" I exclaimed in amazement. "Have you gone into the poultry business?"

"No, not exactly," he mildly returned. "You see, it's this way. The bantams won't lay their eggs in those specially prepared nests in the chicken house. They will steal their nests and they come back from the woods with an air of the greatest importance and ten or twelve little ones trailing along behind them."

"Do you mean to tell me that from those four hens and one rooster with the assistance of eight or nine yellow pullets we have now a hundred and ten bantams, big and little?"

"I do indeed and they're increasing weekly. Something must be done."

Something indeed. I was speechless.

"I wonder if the F——s would n't like a few," interrupted my *vis-à-vis*, "their little boy said something about wanting one the other day."

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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"Yes, that's a good idea. I'll take a selection up there the next time I go that way."

"Perhaps we may hear of somebody else who would like them," went on the tender-hearted man, for he saw a certain fixed resolve appearing in my eye.

"Well, there'll be plenty to give away if that emergency arises; but I think we'd better try eating a few of them."

"They'd be so little," he protested.

"We'll call them pigeons and have one apiece."

But they were not nearly so small as that. Between four and five months old, weighing about a pound and a half, hung a week in the ice house, fat, tender, juicy, with a faint gamey flavor, they were a feast for the gods! Here was our reward, here our justification. Let the bantams have their own way, let them increase and multiply, we have learned how to enjoy them, now full well we know their gastronomic value.

We even contemplated bestowing a medal on that persistent little hen who on the seventeenth of October



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## THE BANTAMS

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emerged from under the porch of the cottage with thirteen chicks toddling after her! And this was her third brood this year, each one from eleven to thirteen in number! The successful man is he who recognizes ability wherever he finds it, only bending this energy to conform to his plans. Here was certainly a potent force; instead of rebelling at its manifestation, why not avail oneself of its possibilities?

These black bantams are wild little creatures infinitely preferring to roost in the trees rather than under a roof so they have to be "shooed" into their coop each night. They are evidently in full sympathy with the Mistress of the Manor in regard to sleeping out of doors.

"How am I ever going to get any pictures of them?" I demanded of their caretaker.

"Oh! I can manage that. I'll not let 'em out in the mornin' till you come up."

That seemed an excellent plan and one sure to succeed. So at about nine o'clock on a bright, sunny morning we placed the water-pan and the food they

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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liked the best directly in front of the door. I seated myself not too near with the camera and the door was opened. The procession began at once, led by the gamey cock who scorned to hurry although his mates, after one indignant glance at me, hastened to overtake him on the other side of the trellis. A brood of week-old chicks in a flutter of excitement tumbled out of the spacious opening accompanied by their anxious mother with many warnings. A young rooster drooped his wings haughtily as he stalked by, the sun flashing into color his iridescent plumage. Fat pullets—my mouth watered at sight of them—hopped gravely down the little step to the gravel and, bantam after bantam, little and big, not bestowing even a hesitating glance at the tempting dainties so lavishly displayed, with one accord took their separate and immediate departure for the woods.

They said so plainly: "We are outraged at being kept shut up until this hour; we know that it was for some evil purpose; we do not accept your hospitality; we are perfectly equal to getting our own living, and

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## THE BANTAMS

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we prefer our liberty to anything else. What is food compared with freedom?"

It was a fine example of concerted action, whether instinctive or prearranged. In less time than it takes to tell it, not a feather was in sight, although triumphant clucking echoed by tiny crowings betrayed their approximate presence. I could almost hear one of the favorites exclaim to my little Chanticleer, "Did you ever hear of such treatment? How dared they? It's abominable." At least that is the way it sounded as she sidled up to him and lifted her beak to his notice. Doubtless they were discussing the situation all about me, for at times a scout would appear in the distance to reconnoiter, to see I suppose if the paddock had assumed its normal aspect.

I retired. There seemed nothing else left for me to do. But I could not consider myself vanquished. Another plan must be evolved.

## CHAPTER VI

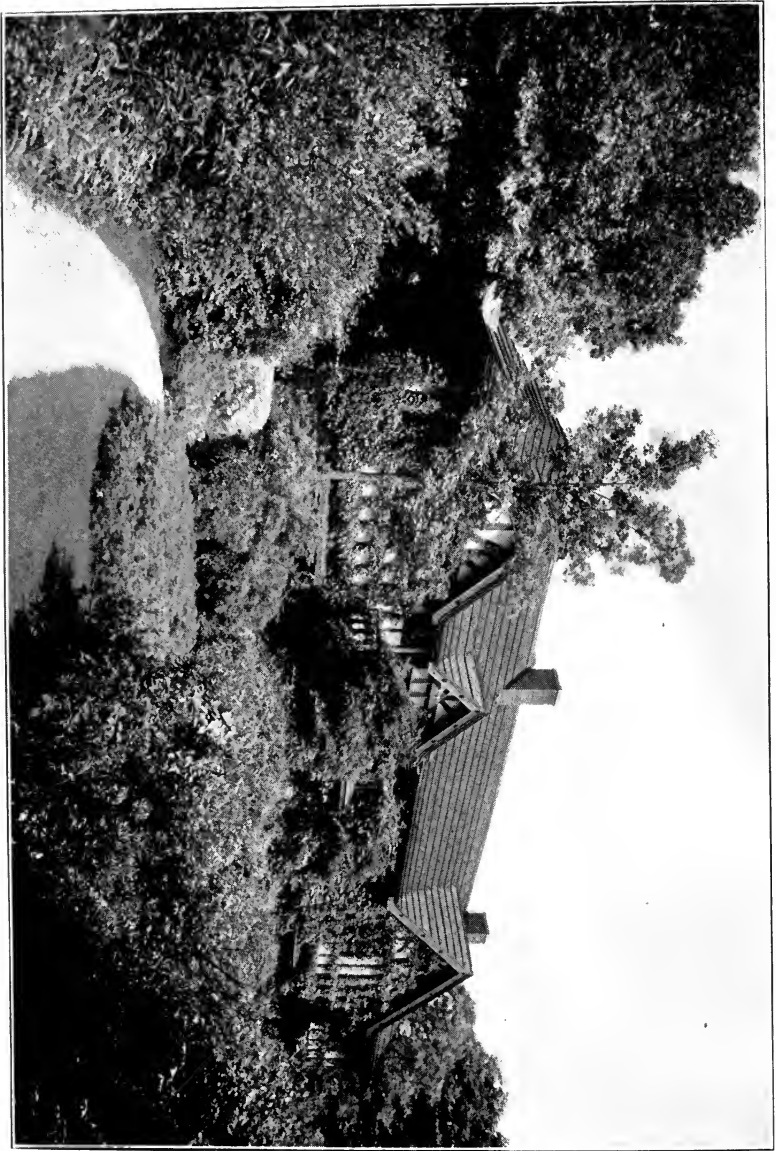
### THE OPEN WINDOW

EVERY room in which one sits should have a window that opens at least three feet square into the out-of-doors. It should be not more than two feet from the floor and protected in such a manner as to exclude both rain and wind. Does this sound impossible? So I once thought. But I have found out that it can be done; discovered it partly by accident, as is the way with so many of the good things of this world. In the tiny cottage where our country life began, the windows, wherever not protected by the eaves, were provided with a kind of hood about a foot wide, which was merely a continuation of the overlapping wood of the house wall. This, with the thick foliage of the maple trees growing close to the house, formed an effective screen against any but the fiercest storms.

When we built the big house I remembered this



BALTIMORE ORIOLE ABOUT THREE WEEKS OLD



THE OPEN WINDOW UNDER THE EAVES BETWEEN THE TWO TREES

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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agreeable feature and went, full of enthusiasm, to the Friendly Architect with my plans; but he looked at me askance and remarked among other things that evidently I had forgotten this was to be a plaster house, and hoods over the windows would be an abomination! Perhaps he phrased it more politely but that was his essential meaning. Of course I was no more anxious than he to ruin the exterior of the house. I only begged that wherever possible our windows should be protected. This he readily promised, and as a result we have five rooms in which at least one window never need be shut.

In my own room this rainproof opening is a constant joy and is open from May until October. Facing the setting sun, protected on the north by the jutting bricks of the big chimney, overhead by the three-foot eaves assisted by the overlapping boughs of a specially planted maple, it provides me with fresh scented air from fragrant shrubs below it, with sweetest sounds from bird throats about it and with a succession of pictures inimitable and unforgettable.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Woodbine leaves surround it and creep over the well-filled box of rose geranium and lemon verbenā. Through it I look out into leafy depths sparkling with raindrops or shimmering with sunlight, into green bowers or gay autumnal mazes. Beneath the maple a wild cherry has spread its glossy foliage, and below the terrace lies the formal garden radiant as a jewel against the cool recesses of the forest. Beyond the tall shrubbery gleam the changing waters of the lake, and the sky broods over all. Beside this window is my favorite seat, and I have no need for other pictures than those framed within this open space.

The birds have chosen this maple for a resting place and here from the tiniest warbler to the rampant blue jay they give me ample opportunities to observe their various manners. Here is always a generous supply of suet for those who like that best, and here too hangs the German food-bell furnishing the chickadees with winter provender.

The chickadee is a bird of moods. No one can feel perfectly acquainted with him who has only seen him



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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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skimming from tree to tree in a merry race with his mate, or pecking at his bit of food held deftly in one claw, or doing gymnastic stunts from the ends of branches. His notes, too, are as varied as his moods. He seldom alights on the sill without a little "cheep" and the woods echo with his well-known song. After the frost my window box is transformed into a buffet where various bird delicacies are carefully displayed, and often when I rush to the window to scare away the squirrel from this birds' table, my little chickadee cocks his head on one side and cries, "Dee, dee, you are really too kind." Occasionally he bubbles over in a joyous trill so unlike his usual call that I look out quickly to be sure it is he.

For days the stillness of the early dawn had been broken by two soft, sad notes in falling cadence. A Peabody bird in January? The call was so like the attempts of young birds of that species that I searched the near-by trees, the terrace wall, the shrubs; but I saw only a few juncos, an English sparrow or two, and of course the chickadees. Is it possible that

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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I cannot tell the whitethroat from the English sparrow? And I scrutinized those saucy, but in the country, clean, birds carefully. No, there was no mistaking those bandits of the bird world; no whitethroat was among them. I asked a caller well versed in this country's habits if the whitethroat ever stayed as late as this. "I think that you must have heard what we call the spring song of the chickadee," she answered at once. Although I smiled politely and thanked her I was not convinced. Until I actually saw a chickadee emitting those two notes I could not believe it. For days I waited and watched, hearing often but never seeing, until finally one morning just as I was putting out the dish of food for the birds' table, a chickadee on the nearest branch to me lifted up his small voice and cried: "O—h, de—r!" An exquisite, prolonged, pathetic sigh. Now I was convinced, now I recognized that Mr. Chickadee had his own small trials, and that although he endeavored to be cheery before the world there were moments when his hidden griefs must find expression.

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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One season we opened the house before the middle of April; in our climate that means winter weather and a scarcity of food, so the birds were very grateful for the nuts and seeds placed on a board covering my window box. The nuthatches and chickadees, the juncos and even the catbirds made me many a visit, but one morning in early May a song sparrow shyly ventured to the sill and helped himself from the seed dish with many a rapid glance about. From that time until the end of September every day that lovely bird came daintily to his meals at my open window. Always he approached in the same manner, a swift flight to the maple tree from which he scanned the board, a gentle hop along the nearest branch, a step to the chimney shelf, thence, still hopping, to the sill and coveted dish.

Unlike the chickadee and nuthatch, who announced their approach, the song sparrow kept a discreet silence when eating, only the crunching of seeds as the shells dropped back into the dish betraying his presence. If not disturbed he generally took from thirty to fifty seeds before leaving, but on one particularly hungry

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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morning he ate seventy-one seeds without even stopping to drink. For beside the food dish stood a saucer of gravel enclosing a shallow basin of water renewed daily. He always drank in a leisurely fashion, often returning to the seeds with apparently new appetite. His hunger appeased, he would fly from the sill directly to the top of the nearest bush below and fling into the air his thrilling notes.

Any sudden movement in the room while he was feeding sent him leaping from the board, but he finally learned that the movement of a hand in writing, even within two feet of him, meant no harm. This opportunity to study the markings of a song sparrow, his bright beady eyes, his shapely body, his rapid motions, was eagerly accepted and enjoyed. The nuthatch and the chickadee found plenty of food in the deep woods by the first week in June, so abandoned the window-sill to the catbirds and song sparrow. Late in July an unusual commotion informed me that *two* sparrows had been feeding on the sill; that is, one drove the other



WOOD THRUSH BABIES



BABY SONG SPARROWS

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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away. How long they had been taking turns, whether mate or child, I could not tell.

One morning in mid-August a greedy young bird followed his parent to the sill with insistent cries and was given fifteen seeds before leaving. In two hours the couple returned for more food. It was a charming picture; the eager nestling with fluttering wings, the careful mother turning her head on one side as she inserted the seed within that open beak; against cool greens beyond their fawn-colored feathers appeared more vivid. The swallowing of food did not seem to interfere at all with the vocal chords of my young song sparrow, but his notes gradually became less harsh as his appetite decreased until at the last just before he flew they were little more than murmurs of satisfaction. Her duty done, the hungry mother came back to the sill alone and ate one hundred and thirty-one seeds without stopping; then took some fine gravel, a drop or two of water and finished with a desert of sixty-one more seeds! One could almost see her form expand as she

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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lifted her wings and preened herself in absolute content.

The presence of the hairy or the downy woodpecker feeding her squawking infant from the suet six feet away never disturbed the song sparrow in the least; a catbird devouring chopped nuts on the other side of the water dish never interfered with his repast; even the gray squirrel would get within two feet of him before he would leave what he had learned to consider his own apartment. It is needless to add that this particular year I gladly gave up my window-box of sweet-scented plants in exchange for the companionship of these adorable song sparrows.

These are some of the joys of my window; but that there are also drawbacks was shown by another winter experience. For several nights I had been disturbed by the nibbling of some night animal on the birds' window sill, so just within the small opening of the double windows I placed a mouse trap. No sooner had I lost myself in slumber than I was awakened by a squealing and a thumping by the



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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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window; flashing on the light I saw such a surprising object flopping over the floor, dragging the trap with him that I called for help.

“Oh! do come and see what I’ve got,” I cried; for this was a new animal to me and a remarkably lively one; the head suggested a rat but his flat furry tail, brown lined with white, contradicted that idea. My request that he be drowned brought a protest which I speedily overruled.

“Now that small beast has been disturbing my rest for two or three nights and I want him killed,” was my demand, made emphatic as much by fear of letting my sympathies prevail as by loss of sleep.

So the Constant Improver gingerly wrapped a towel about the little rascal and dumped trap and all into the filled bowl. This was too much for the beastie and with a final wriggle he freed himself from the trap. At this the tender heart of the strong man carried the day; quickly he opened the door of the porch and shook the half-drowned animal out to a barely won freedom.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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"It's a lesson for him, he'll not disturb you again," he murmured half apologetically.

I wonder whether I looked as doubtful as I felt, but there was nothing left to say. Back to bed again I crept and for a space quiet reigned. Then crackle, crackle, at the window!

"I like the wild things," said I to myself, "so I will just let him nibble while I go to sleep."

How fortunate if we could only do the thing we will to do! Instead of sleeping I turned restlessly, sure that the beast had come into the room. I could plainly hear little thumps and runs on the bare floor, but the instant that I turned on the light all was still. After two hours of philosophizing I went to the window in desperation, closed the hole by which he had come in and stood watching him. There in the bright moonlight my small disturber was springing from chimney to sill and back again; even when I "shooed" at him and drummed on the glass he only retreated a few inches. His movements were very like a chipmunk's but not quite so swift. By and by he

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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decided to go on with his night's entertainment in spite of me and made a flying leap for the opening in the double windows; as he hurled himself angrily again and again at his accustomed entrance, I realized that screens would be advisable up here even in mid-winter.

And what was this little beast who walked abroad at night and fearlessly entered our room? I believe he is called a flying squirrel as he can make such huge leaps in the air, flattening out his small body and steering with his broad tail. I know that they are not at all nice pets for the house, and that much of the damage attributed to the common squirrel is done by this mischievous creature.

"Have n't we a trap that catches small animals without hurting them?" I asked the gardener the next morning.

"Yes'm," he answered.

"Well, please put it on my window sill to-night with peanuts in it."

It had not been there an hour before two small

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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furry creatures were within its wires and I hardened my heart to giving orders that they were to be drowned. But the very same night their ghosts or their relatives paraded up and down my chamber walls and scrambled over the roof so that another trap had to be set. This time only one squirrel was caught although I saw another one near the trap.

“I believe I ’ll keep that cunning little thing a few days and study him. Have n’t we an old bird cage in the attic?”

“Ye—es,” was the dubious reply of my faithful maid, who by this time was quite used to my erratic ways.

“Well, bring it down, and I ’ll wire the door so he can’t push it open. They are such clever little things.”

With a vast deal of effort, with gloved fingers and quick motions the flying squirrel was transferred from trap to bird cage and the door carefully held until my room was reached. As I went for the wire I asked, “Did you put some water in the side dish and—”

“Oh! he ’s out,” exclaimed the maid, and I rushed

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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back to behold the resourceful creature half running, half leaping about the room.

“How—” I began.

“Ben said he could n’t possibly get through that hole—his head was too large—where the dish should have been, but it got broken.”

I only half listened to her breathless explanation. “Shut the doors,” and I rushed to the fireplace to put up the screen. But I need n’t have taken any of these precautions; that squirrel knew my room perfectly, and he knew the six-inch hole in the storm window where he was accustomed to go in and out, for he scrambled to it at once and made his escape. Yet would you believe that, once outside, he only hopped about two feet away and then, squatting on the sill, looked back at us with such an expression of derision that it was uncanny. I could not be beaten by so tiny a creature, I must bide my time.

The trap was put out again that night and in the morning the door of escape was found open and all the food gone! How he must have posed before his

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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family and friends as the unconquerable, the invincible! At last I succeeded in getting two flying squirrels in the trap and, wiring every possibly cranny in the bird cage, transferred them thither.

With the cage on my writing table it was difficult to do any work, they were so cunning. Quite fearless and philosophic, after examining carefully every nook and corner of their new abode, disdaining food or water, they curled up against the side of the cage close together, their broad tails over their eyes; and there in a round ball they stayed until I put them out of doors at nine o'clock. At an unusual noise up would pop one sharp nose and open would come one drowsy eye but only for a moment. Evidently their nervous systems were in perfect condition, and day-time to them meant slumber.

The next morning by dint of poking gently with a broad paper-cutter we induced them to enter a proper squirrel cage. Once in the new quarters, each of them woke up enough to investigate every separate corner of the new abode, even testing the wheel. Then

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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one of them deliberately curled himself up in the small tin food-cup on top of the corn and peanuts, where he remained without even stretching himself until after eight at night, when I put the cage out on the porch. Then such yawnings and friskings, such eating and drinking, such gay whirls in the festive wheel! I did not stay to see how late they kept up their antics, but I heard that only the dawn quieted them. The next day Arthur, as we named the least aggressive one, who had spent his daylight hours the day before curled up in a round ball on the shelf, with his tail carefully spread before his eyes, after poking his companion a bit, managed to crawl also into the tin cup, and there the two stayed all day. It was certainly not for warmth that they did this, as the room was heated. Only the gentle regular pulsation of their backs indicated that they were alive.

When we went to town for the winter, these flying squirrels had become such pets that they were taken down to the cottage, where their funny antics amused the family. They were permitted the freedom of the

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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house, ate out of the hand, snuggled in the men's pockets, and returned readily to sleep in their comfortable cage. As spring came on they roamed abroad and finally took possession of one of the Berlepsch bird boxes hanging near the cottage and intended for a downy woodpecker. Here they set up housekeeping and joined again the great community of wild life about us.

It is the middle of August. I am awakened by the clear, gay whistle of the oriole and the trial peeps of young birds striving after the full phrase. The vesper sparrow, too, has come close to the house to repeat again and again his trill and tumbling notes. The catbird adds his unmusical call, and the peewee from his high perch intones his mournful melody. The robin ventures some cheery sounds, and the song sparrow stops between the incessant demands of his cowbird fledgling to voice his joy of life. From the hollows in the woods comes the tree toad's tom-tom as the sun bursts forth from overhanging clouds to make more brilliant the dripping leaves.



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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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One gray morning last September the world seemed hushed as if expectant, only the insect chorus persisted in a faint undertone. Suddenly the clarion call of a robin was heard. Now our robins had left us some ten days ago, so I went out with the glass to hunt the tree-tops for these visitors. From the low branches of an oak on the edge of the lawn one of the songsters was announcing the arrival of the band. I hastened to see whether the Hercules Club berries were ready to be served, for well I know how fond the robins are of this fruit. No, the rosy stems were tipped with pale green berries making an exquisite picture as, above the tropical foliage, the great heads swayed back and forth against the hazy sky, but the robins did not appreciate this kind of a display. They were far too material. However, there were plenty of other berries for their choice; the wild grape hung its dainty clusters from the pergola roof as well as from many a tree-top; the dogwood and elder offered a variety of luscious berries, and on the house wall the Virginia creeper's rich dark fruit dangled

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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in lavish profusion from crimson stems. Cutting off the larger leaves and keeping the vines confined to the timbers of the house seems to increase the quantity and size of these berries. And how the birds enjoy them! Magnolia warblers perch on a swinging stalk and with lively motions of their slender bodies eat their fill.

What a happy six weeks those visiting robins had! They feasted until they were as fat as pigeons; they were on guard from the pergola way around to the south terrace; they even drove away the belligerent blue jays and suffered only the magnolia warblers and the hermit thrushes to share their daily repasts. By and by the Hercules Club berries did turn blue and for each one a robin stood expectant on the linden tree hard by. They voiced their thanks in lovely spring-like chirruping and vied with the song sparrows in the cool twilight.

How they love the fountain in the formal garden! In the chill air of late September a robin often alights on the still waters of the Roman tazza, gazes

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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entranced at his mirrored image, then dashes in with vigorous splashings and flies away with that triumphant attitude which a bird so often affects after his tub. The thermometer is so low that I shiver at his daring; but flirting the water from his protecting coat he darts to a sunny twig-top to complete his toilet. Early one morning this water was entirely covered with so thick a film of ice that robin after robin skated over its slippery surface in surprised dismay; but the sun soon restored it to its normal condition and set the goldfish free.

Back and forth among their larger brethren dart the restless little goldfinches, no longer yellow and black, but dressed now in their winter suits of sober olive and scarcely to be recognized for the gay mites we used to see swaying on the thistle heads in July. To watch them now, hanging head downward on a trumpet-vine bean, feathers all ruffed the wrong way as they industriously extract the seeds from the open pod, is to fall in love with them anew.

Soon after the first of October come the juncos, a

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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jolly company whirling in the highest wind, finding mysterious delicacies beneath the bayberry bushes, and making friends with the demure Peabody birds. These juncos are our winter friends, and I am never weary of watching their bewitching ways; but the Peabody bird makes our home merely a stop-over on his way south. His delicious notes rejoice our hearts from the middle of September until the last of October, beginning in April, when the snowdrops and marsh marigolds announce that spring has come.

At about nine o'clock one evening in late September I was busy at my desk beside the open window, when I heard a curious scratching at my dressing-room screen; going to the window I frightened a small bird, who took refuge at the next screen and finally clung to the window frame of my own room as if begging to be let in. I opened the window, and without a moment's hesitation in he flew. A tiny brown creature with a white throat and wide speckled tail, a long beak and a light line over the eye. He permitted us to handle him without much trouble. What could

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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he be? Evidently a baby. But to be out at this hour! We finally concluded that it was a Bewick wren as that is the most common species here. When he came against the wall of the room he had a little sharp cry and this same call we now heard outside from some restless relative; however, none was to be seen. Bringing the old bird cage from the attic we made him comfortable with seeds, crumbs, and water, then put him in the next room where it was dark; after a bit of investigation he accepted his new lodging and settled down quite at home. At the end of an hour he was fast asleep on the lower perch. All that night I had visions of a tame wren about my room and wondered what I could feed him. The next morning before six o'clock I crept cautiously into the adjoining room to see after the welfare of my nocturnal visitor. No sign of Mr. Wren within the cage. No sound of any kind within the room. The windows were screened of course but the hall door was open. I wandered through the bedrooms and the living rooms downstairs, but could find no trace of any bird.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Finally hearing a commotion in the butler's pantry I opened the door. Behold a very angry little prisoner and a bewildered group of domestics! That little creature had discovered the shortest way downstairs and now proposed to get out of the house. No longer tame he hurled himself against the confining walls, and it was only with infinite precaution for the china as well as for the tiny bird that we finally succeeded in getting him again into the cage and bringing him to my room. Very sulky he looked and very unhappy, not a bit of food or drink would he touch, he had had his curiosity satisfied about the interior of that lighted box; now all he wished was to return to his beloved out-of-doors. After getting his breath he began to poke his head through the bars of the cage, and in three minutes he had freed his whole body. As I opened the window, with a dainty, unhurried air he stepped along the sill avoiding the woodbine stems and made one joyous, lengthy flight to the red-hawed rose bushes in the midst of the shrubbery.

"Hermit thrushes?" Yes, to my amazement. When

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## THE OPEN WINDOW

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a hermit thrush alights on your window sill not more than two feet from your moving fingers, gazes intently at you, wags his tail once or twice, then calmly turns his back and helps himself to dangling berries, you have a queer feeling of being admitted into the mysteries of an inner circle hitherto undreamed of. It is not only the opportunity of studying each feather, each detail, each motion of the living bird which pleases you, but the sense of mutual confidence and trust which at each repetition of this conduct fills you with exultant satisfaction.

## CHAPTER VII

### OUR LAKE

**M**ANY and beautiful are the lakes of Wisconsin, varied in size and shape and surroundings; some are filled with wild rice, others covered with lotus and white water lilies; some clear with the bubbling of many springs, others shallow as a river bed, and still others as deep as the crater lakes of Italy. Each one has its own peculiar charm, and each one its devotees. To us our small lake, nine miles long and from one and a half to three miles wide, is more than a mere expanse of limpid water to reflect the clouds at sunset and the moon's pale glow, to sparkle beneath the sun's rich rays and rise to white-foamed grandeur under the wind's strong sweep. It tempers the breeze from the hot prairies, affords refreshment to the swimmer, and is a delight to the sailor. Even to him who does not sail the sight of a white sheet skimming across the



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## OUR LAKE

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water brings a never-failing sense of exhilaration and youth. It typifies the joy of living.

And there are more prosaic reasons for taking pleasure in our small bit of water. The delight of fishing does not consist entirely of sitting for hours motionless in a small boat or even in catching a long string of the scaly beauties; the main pleasure of this sport to an average person comes after the fish have passed through the hands of the cook! Perch and pickerel abound, the flesh of the latter being particularly firm and sweet, caught in such deep clear water. Black bass although not common are fairly plentiful, and four or five will well repay a fisherman for his hours of waiting. Occasionally one has been caught weighing as much as four pounds, but the average fish is not above two pounds.

Our lake seems to be used more than many others for transportation; small steam yachts, launches, Hankscraft, and motor boats are darting back and forth the livelong day. The city visitor, heated, dusty, and depressed, alights from the train on a summer

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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afternoon and, sinking into a comfortable chair on deck, abandons himself to the sensuous enjoyment of floating in the clean coolness to his destination. If rainy, the cabin is commodious and large-windowed; here in the fall a cup of tea is often offered to the passenger, an attention much appreciated by the feminine guest. On hot moonlight nights it is a favorite custom to have supper on board, as the yacht drifts lazily over the still waters, making an ideal finish to a Sunday in the country.

Although most of our time is spent in our beloved woods and gardens, it is the lake after all which brought us to this spot, and we are never oblivious of its loveliness. In fact one of our chief problems was how to treat our shore in such a way as not only to preserve but to enhance its natural beauty. We have about sixteen hundred feet on the water, as the island is long and narrow; on account of changing the main line of the shore for about three hundred feet to conform with the line of the house, we had to begin here at the very foundation of things and build

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## OUR LAKE

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the beach. Choosing for a model a natural shore near-by, we placed the pebbles and sand and rocks in irregular outline leaving, as we imagined, ample room for overhanging shrubs before we put in the rich soil beside the gravel path. How much the success of a country place lies in willingness to submit to Nature's whims! From the rosemary willows stretching along the shore almost to the island bridge we planted wild roses. In June they are an exquisite delight, as we anticipated; in October to our surprise they glow with conscious color too, for twining around their ruddy haws, the crimson leaves of the self-sown Virginia creeper make a band of amazing loveliness.

"But does n't the vine hurt the roses?" asks a conscientious garden-lover. It really does not seem to; surely we would not want them higher or more full of bloom. The jewel weed pokes its tender stem through the prickly branches, and tiny asters, all self-sown too, make variegated patches of lavender and white above the green rose leaves. Before the roses begin to leaf out in the early spring, the ground un-

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derneath their bare branches is gay with marsh marigolds and dandelions; later violets—our own wood violets—blossom in company with hundreds of English primroses.

In a hidden corner of our tiny bay, under the rosemary willow, we set out water lilies, pink and yellow, blue and white. Of course these had to be planted in tubs, which are sunk below the ice in winter. Parting the delicate tracery of the willow branches on a sunny morning in August, twenty or thirty of these fragrant flowers may be seen floating on the bosom of the bay, their round leaves lifting lazily with the undulating water.

This bay is a source of constant pleasure to us, for it reflects the little island with its pebbly shore, its gnarled old trees and many wild flowers of varied hues. We scarcely touched this island, it was such a perfect bit of wildness. Beneath the grove of small poplars at the east we scattered wild columbine and trilliums, but amid the milkweed and wild grasses facing the bay we put masses of goldenrod and rosy



WATER LILIES IN A HIDDEN CORNER OF THE BAY



A GRASSY PATH TO THE TEA HOUSE



THE LAKE TEMPERS THE BREEZE FROM THE HOT PRAIRIES



IN THE EARLY SPRING THE SHORE IS GAY WITH MARSH MARIGOLDS  
AND DANDELIONS

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## OUR LAKE

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loosestrife for bits of color in the water. Maples and walnuts, linden clumps and dwarf oaks, slippery elms and ironwoods in a tangle of grape, bittersweet and Virginia creeper make this a favorite haunt for birds and beasts—not to say humans—and a grassy path to the rustic tea-house became a necessary invasion.

In this bay a pair of coots settle down for weeks each autumn; a kingfisher constantly flies back and forth from island point to willow, every now and then diving into the water for his prey; and one morning we discovered a mink's nest hidden beneath a mass of poison ivy! A guest well versed in the lore of the animal kingdom, wandering alone on the island at nightfall, had heard a queer cry like the mew of a very young kitten coming from beneath the shelving bank; so by the light of day we must needs take a boat and search along the waterside for the cause. Two or three hollows and one small but deep excavation close to the water, all abounding in clam shells and recently munched fish bones, betrayed the home of Mr. Mink. But of him and his progeny we did not

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at that time catch a glimpse; he may have been hiding beneath any one of a dozen rocks or hillocks, mocking both our untrained human sight and undeveloped sense of smell. Later, however, we did see a mink swimming near the shore in the clear water.

Some of our friends and neighbors are kind enough to own canoes, painted a harmonious green or left in natural wood color; and one of my choicest memory pictures is this bay as a canoe glides beneath the bridge and emerges into open water, paddled by a red-coated demoiselle who lingers at each lovely lily and slowly, although always far too soon, disappears beyond the willow tree.

One year a pair of kingbirds built their nest upon the farthest branch of the leaning walnut at the end of the island. More pessimistic than they, we daily expected that the nestlings would wriggle over the edge and fall into the water; but no such catastrophe occurred. The brood developed in unusual vigor and later came to the olive grove, where any evening in the twilight one could see the silver sheen upon their



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## OUR LAKE

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breasts as they balanced themselves precariously with fluttering wings on the highest twigs.

In midsummer wheeling chimney swifts and flocks of blue-backed swallows make this bay their hunting ground. Later the gulls arrive but no small bay will content them for long. If the day is stormy they may linger for a while, delighting our eyes with their graceful motions, but richer fishing grounds soon lure them on. Some years, too, the black terns fly back and forth uttering their harsh calls. The crows know where a certain spring in the bay at the end of the island keeps open water on the coldest day in mid-winter. Here they congregate and here they fish! I could not believe my glass at first but distinctly I perceived Mr. Crow draw from the water a small fish, carry it to the willow and hold it with one claw while he calmly devoured it. Whether the fish was a live one or not only the crows know, but many a morning I saw them about this bubbly spot drinking and making merry in true crow fashion.

At certain intervals during the summer various

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craft from the neighboring lakes come to our modest waters to compare speeds. Twenty or thirty entries make the prizes well worth winning and the spectacle an exciting one. What exhilarating pictures these annual regattas bring us when sailboats like white-winged gulls singly, by twos, and by threes come into view from behind the willows, emerge into the open water of the bay, go by the point of the island, and disappear toward the east end of the lake! Above, a cool gray sky, below a dancing sea; the outstretched forms upon the "skimming-dish" appear as tense as the white sail overhead, while the keel cuts through the rippling waters or lifts its blunted nose before the advancing waves. We watch each one eagerly as it tacks in the head wind careening so far that it seems impossible that it should ever right again; but just as we cry, "There she goes!" up it swings in time to take another tack. The scattered boats pass in prolonged procession—"46," "39," "27"—accompanied by the steam yachts at a respectful distance.

Soon from the village buoy comes the sharp whistle

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which signifies that the first half of the race is won. Then we look for the return fleet running before the wind with all sails set. There is something thrilling in that swelling jib pulling its load so easily and swiftly toward the goal. How different the attitude of the crew now! Instead of that tense posture ready to leap on one side or the other or to hang over the edge if need be in order to steady the boat, they now stand at ease on the level deck or sit calmly with up-raised knees, leaving all to the straining breeze. They pass at varying distances followed by the gayly trimmed escort and greeted by waving flags and loud cheering. I suppose that one should take an interest in the winner on this great occasion, but to me the joy is in watching those skimming swallows dipping or swaying or sailing on level keel straight into the sunset sky.

Most people when building a pier on their shore line expect that pier to remain on that spot to the end of time,—I mean *their* time. Imagine my amazement, then, when one day I caught a remark about

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"*moving the pier.*" If the Constant Improver had casually said that he thought of moving the house I could not have been more surprised.

"Are you really going to move the pier?" I asked. "Where to? And why?"

"Well, I'm not going to do it right away," so he temporized,—this was in September,—"but it certainly would improve the looks of this shore very much to have the pier away."

No one could deny that. "But where will you put it?" I persisted. "We must have one, you know." For I am always dreading the moment when the Constant Improver's strong sense of the beautiful will overcome his practical ideas.

"I think it will go the other side of the island and be entirely out of the way."

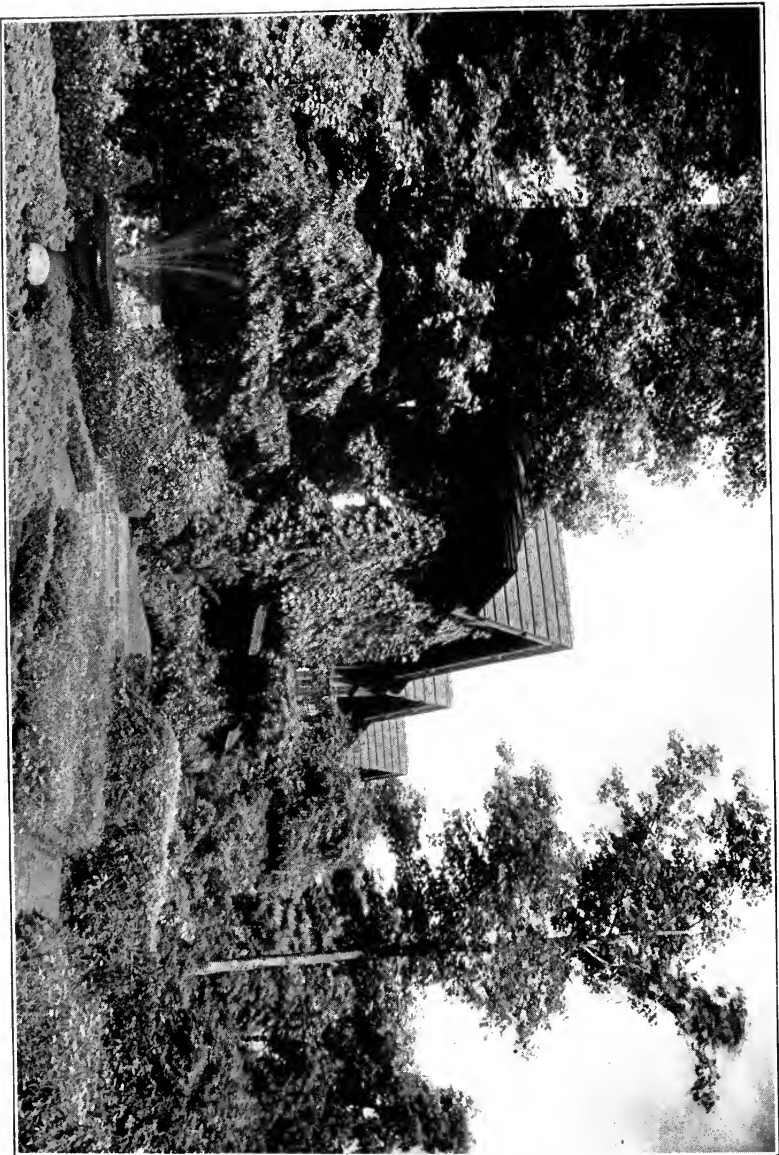
"But the distance from the house?" I began.

"It is very little longer," he interrupted, "and that will bring all guests whether arriving by boat or motor to the front door."

As usual he was right. In January the heavy



OUR SHORE FROM THE NEW PIER



OUR HOUSE WAS SLOWLY BECOMING ENCLOSED IN DENSE FOLIAGE

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stones of the cribs were picked up from the bottom of the lake, carried on the ice to the new location on our eastern boundary, piled in their cribs again and the ice cut under them, so that they sank easily into place. In the spring when the pier was put out, we found it a much more attractive spot at which to anchor, and a stone bench under the drooping maples beside it soon became a favorite resting-place. Where the pier formerly stood a long seat now commands a lovely view of rippling water and dented shore.

About this time we began to realize that our house was slowly but surely becoming enclosed in dense foliage, and that our beloved lake was gradually disappearing from our sight; but we had not yet learned the value of the ax and the saw in landscape gardening; and the old sentiment beginning, "Oh, woodman! spare that tree!" still swayed us. So it was a momentous day when we finally made up our minds to open the lake view at the east. In order to keep up our courage we said over and over again to each other: "We must not get shut in. We must have the

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water views." And so our choice was made, one by one five trees were marked for destruction, two of them walnuts over a hundred feet high! And the day arrived. While the Constant Improver bravely managed the undertaking, I fled to the farther end of the place and worked desperately to avoid hearing those sounds of Fate, those crashing blows. So skillfully did the men work taking the huge trees down in sections that, although in full leaf, none of the surrounding shrubs were hurt and when the débris had been carried away, the result was really surprising. A water picture was revealed, framed in quivering greenery, where white sails danced, where cloud banks reflected the glory of the setting sun, where round, majestic, crimson, rose the hunter's moon.

Encouraged by this procedure, we developed in hardihood and demanded more openings. A tall young poplar draped in a toga of wild grape such as only Nature can arrange had expanded with the years until it completely blocked our view of the water at the west.



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“That clump must come down,” quoth the Constant Improver.

Standing before its luxuriant beauty I shivered, but turned away without a protest, accepting the decree of Fate. We freed the big Wisconsin willow from her neighbor's too close proximity and disclosed her, graceful, single-minded, regal, with space in which to sway her pendent branches unhindered. Our wild olives planted beside the shore path directly in front of the house, making a gray mass in company with the sea-buckthorn and guaranteed not to stretch above them, have, in this rich earth, grown beyond all scale and should be removed. I hope it may be done when I am not at home. I know that the after result will be a distinct improvement; but how anyone can have the heart to put an ax to that feathery, fruity refuge of bird-dom is beyond my understanding.

Is it not fortunate that the world is governed by a sterner sex whose clear judgment is not influenced by sentimental considerations! Being myself of a highly conservative nature and once pleased always

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pleased with the same effect, there have been moments in my existence when I sympathized with the long-suffering woman who, after having had her home remodeled every other year, finally presented her husband with a carload of bricks and an acre lot begging him to work off his surplus energy on them. It must be acknowledged that thus far I have never needed to provide the bricks, as, after numerous near and far connections had been safely furnished with homes of their own, institutions of various kinds utilized the architectural tastes of the Constant Improver, to their great advantage.

But one year there seemed to be nothing especial on hand, and I detected a brooding gaze on the plenty-good-enough garage, and overheard sentences beginning, "If I were going to build again"—which were ominous signs. Luckily at this moment the subject of boathouses came up. Now we had no boat; and if we had had, the Constant Improver did not approve of boathouses, as they disfigured the shore. But our neighbors who had boats did approve of them, and

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## OUR LAKE

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there was a good deal of discussion in regard to size, location, etc. Whereat the Master Mind became interested and finally said, "If you three men are going to build three boathouses on the shore, do let me think it over and submit a plan."

Nothing loath, they consented. Now was the Laird of the Manor happy again; with paper, pad, and ruler he made mysterious measurements, he telephoned for necessary dimensions, he paced off bits of the forest, he hung papers on long strings and went out in a rowboat to judge of the effect. He even deigned to consult the Friendly Architect about possible weights and measures. Very busy indeed were all his spare moments now, and very inscrutable his countenance. At last his plan was ready and he called his neighbors together for consultation.

"You know that low piece of ground next to me in the thick woods?" he began. "Well, that can be bought, and you can put your three boathouses there in one building. Each man will own the lot under his house; there will be no connection between them;

and yet the general effect will be of one admirable building."

"Will they cost more than an ordinary boathouse?" demanded one cautious neighbor.

"Not a bit," he was assured.

"Will they be thoroughly practical, light and dry?" asked another.

"Perfectly," was the confident reply.

The idea was certainly original, and the effect on paper very good, and that it would look equally well finished the neighbors believed; but as to the practical working of the plan possibly they felt more dubious. However they rallied loyally to his support in a unanimous; "Go ahead, then." And the work was begun.

Placed sixty feet back from the shore with three "ways" on which to pull the yachts from the water, these "ways" covered with portable wooden bridges for the shore path, the wide trellised structure of smooth cement blocks presented anything but a conventional appearance. A broad wooden band dis-

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guised the necessary slope of the roof, the beautifully proportioned brown trellis concealed the awkward doors and divided the length into agreeable panels; and the cement blocks, put up with heavy mortar, made so pleasing a surface that the first idea of vines was abandoned. The middle house was lighted by a skylight, the other two by windows on one side as well as by the doors at either end. One windlass at the rear serves for them all. With bushes planted thickly in front of this structure, with trees bending over it, no one can say that it disfigures the shore line. Indeed it seems to nestle down into the landscape and become a part of the forest. Of course, this is partly due to the low ground selected for its site; but even in winter, when fully exposed to the gaze of the passer-by, it preserves its stately if unusual aspect and serves its purpose perfectly.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE STORY OF NAN

**I**T was the twenty-eighth of June, I remember, and a very hot day, when one of my guests ran into my room with the news that a bird was lying on the brick terrace crying vigorously.

“Oh! what is it?” I demanded.

“How can I tell? I guess it’s just hatched, it has n’t any feathers—hardly.”

“Well, I’ll be right down. Move it out of the sun.”

The telephone rang that minute, the mail came in, the cook wanted to see me, and I confess I forgot all about the matter. Two hours later I went down to the terrace in a conscience-stricken rush. The birdling was still peeping, lying under the shelter of a geranium leaf on the moist earth. It was about four inches long, the body naked, but wings, head and would-be tail covered with tiny quill-like feathers.

“Of course it can’t live, and I have n’t an idea what

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## THE STORY OF NAN

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to give it; but we 'll try milk," was my rather pessimistic remark.

So we put the tiny thing into a candy-box lined with soft paper, took a dropper and proceeded to squeeze a few drops of milk into his throat every time that he opened his bill to peep. He was surprised but he was also hungry, and milk being the only thing offered he accepted it; then snuggling down under a covering of cotton he went to sleep with his head upright ready to expand that yellow gap instantly for further feeding. After twenty minutes of peace came more peeps which continued until more milk was forthcoming. In this manner we gave the baby his bottle every twenty minutes for an hour and three-quarters when we began to feel that food of more staying qualities was demanded. Looking in the bird-book, we learned that equal parts of potato, carrot and hard-boiled eggs grated and mixed together made an ideal diet for young birds; so every time the youngster cried, which was every time he woke, this food was pushed down his throat on the blunt end of a quill toothpick. He always knew when he had

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enough and much appreciated a drop or two of water with each meal.

“But where do you suppose it came from?” asked the guest who found it, “and what is it?”

We searched the tree near-by, but the robin’s nest was empty; we searched the vines, but no nests were to be found.

“I have n’t an idea what kind of a bird it is, but we ’ll take it to the Observatory and ask the authority there.”

With perfect serenity the birdling stood his first motor ride of twenty-five miles and was pronounced by the authority’s wife, “a blue jay.”

“Don’t you see those blue stripes in embryo, two on each wing?”

We did see them, but were not convinced.

“It seems rather small,” she continued hesitatingly; “I wish my husband were here.”

We begged a little milk and fed the infant to the delight of the children, and then went on our way. Nearing home, we met some friends who knew a great deal about birds, and when we told them our



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## THE STORY OF NAN

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story and took off the box cover, one of them instantly cried,

“Are you actually going to let a blue jay live?”

“Well, he’s so little and so cunning, perhaps just for a few days.”

The chauffeur in his cockney dialect remarked: “It looks like a Henglish sparrow, ma’am.” But we demurred to that; a blue jay was bad enough, but surely this wee thing which took so kindly to us and our ways, this could not be one of that detested breed, the English sparrow!

Before we reached home, at a quarter before seven, the birdling was sound asleep and he never peeped again that night. It had been a strenuous day for him, and he needed a long rest. Think of the tenacity of life in the little creature! For on top of his fall of twenty-five feet he had cried two hours without cessation; yet after a short night of rest he seemed a perfectly normal bird, devoting his entire time to eating and sleeping as a birdling should, and growing more cunning each passing hour.

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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I hesitate to confess that early, very early the next morning—at a quarter before five in fact—I actually woke him to see if he was alive! Very much alive he proved to be and very hungry. Four times before 7:20 he demanded food and then perched on my finger for more.

How the birdling thrived on this artificial diet administered every hour from dawn to dark; how we dared not neglect him, as he could be heard all over the house; how the window ledge in my own sanctum became his abode; and how rapidly he changed from day to day would make a long story. Suffice it to say that we named our pet “Andy” at first, but afterwards were obliged to change it to “Nan.”

On the fifth day of her stay with us Nan managed to climb out of the candy-box, and a deeper one was procured, then an open basket ten inches high. The very next day she flew out of the basket and into the hall. After that in the daytime she was allowed her liberty, but at night we put a mosquito netting over the basket. How she hated it! As soon as it was light

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## THE STORY OF NAN

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she attacked this covering with claws and beak getting so tangled that we had to remove it. The bottom of that basket was far too dull a place to suit her tastes; she wished to perch upon the rim, day or night. Here she took her daytime naps, and by the twelfth day she managed to tuck her head under her tiny wing. Several days before this she had begun to have real feathers and to preen them.

At my west window the screen is divided horizontally so that the lower part slides upward for placing food and water on the birds' table outside. This ledge where the two screens join Nan adopted as her own, and on the ninth day began to take short flights accepting my shoulder as a city of refuge. Gradually she extended her excursions to my desk, to the big table, and then across the room to the different pictures.

Now she fluttered her wings at sight of food, and we varied her diet with chopped pecans and bits of apple. She would hop across from one of my shoulders to the other, peering up at my lips for the expected tidbit. I fed her always on my finger or

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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shoulder, but birdseed and water were kept in the cage and the door open all day long. She would hop in and out at her pleasure. So knowing was she that I could put my face close to the open door without disturbing her, but if a hand moved toward the door she was out in a flash. Within three weeks Nan tired of the cooked food and began to take care of herself. Peanuts she would not touch, but almonds and pecans she liked, also hempseed, lettuce, celery-tops and grapes. All fruit in the room had to be kept covered, or she helped herself. She knew perfectly well the food she liked the best, hempseed and pecans; if I offered her something else she would shake her head and gently but decidedly peck at my fingers until I conformed to her desires.

As soon as she could fly, big branches in leaf were brought in and kept by her window, but she scorned them, and if placed upon the twigs instantly flew off, preferring the solid footing afforded by window ledge or chair rail. Evidently, too, she feared the moving leaves at first, and even when accustomed to them, she



NAN NINE DAYS OLD



NAN TWO WEEKS OLD



NAN SEVEN WEEKS OLD



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## THE STORY OF NAN

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never really liked them nor went near them of her own volition.

Her days were short but very full. It was not long before she lost her querulous, sharp call and developed, especially at twilight, a gentle rather plaintive note like a sleepy child who does n't want to go to bed. And this was exactly the case, for she hated the pretty cage into which we put her every night and never willingly went there to sleep. In fact she became an adept at finding new hiding-places to avoid this bedtime capture, keeping so still, never moving a feather at our call, that it was almost impossible to find her; but when discovered she would enter the cage peaceably as if that was part of the game. Once she wriggled herself into so snug a space behind a candlestick that her tail did n't come out of kink for a week. Often she would get down on the wire behind a large picture; and when we called "Nan, Nan," up would bob her head only to jump back again at our approach. Hiding in the farthest corner on the lambrequin pole, she would remain perfectly quiet until discovered, when she would

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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cock her tiny head on one side as much as to say, "How are you going to get at me now?"

About the first of August Nan shed her baby tail feathers, and it was the twentieth of September before they grew out again. With this new dignity she ceased to flutter her wings for food and began to utter a curious scolding rattle when opposed. She was now three months old, for we calculated that she was probably about a week old when she fell from the eaves of the house to the brick terrace below, and had developed a full suit of glossy brown feathers beautifully marked *although all trace of blue had disappeared.*

She kept herself immaculate. Never shall I forget how she made me understand that she wanted a bath. It was the tenth day of her stay with us when she began a series of queer antics, squatting on my small French dictionary and fluffing her feathers with many wriggings and twistings, until the Constant Improver seeing her, said, "She wants a bath." That given, how she enjoyed it! From eleven to fifteen times would she step daintily in and out of the shallow dish, dash-



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## THE STORY OF NAN

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ing the water first over her head and then gradually soaking every feather. Sometimes she would indulge in two baths a day. However she persisted in her odd capers on the dictionary, until I procured her a big bowl of sand. Here she wallowed in delicious content. Now was her life one continual joy!

Never did Nan care to leave my room, although the door was always open. Into the dressing-room she flew often and even the bathroom beyond, but there her ambition ended. Although the French dictionary continued to be her favorite, all books had a strange fascination for her, as she generally managed to detach a string somewhere about them with which to play. She loved the telephone too, first because it had a loose end on which she used to hang like a chickadee, and secondly because she saw another bird in its shining base. One picture on the wall reflected herself so plainly that she would spend hours fluttering down before it or hunting down behind it for the bird she knew was there. When doing my hair before the triple mirror, she was often on my shoulder, and her

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puzzled and disgusted air when she pecked at a bird and touched a piece of glass was laughable to see.

At first I placed her cage on the porch a part of each day so that she should grow accustomed to the many birds, bees, wasps and flies; but she did not like the atmosphere, and either stayed on the bottom of the cage or pecked at any bird that came too near. Twice I took her on my shoulder to the lawn to have her picture taken but I had no suitable camera and the results were very poor. A screened porch downstairs seemed to be an ideal place for her; but she had her own notions as to location and did not feel at home there, so made her way one day back through two big rooms, upstairs, along a gallery to her own quarters. It was equal to a long migration for her, and how she followed the trail no one could guess.

She would remain on Kate's shoulder or on mine as long as we stayed in her room, but the instant we entered the hall, back she would fly to her window ledge. Twice she flew out of the window when the screen blew open and her airs of superiority as she

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## THE STORY OF NAN

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strutted along the garden paths were comical to see. Kate, the maid of whom she was very fond, caught her in her apron, for the sight of the cage only drove her deeper into the bushes. We would have given her liberty now but she had always been so shielded and taken care of we feared that she would fall a victim to the first enemy that approached.

From the very beginning Nan was a most fascinating study in so-called animal psychology. All her tricks were the result of her own invention, for we never consciously taught her anything. In fact we carefully refrained from doing so. How much was instinct, how much imitation, how much, if any, what we call "reason" I was never able to determine. One of her tricks that seemed to savor of reasoning was to wait until she saw me fully absorbed in writing, then light on my head and pull each hairpin out, flying off with almost a chuckle as the coiffure came tumbling down!

Leading a life of the utmost quiet and regularity, she hated the wind and a noise of any kind. The whistle of the passing boats startled her, the lawn mower

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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made her nervous, and the carpet sweeper actually terrified her. Curiously enough she did not mind the typewriter at all, and would sit on my shoulder when I was at work and even perch on the carriage of the machine, not stirring when I pushed it over to begin a line. She was perfectly at home on my desk, biting the point of my pencil as I wrote, carrying off one by one my pens, my pins, my rubber bands, which she would play with by the hour, scattering them over the floor. One of her favorite occupations was to lift the lid of a silver stamp-box and abstract one by one the red stamps only, carrying them off in her beak, shaking them and picking them up again to see apparently if they were still sticky!

She was as companionable as a bird could possibly be, always chirping in answer to my call except when mischievously hiding; she would play "peek-a-boo" around a vase on the mantel shelf with an apparent zest as keen as a child's, and the instant I stretched myself lazily on the *chaise-longue* with the newspaper, over would come Miss Nan to alight on its precarious

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## THE STORY OF NAN

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edges, to nip out small pieces just for the fun of hearing it tear; or when brushed from that perch, fly to my head and once more gleefully rattle the hairpins to the floor. To drum on the fire-screen with her bill was another of her diversions, and to catch a stray fly on the window pane an unfailing pastime; a dead fly was no treat to her, but a live one she ate with relish.

She was shy with men but would go to most women, although she well distinguished the maid Kate and me. Colors she discerned, white clothes she infinitely preferred probably because she first became accustomed to them. It took me a long time to induce her to alight on my shoulder after I put on black. She displayed a fine taste for form, too; well acquainted as she was with my clumsy down wrapper she loathed it so that she would not come near it. Big bulky objects frightened her, and when Kate would enter the room carrying many gowns over her arm or a petticoat held aloft, Nan would fly to the farthest corner. The disorder of packing distressed her, she would dash back and forth across the room in such a panic

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of fear that we had to move the trunks into another apartment.

But what kind of a bird was this wonder, this sensitive being, this petted darling of the household? In utter ignorance the first day or two I had visions of wild canaries, orioles, or even thrushes, but in this respect I was doomed to disappointment. A week after Nan came to us another more developed fledgling fell in exactly the same spot on the brick terrace. Our suspicions grew stronger. Making a more vigilant search we extracted at last from under the eaves a familiar-looking mass of hay and feathers; it was the nest, still full, alas! of English sparrows. Three days after Nan's arrival I had noticed at my window the most beautifully marked English sparrow and on the fourteenth day a female bird also visited the screen. An imaginative person could make quite a tale from these happenings. It really looked as if the birds were examining the surroundings of their lost child and asking of her condition. They well might reason: "Here are some incomprehensible beings who shoot

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## THE STORY OF NAN

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our kind, and yet if a baby bird falls into their care they cannot do too much for it. If they like one so much, probably two won't come amiss." So they pushed another one out of the nest. Of course I do not say they reasoned thus but that is the way it seemed.

"What are you going to do with her?" asked my friends as the summer waned and autumn winds arose. Poor Nan who nestled at my throat, who ate daintily from my lips, who trusted us—could we turn her out into the cold world? Perhaps in the city, where scores of her kind lived in the vines about the house, she might be freed.

So when we closed the country house early in November, Nan was placed in her cage, carefully covered and carried to town by motor. How she rebelled at being confined in the daytime! How she hated the rushing wind and the noise of the machine! She cried until exhausted, refusing to eat or stay on her perch, clinging to the sides of the cage and snapping at any finger or food that came within reach. At noon, when we stopped by the wayside for luncheon,

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we tried uncovering the cage; but to see us sitting free in the out-of-doors only added insult to her injured feelings and she threw herself from swing to floor and back again until we were forced to cover the cage.

It took her nearly a week to grow accustomed to her new room in the city, and although we placed her bath and food and cage near the open window, she only went to them when forced to by her needs, always perching as far from that window as possible. To be sure it was cold weather but to that she had been gradually inured; quantities of sparrows were flying and calling just outside, but she scorned to notice them. The city noises troubled her, she sat morose and huddled on the gas fixture, responding in almost a timid manner to our advances. One afternoon before she was put in her cage for the night, she saw a flame come from that bright perch which she had chosen for her own; it is possible she may have brushed it with her wing, but never again could she be induced to perch on the brass tube, confining her excursions, when not on her food table to the tops of the picture



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## THE STORY OF NAN

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frames. Could we force this tenderly nurtured creature to go out and battle for herself? Not in the winter's cold, at least.

When the spring sunshine began to warm the earth, it melted the cold heart of Nan the sparrow, and she became more sociable with the birds outside, frequenting the window where seed was spread for them, and finally lifting up her eager voice she chirped soft nothings to her kind. Day after day she spent upon the sill, pecking upon the screen and answering the chattering sparrows outside, until about the middle of April we opened the barrier, and in an unforgettable transport of joy our Nan flew away. Not far, however; for weeks afterward in the early morning she would come to the windowsill, where food was always kept for her, and call us in her own way. Once out in the yard Kate spoke to her, and she answered but did not come down; she had her own affairs to attend to now and had no time for us.

Her feathers were so glossy and fine and she was so beautifully marked that at first she was readily

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distinguished from the rank and file of city sparrows. Has she survived the summer? Has she forgotten us? Will she return to that familiar window when the winter winds blow keenly?

Only the future, that mysterious future which we are ever questioning, that future which holds within its shrouded depths our pleasures and our pains, that future which continually gives us new hope from day to day, holds the sequel to Nan's youth.

## CHAPTER IX

### SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

ONE of the most exhilarating experiences of my life was that first night under the stars. How much we conservative people owe to the initiative of our friends! Anything radically new always presents to me its dark rather than its pleasant side; and this is true of small as well as large experiments. Many were the dishes which as a child I had not eaten, consequently I did not touch them now, until one by one the force of example and circumstance constrained me to recognize them, and in nearly every case that particular article of food became a favorite. So it was with that new fad, as the Constant Improver called it, of sleeping out of doors. I shrank from its discomforts, the noise, the early light, the cold, all the vague nothings I could not name. But a friend persuaded me to try it for a week—well, for a night, then—and carefully chose a perfect one in August.

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The upstairs porch had no roof but otherwise was well adapted to our plan, facing full south, open on three sides and protected by the house on the north. We sent down to the village for two folding cots and mosquito netting; then to the garden for eight tall bamboo stakes, and with staples and tapes made frames which could be quickly lifted from the cots in case of need. On this frame we fastened full curtains of the net and put a plain piece double for the roof. Pushing the heads of the cots close to the house, one on either side of the gable, under eaves which projected nearly three feet over us although some six feet above us, we snugly tucked the full curtains under the mattress, and thus protected against nocturnal insects, not to mention bats, we composed ourselves to slumber.

At least that is what we were supposed to do. But the night was too wonderful for me, the air a gentle caress, warm, yet full of refreshment, and the stillness was unearthly; for the crickets and locusts had not yet begun their lullabies. Overhead arched the celestial



THE UPSTAIRS PORCH



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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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glory of the starry firmament; the southern half of the heavens stood revealed in all its majesty, the Milky Way a sparkling, scintillating radiance. From a child I had loved the stars, but I felt I had never seen them before. A singular exhilaration, a curious sense of exaltation took possession of me. Why could I not float in long, swinging cadences, ever higher and higher into that far ether? And the sensation was so exquisite, the dreamy pleasure so intense, that I deliberately dropped the cords of reason and launched forth upon the wings of imagination. That night brought me far more than sleep. It brought me a revelation. So it is that the soul of man when released from the bondage of earth floats upward, ever upward to become one with the Father.

By the end of the week, the thrilling novelty of the out-of-doors had partially worn away, leaving a pleasing sense of unreality to refresh the drowsy spirit. That delicious night air filled with the fragrance of box and heliotrope, of phlox and petunia, of jasmine and rose geranium! Is it possible that once on a time

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it was considered dangerous, and carefully excluded from our homes?

“But I always have my window open at night,” cries the average person, “and that amounts to the same thing.”

No, Gentle Reader. No doubt it is an excellent thing to do; but never make the mistake of thinking for an instant that it can be the same as sleeping out of doors. I have slept in my own room when the ink froze on the desk, and I know that I had fresh air; but I also knew that it could not be as fresh as the out-of-doors. Each piece of furniture in the room, each curtain, rug, and picture, each book and paper, even, takes something, no matter how small, from the purity of the air; and this we cannot realize until we sleep out of doors and enter that room in the morning.

It also seems a waste of time to sleep when the night is so enlightening, and one form of enchantment succeeds another. A half-moon hangs in the silent sky, its rays form a broad sparkling path upon the waves. Back and forth within this heavenly radiance drifts



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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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a dark canoe bearing two happy souls; their voices blend in snatches of folk song; the words come dimly to my drowsy senses; but the meaning is the old, old story which is ever new. Far off, the weird call of a loon, nearer across the lake a tinkling bell, and a faint "moo" breaks the stillness.

And that brief glory which we call a falling star thrilling us with its mysterious hint of power, as it sweeps across the heavens! What is that strange upheaval whose pale reflection reaches us? Can the imagination leap those millions of long miles into the abode of limitless space and grasp the meaning of that molten mass? What a fascinating science is astronomy to young and old alike! It offers that unbridled, riotous scope which one's imagination demands. Its mighty numbers, its astounding facts, its inspiring discoveries—but yet in the beginning—bring one nearer to a realization of the Infinite. Nothing can give one a more appalling sense of the earth's speed than to look through a *fixed* telescope at the Milky Way. With incredible swiftness vast fields of stars rush across the

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glass and with a reeling brain, one instinctively puts forth a hand to steady the toppling earth! Yet it does not follow that because astronomy is the most romantic of the sciences, its devotees are sentimental.

"Yes," I overheard a noted astronomer say to a startled miss who with clasped hands and parted lips, was adoring the full, round moon: "Yes, I would really blot out the moon if I could. It is only in the way in our business."

One night the white-flecked sky was apparently on this side of the moon. How mysterious its depths! How lowering it curved above me! It was as seamed and crackled as the surface of the moon itself and looked as changeless. I wonder whether the Chinese poet Li Po who wrote in the eighth century was a traveler; I know he was a nature lover, and I believe he slept out of doors, for listen to one of his lays;

Athwart the night  
I watch the moonbeams cast a trail  
So bright, so cold, so frail  
That for a space it gleams  
Like hoarfrost on the margin of my dreams.

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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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I raise my head,  
The splendid moon I see;  
Then droop my head,  
And sink to dreams of thee,  
My Fatherland, of thee.

Sometimes after the moon has set and just before the dawn, when the grasshoppers and crickets have ceased their nocturnal chorus, there comes a period of stillness so intense that in the distance one can hear the wind sweeping across the forest, where each tree bends in graceful salutation at the passing of the god. Nearer and nearer comes the rushing sound, until the swaying vines are caught in its embrace; then it is gone, and the stillness reasserts itself.

Night after night the stars shone; but early one morning I was awakened by a singular pattering sound. Yes, it was rain; was it going to continue or was it merely a passing shower? Sleepily I surveyed the heavens and pulled up the cravanette spread. Here was another new experience. The rain had a grateful scent of ferns in deep woods, of earth and of coolness. Luckily this cloud passed over before doing any harm,

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but after one or two sudden downpours and one or two hasty scurryings for shelter, we concluded something must be arranged for stormy nights.

Some men would have put on a roof and calmly screened in this upstairs porch, but the face of the Constant Improver was a study when one of our practical neighbors made this obvious suggestion. What! spoil the whole effect of his adored house for this passing whim? No, indeed! Give him time, he would think out some solution. And when it was thought out and carried out, it was the most sensible and inconspicuous affair possible.

A platform thirteen inches high, five feet four inches long, and four feet wide was placed on the southeast corner of the porch, on which was put the long wooden bench, the Master's favorite lookout; for here was an ideal spot to view the sunset, the moonrise over the lake, and—never failing object of interest—each particular bush in our extensive shrubbery. From the house wall slanting to the back of the bench, a frame-



THE SHRUBBERY FROM THE UPSTAIRS PORCH



THE TENT



READY FOR THE NIGHT

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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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work projects, seven feet four inches by five feet, covered with canvas to match the awnings, and lined with white oilcloth to keep out the rain. Rods on either side hold canvas curtains with snap hooks, generally remaining against the wall but in case of wind or rain, easily brought forward to the bench and snapped into staples, thus absolutely protecting the occupant. Into this Oriental shelter is rolled the lightest of hospital beds; brass rods hold up the netting at the four corners, and crossed sticks of bamboo keep the top taut.

A layer of asbestos in a thin pad, and a paper quilt beneath the mattress, gave sufficient protection against the cold as autumn came, and instead of heavy blankets, wool wadding quilts of silkoline proved light and warm. From the iron headboard hung a bag for slippers and a smaller one for night light and watch. In pleasant weather one could sleep under the stars as the bed could be rolled out from the canopy in a moment. In summer this contrivance is almost completely

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hidden from below by the kudzu and trumpet vines, and in winter is easily taken down by removing the hinges at the house wall.

The first night that I slept under this shelter through a shower is another of my pleasurable memories. Awakening with the first gentle patter, where was I? Oh, safe and dry with nothing to worry about. With a chuckle of glee I pulled the curtains across and snapped them securely, then with a childlike grin snuggled down to enjoy the increasing storm. The wind blew in fitful gusts, the rain settled into a steady downpour, rivers of water ran from the roof to the brick terrace below and splashed in merry laughter; on the tin roof the drops danced gayly, and I was out in it, a part of it all, joining its lively play, yet in some magical manner, cozy and warm and dry! Whether it lasted an hour or two or three I have no recollection; the next thing that I remember is the crystal clarity of the sunshine as I opened my wondering eyes.

How delicious that sense of guilt with which the



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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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child runs out into the rain, knowing its naughtiness but unable to resist that call from the heart of nature!

“May I go in swimming?” asks an eager boyish voice.

“Yes, if it does n’t rain,” absently assents the preoccupied mother, and neither sees the absurdity of it.

One of the main objections to sleeping out of doors is the very early light which awakens most people; but I have learned how to bring back the charm of dusky night with the simplest of contrivances. I called it “the morning nap producer”; but a laconic relative has dubbed it “the blinder,” and by that name it is known in the family. To the traveler devoted to his siesta, it is hereby recommended, as it brings darkness even in the lightest room. In the summer of Scandinavian countries it would be a special blessing, as that sensation of going to bed by day must remind one of one’s infancy and all the injured pangs which that performance brought!

For the tiny baby what comfort this soft dusk might bring, and the habit formed early in his career would

unconsciously associate the adjusted band with rest and sleep.

“The blinder” is made of black silk batiste which comes twenty-six inches wide and costs forty-five cents a yard. To make it, fold the material until you have an oblong piece of six thicknesses, nine by three and a half inches finished. Sew a black elastic cord to the middle of each end. Lo! it is ready for use. Light in weight, cool when placed over the eyes, the elastic at the back of the head, it is a perfect protection and guaranteed to bring to the normal spirit that sense of rest which darkness alone gives, that peace which follows the advent of night.

One of the greatest boons to the weary is the privilege of going to bed early; not exactly with the birds perhaps, for they tuck their heads under their wings before five o'clock in the autumn, but at least to sleep when the fancy seizes one. Think of nine or ten hours of blissful unconsciousness a night, O thou tired soul! and wonder not at the country's fascinations.

If the greatest boon which God has given to man

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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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is Death, then the next is certainly its sister Sleep, and after that is Stillness. That blessed quiet in which we may draw long breaths of appreciation, that quiet which calms the spirit and refreshes the physical body, that quiet which leads us to contemplation and to work. For few of us can be happy anywhere in utter idleness, and the seeker after occupation rarely seeks in vain.

Arnold Bennett has conceived a heaven of miraculous light and penned so exquisite a picture that any finite mind must respond to it; but his heaven is for infinite beings of airy nothingness, a spiritual manifestation of will. Here on this earth we need the darkness, we need clouds, both literally and figuratively. Can we spare the fleecy grandeur of the thunder-caps or the weird beauty of the moon in a mackerel sky?

And that other edge of night which we call dawn, when the sky is pale gray flecked with small darker clouds; when the sun rises and the cool background turns to delicate blue and each gray cloud changes to rose, until the heavens are alive with color, deepening

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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in the east into flame against tender beryl tints; when the air is so still that every shade and form is repeated in the mirror-like waters of the lake; when the insect chorus has ceased its roundelay and the delicious freshness of the early morn is filled with fragrance from each opening flower, until the sun itself, a crimson orb, sparkles into being above the golden horizon—how can one look at such a scene without perceiving its precious imagery? Each one of us must at times live beneath a dull gray cloud, but happy is he who knows that sometime it will surely be turned to rose by that same magic hand which so transforms this physical world.

How exquisite comes the light borne upon the melodies of enchanted songsters—the pathos of the whitethroat's whistle, the merry trill of the wren, the call of the song sparrow from the shore, and the soulful voice of the thrush from the wood! As the sense of hearing is the last one to leave us when we sleep and the first one to awaken in us, so this birth of a new day is foreshadowed by sounds of refreshment and

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## SLEEPING OUT OF DOORS

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cheer, to prepare the soul of man for the labors before him, to uplift his heart and give him courage in the face of possible trials, to symbolize that heavenly chorus which awaits him at the Great Awakening. The air is hushed; each jeweled blade of grass, each bending flower turns slowly toward the coming light; and as "the trailing garments of the night" sweep noiselessly away, the first long rays of the ascending sun appear above the clear horizon, and a new day is born.

It seems impossible to understand  
How joy and sorrow may go hand in hand,  
But God created when the world was born  
The endless paradox of night and morn.

## CHAPTER X

### OUR GUEST BOOK

**P**OSSIBLY one great reason for the general exodus of the American people country-ward is the realization that we are living at too fast a pace; that the whirl in which we take our pleasures as well as our more serious occupations is lacking in some of the attributes which were dear to our forefathers. Certainly a country house is a pleasing remedy; for here the real individuality of the owner may be expressed, and here he may have time to become really acquainted with those friends whom he likes the best.

Sometimes I think that the chief charm of a home in the country is the opportunity its leisure gives to know one's friends better, to make friends of mere acquaintances, to become familiar with the people who are actually accomplishing things in life whether through settlement work, church work, educational work, painting, sculpture, architecture, books, or na-

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## OUR GUEST BOOK

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tional organizations. These few hours of informality give one a rare insight into the real being, and often change one's estimate of a character formerly known only from external appearances.

For comfort and freedom from care, a country house should be so simply furnished that merely turning the key in the outside door suffices so far as intrinsic values go, and we have so arranged ours; but there is one object in it which is very precious. It is not of silver or gold or any precious stone, not wonderful in needlework or a relic of the ages, yet it is our one most cared-for possession. Can you not guess, O Sympathetic Reader? It is our Guest Book. Begun when we entered the tiny cottage, continued through our camping in the kitchen-house and our final settlement in the main house, it bears a complete record of our different visitors to the present day. It lacks the whimsical charm of many guest books, it has no sketches, photographs or comments, it contains only the autographs of our guests; it goes steadily forward in methodical order from month to month, from year

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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to year with the names of relatives, friends, and acquaintances.

When we ask a visitor who has not been to our home before to write in the guest book, a curious, pensive, not to say haunted, look comes into his face especially if he is famous with pen or brush. And I have even known him to say, "May n't I just wait a little?"

"For an inspiration?"

Then when we explain that the only tribute levied is the autograph, the relief in his countenance and the alacrity with which he rises to the occasion are delightful to witness.

When we leave for the winter this beloved book of white vellum is carefully wrapped in its leather case, placed in a cotton-flannel bag, then in a tin box which is enveloped in paper to keep out the dampness, put inside another tin box and carried out of the house.

What a long procession of figures moves before me as I turn the leaves of our guest book, from the "mark" of the tiny tot just toddling across the floor, our first grandniece, to the fine, firm hand of my dear

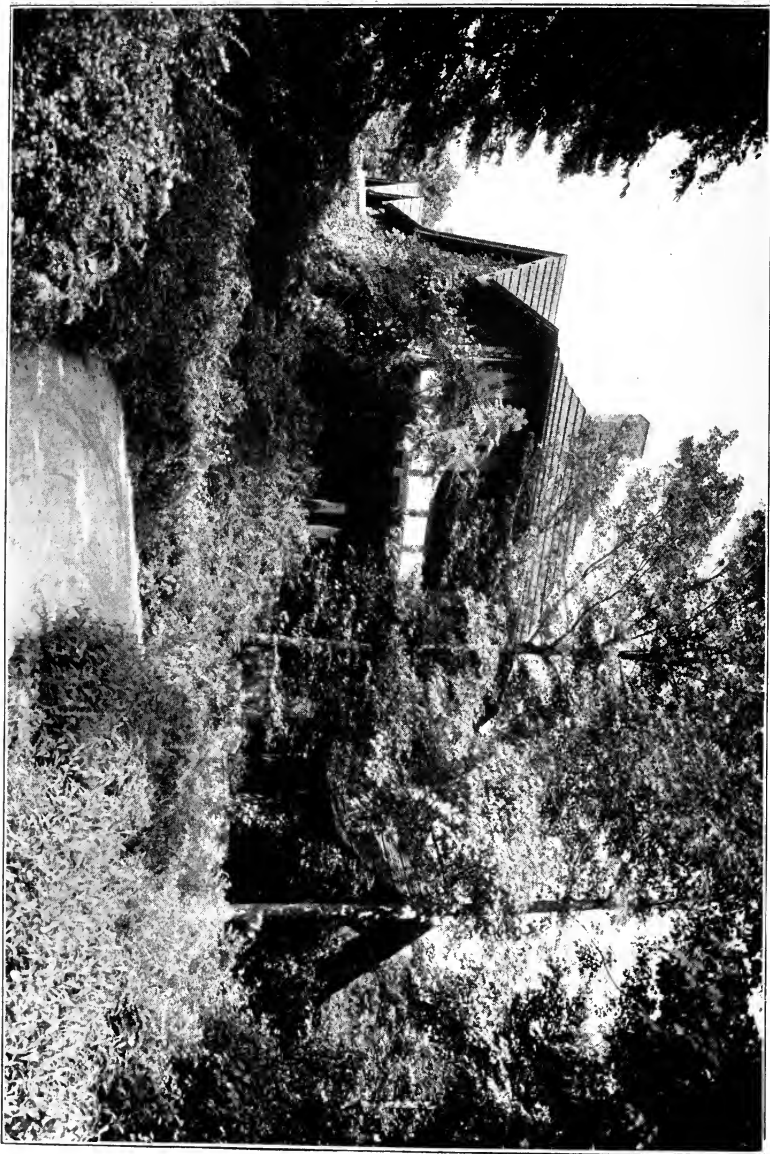




NOVEL EFFECTS OF LIGHT EACH CHANGING HOUR



TWO NATURE LOVERS



THE ENTRANCE AT THE EAST

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## OUR GUEST BOOK

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lady mother "eighty-two years young!" Here is the sprawling record of a seven-year-old genius; here, the close structure of the man of affairs; here, the plain signature of the old school; here, an undecipherable rebus which only the initiated know; here, the unformed hand of youth; here, the well-knit sign of experience; here, the graceful flowing style; here, the upright, and beyond, the backhand, with all manner of slight differences and variations. The ministerial hand, the medicinal hand, the artistic hand, the archæological hand, the literary hand, all are here. A chance indeed to study individuality as expressed in chirography! Many of the names occur over and over again; for this guest book of ours is not only an autograph album but a chronological record often referred to in debated questions.

Our guests, no matter what sex or condition in life, what appearance or temperament, married or single, old, young, or middle-aged (a rapidly disappearing period!), resolve themselves almost immediately into two classes; those who do not like the country and

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those who do. The former come out of curiosity, to escape from boredom, for the social side only or because it is the correct thing to do in summer; but this class is growing smaller every year, and to this desirable end the motor car has largely contributed. So the passion for country life is creeping into the veins of the American people, our Anglo-Saxon traditions are asserting themselves, and gradually we are returning to the soil.

Even those who do love the country love it for divers reasons. To some it is a playground, and that is all, bounded by the golf links or the tennis court. To others it is a place for needed rest and respite; to be let alone is all they ask; a book on the terrace and three good meals a day satisfies them completely. Some look upon the country as a series of pictures with novel effects of light each changing hour; some prefer the creations of man, and go on architectural expeditions with zest; some are fishermen, and given a small boy and some bait, a boat and a rod, are per-

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## OUR GUEST BOOK

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fectly content; and to each one we seek to give the kind of recreation that he or she likes the best.

To some just the woods are enough, the freedom of the place, the liberty of investigation, long mornings or cool afternoons in which to explore and to discover. I have noticed that one of the keenest pleasures I can give a nature-lover is to turn her toward a particular path and then follow quietly behind her. How delicious to my expectant ears are her little shrieks of delight as she catches a glimpse of a rare wild flower or unremembered plant! One morning in early October I steered my companion, all unconscious, toward the gravel pit. We were talking busily, at least she was, and did not happen to raise her eyes until I stopped as if in interest at her recital, but she never finished that story; she had discovered the autumn crocuses, those precious ghost flowers which carry in their translucent cups all the fragrance of the springtime and the memories which lie between.

One of our happiest guests was a well-known

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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educator who loved the country with a sincere attachment. He appreciated the opportunity given to spend long hours over his literary labors, but still more he reveled in the peace and beauty of the place. We learned to know him well, so that in later years many of our talks began with "Do you remember?" Never was a man more devoted to an institution than he to his beloved university, and naturally he wished to bring there great men from all over the world. Once he even had the courage to go to Count Tolstoi, then over seventy, and beg him to come to America and lecture there.

The picture remains indelibly fixed on my memory: the unusual appearance of the small drawing-room in his Moscow house; the two sons, men of conventional outlook, and the little group of worshiping strangers all dominated by this blue-bloused figure with its noble head and piercing eyes. When the request was gently urged upon him, the bent shoulders stiffened, the rugged face of the aged enthusiast was a study for an instant; then he answered slowly: "It is

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## OUR GUEST BOOK

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impossible. There are three things which I abominate—talking with women, playing cards, and useless traveling.” Smiling grimly, he left the inference with us.

And that great Russian reformer who while in prison wrote the lectures which he had promised to deliver at a foreign university, how simple and friendly he was! How he fitted into our home life! So modest was he that only by close questioning could we get him to talk about his experiences. How he finally obtained permission to go over to England to perfect his speaking knowledge of that tongue, promising to return to prison on a certain date; how he did return on that date, and it happened to be Sunday, and they asked him what he wanted.

“Why I’ve come back to serve out my term,” he replied.

“But we’re full tonight. Go away, and come back tomorrow.”

“No,” was his answer, “I am going to stay here, you must find a place for me.”

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And stay he did. It seems an incredible state of affairs. Where could such conditions exist except in Russia, that land of strange contradictions and every possibility?

“For myself,” continued our interesting guest, “I do not care. One can die but once; and to do something for one’s country!” The glow of his eyes belied the restraint of his words. “But my sons, now fourteen and sixteen, I shudder for them. They are sure to get into trouble in the university, and will be marked for attention.”

“Why don’t you have them educated in some other country?” demanded the practical American. “Why do you deliberately run this risk?”

“They are Russians,” was the proud reply; “they must be educated in Russia, they must take their share in her trials and her development.”

A famous settlement-worker, perhaps I may say the most famous one in our own country at least, was persuaded to give us a few days for a real vacation. Her usual vacation was to travel some thousand miles,



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preparing her remarks *en route*, be the guest of honor at a luncheon or dinner or both, and lecture afternoon or evening! Here, where each guest is implored to be selfish and please herself only, she chose the chimney corner when the rest of us went off to the woods. It was in the cool days of October, and when we returned laden with woodland treasure, we found her in restful abandonment to the peace and quiet of the country.

"I feel," she cried, "like the old woman in Mother Goose who exclaimed, 'Can this be I?' To sit by the fire at ten in the morning reading the Atlantic Monthly! It seems incredible."

Since that day the dear lady has been forced to sit idle many mornings in order that she might ultimately accomplish her work in this world. Most of our American women live at high tension; they may vary their occupations, but they generally go from one to the other with a feeling of haste. The old rule of my swimming teacher impresses me as peculiarly applicable to our modern life. "Take a stroke and then rest." Isn't it full of true philosophy? "Take a

stroke and then rest; in the end you will go much farther and more comfortably than if you are making motions every moment." Such a little rests one, too. Five minutes of perfect relaxation banishing all thought, breathing deeply in pure air, and the whole system is renewed. To those who sleep out of doors it is suggested that they utilize their couches for these bi-daily—at least—refreshments.

An erratic but brilliant American artist, who spends most of his time in France, had just returned from the West. He was much impressed with the virility, the enthusiasm, the coöperative spirit, the sense of public obligation which the young Americans possessed in marked contrast to the selfish attitude of many modern Europeans to whom he was accustomed.

"If I were young," he exclaimed, "*there* is where I would make my home; there I would live, in those glorious expanses where nothing petty can exist."

One evening the conversation had drifted into a discussion of the merits of stained glass for house decoration.

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“No, I don’t care for stained glass,” he answered, “except in the dining-room. There it is suitable; for when a company of people are around a table, they should be shut in away from distractions; they should each be forced, if necessary, to contribute something to the zest of the conversation.”

We had been taught that the dining-room of a house should have the pleasantest outlook, as so much of the time must necessarily be spent there; but he had acquired the European idea of a repast as a social function, no matter how simple the food might be. Being himself a brilliant talker, one could understand his point of view. Evidently he believed that anyone could talk if he would, like the accomplished cartoonist who scorned the word genius and insisted, “It is just keeping at it; anyone can do it with practice.”

We were telling rare experiences around the fire of great logs a chilly afternoon in October, when a sunny American painter told us of an entertaining spectacle which he saw down in Virginia while shooting.

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“One evening (which is Southern for afternoon) the mud hens began to gather in the bay until they covered nearly an acre of water, swimming together as closely as possible. Overhead soared a bald eagle evidently hunting for his supper.

“‘Now watch,’ exclaimed my guide; ‘you’ll see some fun!’

“Deliberately selecting his prey, the eagle closed his wings to drop. Instantly and simultaneously every hen ducked her head and with her feet, splashed the water into the air. It was an acre of dancing drops, three feet high! The eagle could distinguish nothing in that foaming mass, and, as he dislikes to wet his feathers, he flew up again to wait a new opportunity. The instant the big bird rose, that instant those intelligent Blue Peters, as they are called in the South, *lifted up their heads* but they kept their close formation. Three times did the eagle attempt to get his supper from this flock, and three times were these tactics repeated. At last quite discouraged he flew away to less sophisticated quarters. At his disappearance, the mud hens dispersed

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into their usual small groups. Was n't it something wonderful?"

Wonderful indeed. How can scientists assert that birds and other animals are without practical reasoning faculties?

No one appreciates more keenly the lavishness with which Nature decks our Western woodlands than the mountain dweller of the East. A dear friend, who had spent years of persistent effort in acclimatizing the wild flowers of the world among her rocks, under her pine woods and beside her tumbling brook, came to see us in May, and we went out to walk in the forest. No leaves were on the trees, but the feeling of life was in the air, and the birds were already at work building their homes in absolute faith that food would be provided for them. The ground was literally covered with spring beauties, hepaticas in glorious clumps, starry bloodroot, and anemones, buttercups and violets, both yellow and blue.

"Oh! don't step on them," she cried, as we penetrated into the wooded depths and began to gather our nose-

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gay, "And oh! please don't pick them, they are so exquisite there where they grow."

"Yes, but there are quantities," we explained, "and it does not hurt to pick the flowers if we are careful not to disturb the roots."

"No, that's true; but think how many more you'd have if they were allowed to seed!"

Then with an admiring yet despairing glance at the gayly flowering acres, she admitted, "Well, I don't suppose that you really need any more."

I appreciated her feelings perfectly, for the wanton picking of wild flowers is so common and most aggravating. Tiny wads of withered blooms scattered along the path tell their own story of heedlessness and havoc. However, the spirit of enjoyment in the growing plant is becoming more general each year, as conservation in all its branches is being gradually learned.

With what abandon a child takes possession of a house! With what confiding grace he or she penetrates to its remotest recesses! What joy to discover the shelf where the cookies are kept, the corner where the pep-



"I AND JACK GOT UP REAL EARLY AND FISHED"



AN HOUR'S CATCH



"WE LIKE PEANUTS TOO"



BLISSFUL MOMENTS



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permits are hidden, the old Italian oil jar filled with peanuts for the squirrels! After chipmunks and squirrels have had their fill, sometimes a wistful voice observes: "We like peanuts, too." In the cool of the late afternoon when little feet have grown weary and little tongues grown still, sometimes there come blissful moments of drifting over deep waters where mermaids may be lingering and fairies cannot be so very far away.

How pleased and proud we are to seize occasionally one who is perhaps our greatest living American sculptor and carry him off to our lair in the country! Here he enjoys each leaf on each shrub just as we do, and enters into our bird life with sympathetic comprehension. At his own beautiful place in the Berkshires he boasted of a deer who now and then visited his corn field. The gardener naturally wished to shoot it.

"But," he protested, "I'd rather have that deer than fifty corn fields."

So modest is he that it is next to impossible to persuade him to talk about his work, and as unassuming as

only Genius may be. On being presented to a lady who was calling, she half tentatively asked, "Not the great—"

At his look of real distress, I broke in: "Yes, the great sculptor. But he is so modest that he blushes at the word."

"Well, I can't help it," he explained in some confusion, whether referring to his work or to his blushes was a question. All the evening he took refuge in telling experiences of a Mr. B—, a college chum and intimate friend who, he said, "having had sufficient means became an ornithologist, while I had to carve for a living." Fortunately for the world!

"Anyone that knows me long always has to hear about Mr. B—" he quizzically explained. "You know the flat round baskets that figs come in? Well, my friend Mr. B— saves them for the robins." I was so overcome by this thoughtful act that I forgot to ask if he tied the baskets securely in the bushes.

"Of course you have heard about Abbott Thayer's theory of protective coloring, have n't you? Only the

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combination of a painter and a naturalist could have produced it. Very ingenious it is and very interesting, but not everyone agrees with him. This does not please Mr. Thayer at all. 'Don't you think that any of this bird color was created simply for beauty?' asked my friend Mr. B—.

“‘I am surprised that a man of your intelligence should believe that there is such a thing as beauty,’ was the sharp retort.”

Then the Constant Improver and the Modest Genius began to exchange wondrous tales and the air was filled with laughter and much encouraging applause.

“‘You remember the story about the hippopotamus, don't you? No? Why, that's one of my stand-bys. A man began suit against his neighbor for calling him a hippopotamus; and when the case came up the judge said, 'But I find that it's nearly two years since he called you a hippopotamus.'”

“‘Yes,’ was the bitter response ‘but I never saw one until two weeks ago.’”

After listening one morning to an enthusiast upon the

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delights of out-of-door sleeping, our Modest Genius, who evidently felt strongly upon this subject, broke out with: "It's all bosh! It's against nature! If people are ill, of course they need all the oxygen they can get; but I confess I'm a cold creature. I hate draughts. I like to sleep in a nice, warm, unventilated room."

At the horrified expression which this word called forth upon our faces, the Iconoclast waxed warmer: "Look at the animals, how do they sleep? They *have* to sleep outdoors, poor things! but they seek the shelter of various holes and nests, and then stick their noses into their fur; even the birds tuck their heads under their wings. This idea of breathing fresh air at night, of inhaling oxygen when you're asleep is a mistaken one. At night we ought to rest, to hibernate as it were. The brain should n't be stimulated or excited. Say what you will, no one can sleep as soundly out of doors as in a tightly closed room."

At this the Fresh Air Fiend, being also hostess, pinched her lips tight shut, maintaining a heroic, and

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to her, painful silence; but the Constant Improver felt that he had won an ally.

What an ideal guest was that genial and learned Scotsman, divine and author, who had so rare a sympathy, so perfect a combination of childlike frankness tempered with manifold experience! How from his playful anecdotes we learned to know his children and his delightful home life! Pleased and proud indeed were we to hear that his wife wished him to buy for her, from our favorite shop in the city, various personal articles, including, if I remember rightly, a hat! It seemed to us a very daring commission.

A well-known geologist is occasionally inveigled into our neighborhood, when we always take advantage of his presence to explore the surrounding country, learning from him its origin and formation in language our own ignorant eyes could not read. He is an expert in botany too, and is tireless in seeking new wild flowers and sending us strange plants to naturalize in our woods.

His colleague knows naught of country life except

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on Oriental shores; there he really lives, and there his thoughts abide although his body may be with us here. We never tire hearing of his adventures in those far African lands, for they are told with the keen vigor of the enthusiast; and we enter into his own feelings when severe disappointment faces him or great discoveries are granted to him.

Another being, splendid, boyish, enthusiastic in another way, finds an eager welcome here. His phenomenally brilliant intellect, his gay and rapid speech, his sympathetic outlook on life makes him a general favorite. As toastmaster he is unexcelled, and his faculty of reeling off pat and diverting stories by the hour makes him a much sought-for guest in many a circle. But apart from these gifts he owns a serious side. A tremendous worker, executive and systematic, after much experience in large undertakings, he has now accepted the presidency of a Western university, where his talents will have full scope, and where he is sure to achieve lasting fame.

Perhaps two of the most democratic guests whom

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we have ever entertained were the representative of his great nation to our country, and his gifted helpmeet. What an interesting atmosphere they lived in! He seemed to possess accurate and detailed knowledge upon every topic up for discussion, from astronomy to forestry and from Adam to Dreyfus; withal a homey man, one who could never grow old, with a sympathetic heart and a twinkle in his eye. Rarely does one see such *camaraderie* as existed between this intellectual pair.

A talented novelist, whimsical and shy, yet when in the mood brilliant in conversation, is at times induced to spend a few days with us. "When no one else is there!" he stipulates; and we, highly flattered, although feeling rather selfish, accede to his condition.

Vividly alive to color and picturesqueness, his sympathies are rather with the Old World than with the New. "My ideal of life is to have no hampering luxuries," he confessed. "If I could limit my possessions to one umbrella then I should be perfectly content."

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Like most reserved persons, when he lets himself go, he is a delightful companion, gay, debonair, casting discretion to the winds. His comments on country life are unique: "What a noisy crew these country creatures are!" It happened to be August. "They actually kept me awake last night. I shall have to return to my quiet city home." And he awaited half seriously our protests.

"You should be here in June if you think this is noisy," we hasten to retort; "then the birds make the most frightful racket all day long."

"Indeed? Well, I've never believed in the so-called joys of a country life. Give me the peace of well-built blocks of houses—"

"With the music of the street car, and the elevated and the motors not too far away!"

"Why, that's not nearly so disturbing as this nocturnal uproar."

I must confess to feeling somewhat embarrassed one May during an especially active mating season when I was forced to ask my guests whether they would pre-



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fer the room where the mourning dove was nesting on the transom shelf, or the chamber over whose window the wren's box hung! I did not choose to have a mourning dove adopt a disused robin's nest for her own two white eggs. I am not very fond of mourning doves anyway on account of their melancholy call. But when one threw herself so completely on our mercy, what could we do but succor her? As to the wrens, noisy they are but so happy and gay that the nearer they come the better we like it. It is a case of love us, love our wrens!

When during the cool evenings of June and July we are driven to the dining-room or hall for our open fire as the living-room chimney has been preëmpted by the swifts, a wonder sometimes creeps into my mind if we are not being overindulgent toward our feathered friends. But their graceful flight in the stormiest days as well as their fondness for destructive insects prevents any measures being taken to discourage them.

A great musician, composer, and conductor honored our rooftree one spring before his own beloved moun-

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tain home was ready to receive him. A comfortable guest he proved to be, with pleasant memories of a varied life to unfold.

And that famous Dublin scholar whom we laughingly called "a professional visitor," whose convivial qualities were in demand from the court to the humblest cottage! With what dramatic skill he related his humorous *contretemps*, and how many there were! His knowledge of Greece and of human nature were equally profound.

A bright young ten-year-old in the privacy of his own journal thus recorded unaided the impressions of his brief visit:

Sept. 10. Bright and fair. I won't tell what I did all morning. Mama and Papa and Jack and I are going to Lake Geneva. We went down town and over to the North Western station. We are going to stay at Mr. Huchsen's house. He is going on the train with us. We road in a parlor car and almost all the way we were in back on the platform. You know how it is whising by farm houses and cattle and whising over little streams and going slow over big rivers. It seemed to take us an awfly long time to get there a carage was waighting for us. We got in and drove down the street a little ways. We stopped and got soda and then went on. It was a dandy drive. You could feel the breees from the lake. Jack and I went in swimming. After our swim we paddled around

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in the boat till supper. The next day we paddled around in the boat a little and went in twice. There are two little chipmunkys that live under the porch. They were wild once and now they are so tame that they will come and take peanuts from your pockets.

The next day I and Jack got up real early and fished. I caught four and Jack caught nowne. Jack had a steel pole and a real. I had a bamboo pole with a string tied on the end. We went home right after breakfast. We got in the carage and drove to the station.

It is a favorite custom of ours to take newly arrived guests out on the south terrace, where they get the first view of the shrubbery, the ancient willows, and the lake beyond. As one turns, the shell-pink geraniums greet the eye from the low window-boxes and we leisurely continue on to the dog-trot, and so enter the house. One active little fellow, on arriving, had broken away from his elders and had made the entire circuit of the house while his mother was still politely listening to her host's explanation of the place.

"It *is* beautiful. Is n't it, dearie?" she added to her small son, who raced up to her evidently overflowing with speech.

"Yes, mother," he gasped, "but you ought to see the *back-yard!*"

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He had a true urban idea of correctness, and his bent was so logical that it was difficult for his mother to impress upon him the fact that the other side of front was not necessarily back.

Very flattering to our self-esteem is the appeal of the inexperienced to our small degree of knowledge. When a man has just bought a country place or is thinking of taking up country life and comes to see what we have done, with what keen pleasure we inform him! We extend to him young or old, our hearty greeting and share with him to the minutest detail our lately acquired wisdom. We spread before him maps of the place at various stages, lists of formidable length, names of plants so scientific as to induce a feeling of helplessness in the novice; then when we have reduced him to this condition of utter bewilderment, we ask gently, "Is there anything else you would like to know?" If he is brave and persistent, he gathers himself together, looks up and says, "Yes, I want to ask questions; will you please answer them as plainly and as simply as you can?" This is a hopeful sign;

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the man is beginning to understand that he must learn little by little, that increasing his knowledge gradually day by day, he will in time be able to do his share toward enlightening the next newcomer into this blessed country life.

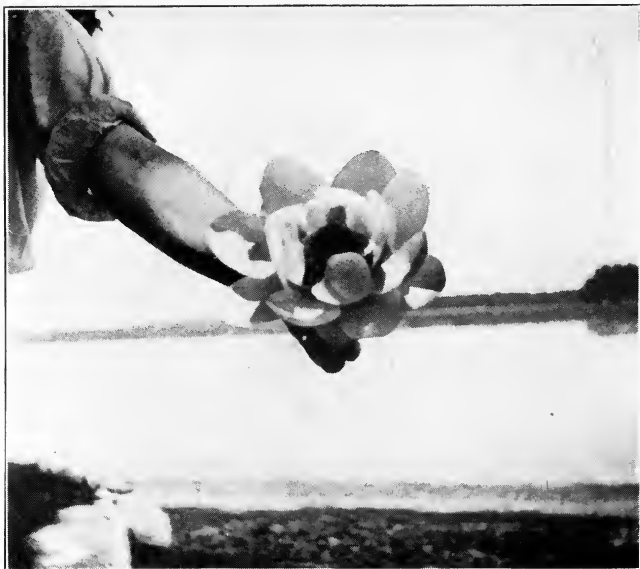
Of those dear ones who are the nearest to us; those who know each corner, each remote recess of our beloved wood, to whom this haven is a second home; of those who share in all our sorrows and double all our joys; of them this is not the place to speak. Within our hearts their names are graven far more deeply than in the book of guests.

## CHAPTER XI

### OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

**W**E live in a beautiful section of the country, in the midst of undulating hills around whose bases flow gentle rivulets forming pools and lakes of various shapes and sizes. The roads are fair whenever the rain keeps away, and many are the interesting excursions within a radius of sixty miles.

It is difficult to persuade the Constant Improver to leave his small estate for a mere ride, but if the object is a worthy one his enthusiasm rises. The latter part of July or the first of August, according to the season, we always look forward to a particular day, the Fête of the Lotus. In the motor it takes us a little over an hour through a charming landscape. Passing four or five hamlets, by comfortable, well-kept farmhouses with their fields of corn and alfalfa, crossing great swamps in flower where redwings and bobolinks gather, climbing through forests of hardwood with ravishing



THE LOTUS



KINGFISHERS' NESTS



GREEN HERONS THIRTEEN DAYS OLD



THE LITTLE GRAND-DAUGHTER



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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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views from the summits, at last we turn in at a gateway and behold at the foot of a steep hill sparkling water covered with acres of flowers.

In the foreground are water-lilies, their tinted pads moving with the ripples; beyond rise the blue stalks of the pickerel weed from among the lotus blossoms. And those blossoms,—creamy with a tinge of green on the outside of the petals,—each of them holds in its rich yellow stamens so powerful a perfume that the still air is heavy with its breath. The large round leaves with their exquisite coloring stand out more than a foot above the water, while the buds and blossoms just o’ertop them, making an extraordinary picture. In Japan this would be a place of yearly pilgrimage; in Europe one of the noted attractions; here it is beginning to be well known, and hundreds of visitors come in small boats and launches to exclaim over its beauty and, alas! to carry away as much of it as they can. This is a fruitless although tempting procedure, as the buds rarely open well; and if the expanded flower is picked it closes at once and does not revive.

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Where did this curious plant come from? They call it the Egyptian lotus, but in Egypt the lotus has practically disappeared. How did it come here? and why is it found only in this one grassy lake when in the surrounding country the conditions appear identical? To these questions there are various solutions, none of which are particularly satisfactory. Why not be content with this as a wonderful spectacle, a miracle of Nature, a joy to the senses? To be sure I have heard that near Detroit more acres of lotus have been found, and in the olden days the Calumet River boasted blossoms; but civilization has successfully destroyed the latter. Let us hope that this particular lotus bed at Grass Lake may be spared to afford joy to future generations.

One season we went to the lotus fields so late that many of the flowers had gone, but there was a new and remarkable effect as of acres of *blue* blossoms above the broad green leaves.

“What can it be?” I cried. “Do the flowers turn blue in fading?”

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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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"Come and see," said the smiling guardian, and pushing off in the tiny flat-bottomed boat we silently punted into the midst of the parting leaves.

"They are birds!" I exclaimed, for when we came too close the swallows sluggishly rose only to seek the nearest perch again. "Birds! There must be hundreds of them."

"Yes, they love to drink from the lotus pods," answered the guardian. "It must make them feel queer for a while, but it does n't hurt 'em any."

When the petals of the lotus drop away the cup-like seed-pod stands exposed, offering its contents to the blue-winged swallows who, sweeping in great circles over these Elysian fields, with reckless self-indulgence drink the sleep-producing liquid and on the upright perches rest, dreaming rapturously.

These wild water plants are difficult to cultivate; the guardian told us that for fifteen years he had experimented and had only just succeeded in making some of the lotus plants live in another section of the lake. What a beautiful addition they would be to any water

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garden, and how effective their splendid foliage on the edges of protected bays in the larger lakes!

Another of our favorite rides is to a neighboring college famous for its Indian mounds. Fifteen of these enrich its campus, some of which have been explored; but as investigations have now been forbidden, those yet unviolated must exercise a curious fascination upon the imaginative student. This was a part of the country well populated by the first Americans, and in the Museum here is many a trophy of their life and customs.

The distance, thirty-three miles over a good road, and the excellent inn for luncheon, make this an attractive excursion at almost any time of year; but in September, when the second growth of sweet clover perfumes the highway and an occasional sumach glows brilliant in the sunshine; when not only the late golden-rods are in bloom, but dainty asters, purple, lavender, and white, nod graciously from hill and hollow; when the hazel and dogwood are turning to crimson, and in the swamps the sneezeweed and coreopsis vie with each

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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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other in glory; when the Virginia creeper trails its scarlet banners over high fences and up lofty tree-trunks, and an infrequent maple branch flames in autumnal coloring—then indeed is the mere motion through this region a delight, and we need no other reward.

The cattle are grazing in friendly groups or gather under sheltering trees; huge golden stacks of straw are outlined against red barns; a child in gingham frock beside the well dances as she pumps; a white-washed schoolhouse at the crossroads turns out its tumultuous flock; an avenue of fine old maples, for which we must thank some early nature-lover, borders the road; a stately farmhouse built of matched cobblestones half hides within its grove of elms, its orchard and kitchen garden standing in proud prominence beside the highway. Small villages of neatly kept houses shaded by excellent trees follow each other every ten miles or so in this undulating country, while a dim, neglected cemetery beneath huge firs seems to indicate a particularly healthy community.

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We aim to have on our place all the wild flowers that will flourish there, especially those natural to this region; so when we heard that the beautiful large *anemone patens* could be had for the gathering, we made every inquiry possible about the location and started out full of hope one morning in May to discover its whereabouts. We were able to obtain only vague information.

“Yes, up near Whitewater, in those gravelly hills, there used to be lots of them. Of course, it’s years since we were there,” acknowledged our informant; and with this as our only clue we set forth. Now Whitewater was about twenty-four miles from us; so after an early luncheon, provided with trowel and newspapers, baskets and an old tarpaulin to protect the fragile flowers from the wind, we set out a party of three. It was arranged that each one must be on the lookout and the instant an anemone was sighted give a signal to stop. It was one of those heavenly days in early May when all nature seems happy in the coming of the springtime, when the air is full of promise, and

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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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wild flowers open to the sunshine from every field and pasture. Gayly chatting, we bowled along the familiar road to the Observatory and on to Delevan Lake, then to the town itself; and after that we began to study guideboards. Almost due north with right-angled jogs, over a creek and through marshes, catching a glimpse of a lake or two we began to climb, and before long were in the midst of the "gravelly hills" so well described by our informant.

"It does seem like hunting for a needle in a haystack," suggested the youngest member of the party, as mound after mound rose before us, beside us, and all around us.

"In that case we might as well begin here," I announced. So the car was stopped, and out we all jumped, including the chauffeur, who by this time was an experienced wild-flower hunter. In order to cover as much ground as possible we scattered in different directions and searched diligently.

"I have one," cried the youngest member of the party almost at once; "at least I've found something."

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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We rushed to her, standing on guard over her treasure. It seemed almost uncanny so soon to come across the much desired small flower in these acres of sparse underbrush, for it really was an *anemone patens*, and by going carefully over the neighboring ground we discovered a few more plants; but this did not satisfy us. By this time we had tasted blood, figuratively speaking, and the fury of the hunt was upon us. Old and young we scoured the hills, but possibly the plants were past blossoming, for we found no more. On our return homewards, when in a narrow lane, we met a farmer's cart driven by a woman with a baby in her arms; but what each one of us saw as we turned out to allow her to pass was a bunch of our longed-for anemones in one of her hands.

We looked at each other with but one thought. Then without a word I sprang out and ran after her.

"Oh! would you mind," I cried a bit breathlessly, "would you mind telling me where you found those flowers?"



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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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She looked at me in a dazed way and then deliberately pulled up her nag.

"Them?" she asked. "You can have 'em."

"No," I protested, "I want so much to get some of the plants for my garden. What do you call them? They are so lovely."

"Them 's wild crocus," she kindly explained. "Take 'em if you want 'em; they ain't no treat to me. There 's lots of 'em down yander in the medder."

"Oh! do tell me where," I begged, accepting her posies as she still held them out to me.

"Down there, 'bout half a mile you come to a school-house on the corner, and then there 's a cow pasture back of it; there 's where you 'll find 'em, lots of 'em. It 's pretty wet," she warned us in leaving.

Thanking her profusely, to her evident surprise, we followed her directions and found the precious plants as she had said in quantities. With glee we bundled a big basket of them into the waiting car, and before they could wither had safely transplanted them to a

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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propitiously gravelly spot in the wild garden. Here they greet us every springtime, a lovely mass of delicate bloom, and sometimes in September a flower or two opens to remind us of our May outing.

The uninitiated might imagine that hunting wild flowers from a motor car would be a useless expenditure of energy as far as the flowers are concerned, but we never go too fast to see the wayside blossoms nor ever hesitate to stop for anything whatever. If the road leads through a gravel pit whose steep sides are honeycombed with swallows' and kingfishers' nests, who could resist such an opportunity to get a glimpse of the little ones? It is so easy to pull up at a field of bloom and hunt for one's particular quarry there, often stumbling upon other treasures, none of which are disregarded.

The road maps sent out by the U. S. Geological Survey at ridiculously low prices are a great comfort to him who wishes to explore the country; by learning their conventional signs, one can see the whole region

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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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pictured as if on canvas. To be sure the condition of the road bed is carefully omitted, and it is necessary to judge for oneself at each corner which is the best route. For all highways we depend on the maps prepared for the touring car.

About twelve miles to the west of us are extensive marshes where the blackbirds build their nests, not only the red-winged but the brilliant yellow-headed blackbird. Here in June is a mine of satisfaction to the bird-lover. What do we care if the sun is hot. Did you see the false nest of the marsh wren on those tall reeds?

“But the mosquitoes—”

“Yes, they are in the marshes too. The larvæ are a favorite delicacy on the blackbird’s menu.”

“But they say the gnats there bite worse than the mosquitoes.”

“Yes, they’re pretty troublesome at times, but we protect ourselves the best we can with long gloves and a veil.”

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“But is n't it tiresome to poke about in a small boat all day?”

“Yes, indeed; it would be deadly if one's every sense were not on the alert to catch something of the mysterious life hidden within those moving grasses, beyond those boggy hillocks, beside that bank of willows. To sit motionless with poised glasses as the boat creeps silently through tiny channels, pushing aside the rank water weeds, seeking for who-knows-what rare secrets—could any adventure be more absorbing?”

Whatever you “go out for to see” is generally what you will *not* find; it is the unexpected which gives us the keenest gratification. The bobolinks are curtsying on the cat-tail's sheaths; their liquid song is gay as their bright coats. The marsh wrens trill and dive into the shade, where their round balls of nests hang tied so cleverly.

“Look!” my companion indicates with eager eyes rather than by speech.

And I look but see nothing new.

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"There! By the water, that brown thing, tall, like a stick," she barely breathes.

Yes, I see that, of course, another bit of the marsh vegetation. I wonder at her excitement and search again for the cause.

"It's a bittern!" she whispers.

"A bittern? Where?" Even then I fail to see until, still motionless, upright, with head thrown back, the posing bird permits us to approach within fifteen feet!

This ability to recognize the marvels of nature is almost like acquiring another sense, it so sharpens those with which we are endowed; and each new acquisition prepares us to see and hear more of that wonder world which surrounds us.

"I believe there's a heron's nest on that tree," exclaims my companion after some moments of study with the glass. "Can we get near it, do you think?"

"The little green heron?" I ask, as we glide slowly, by narrow windings, through the marshy grass.

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“Yes, and I ’ve wanted for such a long time to photograph some young herons.”

How we came close enough to watch the mother bird go to the nest and leave again, how we slid over slippery hummocks to reach the desired tree, how with infinite pains we took out those two herons, kodaked them, and replaced them in the dilapidated nest, how the mother watched us from a neighboring branch and comforted her recovered darlings with choice bits of fish—all this forms an experience long to be remembered. So whenever this enthusiastic nature-lover comes to us we always try to reserve one day for the marshes; and sometime we hope not only to see the bittern again in his haunts but also to hear his far-famed “love-song,” a curious sort of noise that gives him his name of “Thunder-pumper.”

Beside a clear bit of water about twenty-five miles away lives a colony of boys learning by self-government to be able men and honorable citizens. The drive over is through upland and meadow with enchanting pictures at each fresh turn; but the encouragement and in-

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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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spiration which accompany us on our homeward way is not due wholly to the landscape.

If we have a whole day at our disposal we are often tempted to go as far as W——, for there the far-famed Hull House has its Country Club given by one of its most ardent supporters in memory of her husband. Seventy-two acres of undulating woodland traversed by a deep, winding ravine nearly a mile in extent, with a spring and a swimming pool and a trickling brook;—what could mortal wish for more? Here tired mothers find refreshment and here the convalescent finds a cure. Here also the music school carries forward its wonderful work under strict surveillance of many feathered songsters.

In quite another direction lies a famous pottery whose owner makes visitors welcome. It is an unusual experience to see in all its details the making of one's favorite vase! Each member of the family takes a personal pleasure in this work; it is like the old Florentine ateliers, even a little granddaughter shyly entertains us with the assistance of a cherished cat.

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A region of utter wildness lies about seven miles to the south of us, a tract of land consisting of some two hundred acres on which the hand of civilization has never set its seal. Rich land it is and fertile beyond words, but no man has ventured yet to curb its native growths. To its borders extend fields of corn and grain; to its edges wander grazing cattle; but within its dark recesses no highway penetrates, no path is cut. For this is the tamarack swamp, and even in the driest season here stands water bathing the feet of the feathery larches. From the outside it is always alluring, this tamarack swamp. In the dull days of November its brown interlaced twigs are blurred and misty against the sky; when the snow comes, it is like a vast garden of Christmas trees; and in the early spring when the delicate needles first appear, a lovely evanescent green, it is indeed a fairy forest; in September, too, above radiant fields of wild coreopsis it is filled with a mysterious charm, and facing the glory of the setting sun its dark pointed tree-tops gain a new beauty.



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## OUR FAVORITE JAUNTS

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But within its silent aisles the stillness is oppressive; only the song sparrow refuses to be downcast or even frightened by the sinister hiss of the tiny snake; the frogs, too, form a cheery company, and the profusion of flowers surrounding the forest does its best to enliven the somberness. This tract of marsh land is a paradise to the courageous nature-lover: in its deep retreats, protected from wind and sun, the cinnamon fern, the royal fern, and the sensitive fern flourish with a prodigality and lavishness undreamed of by the outside world.

These, then, are the objects of our pilgrimage, here is our June rendezvous, but not by the motor car! Preferably on a dark, even a rainy, day—what difference does a little more water make?—with the flattest, broadest hayrack we can borrow, and two strong horses, we sally forth dressed as for wading; for wading it will be, either in treacherous mud or holes of water or grassy pools. This is no woman's undertaking, this is a man's job; but if she is willing to prepare herself properly she may be allowed to join the party, to share

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in its fascinating discoveries and to divide its curious experiences.

We make an early start and have ample time to appreciate the country sights *en route*, for caravanning is a leisurely sport, and this is doubtless as near caravanning as we shall ever get. Occasionally the driver speaks to his big nags and at times even flicks his whip, but both he and they know that it is a mere figure of speech. They jog along in their own free way, and in due time we arrive.

That is, we arrive at the place where the wagon must be left; whether a mile or half a mile from the grove depends upon the amount of water in the marsh. Rapidly the ground is reconnoitered. Among such a wealth of material decision is difficult. We find dense clumps of the sensitive fern with its rich, heavy leaves; then we are tempted by a strange intertwined combination of the royal fern's airy fronds with the brake-like fronds of the cinnamon fern. This certainly we cannot leave, although its size is enormous. Carefully the chosen plants are marked,—then with sharp spades

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the clumps are separated from the tangle of growth around them. The men work busily but cautiously, protecting the roots with balls of earth and carrying the clumps when excavated to the waiting wagon. There they are placed as close together as possible; and with the exception of a short intermission at noon-time this proceeding is repeated until dusk.

It is impossible for the woman in the party to sit idle in the midst of so much industry. She may assist in the selection of desirable booty, or pick armfuls of pitcher plants to carry away for home study, or she may wander cautiously among the closely growing larches, standing quiet for long intervals the better to observe the strange life of the morass; she may even venture into the more open spaces whose quaking bogs are half hidden under a wealth of heavenly bloom; for blue is the wild flag, and blue is the swamp lobelia, and blue is the blue-eyed grass in tones of magical beauty. Hundreds of shooting stars nod their heads gently, and the anemone-like flowers of the swamp galium unfold from their stalks of clasping leaves.

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The bewitching blossoms of the cotton grass sway in fleecy waves above the showy lady's slippers; stooping to gather these, the greenish white flowers of the poison ivy warn one to beware, danger is near. Protected by tall rushes, the winged moccasin flower thrives and the yellow lady's-slipper and that spike of fragrant creamy petals known as the grass orchid in common parlance, but to the scientific mind as *Spiranthes Romanzoffiana*! Sometimes I wonder if scientists who label have any sense of humor. By this time my enthusiasm for gathering is abating and my arms are growing weary with the burden, yet the fields of bloom show no decrease. Many flowers of the marsh droop and wither when brought into a house; but these orchids if provided with fresh water and fresh air will keep their beauty for nearly two weeks.

It is a long day and a hard one, this day at the tamarack swamp, for seven miles in a hayrack is a very lengthy proceeding, particularly when returning at night. But think of the reward! We are so constituted as to prize most what we work the hardest to

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get, and our ferns and orchids thus become very precious in our eyes.

As soon as we reach home our "treasure trove" is planted in the holes already prepared for it and given plenty of water, so that none of the plants have time to wither. To bring these denizens of the forest to our own woodland, to be able to watch over and care for them, to foster their growth and increase their production, what an unmitigated joy!

O dweller in the haunts of man, have you ever tried to turn back the wheel of time and to become a child again thrilled with anticipation of the County Fair? Not the modern Exposition, but the real old-fashioned genuine article with horse races, big pumpkins and beets, prize cattle and prize chickens, prize patchwork and prize cakes; with candy booths and lemonade and lunches served by ladies of the church, with merry-go-rounds of course, and side shows each more wonderful than the other,—the Flying Lady, the High Diver, the Sphinx! It is an astonishing spectacle and attracts the

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whole countryside. Would anything induce us to miss this annual diversion, the half concealed pride of our farmer neighbors, the sauntering, bantering crowd, the ancient jokes of the "barkers," and then—the delicious ride home in the September twilight?

## CHAPTER XII

### THE COUNTRY IN WINTER

**T**O most of us swept along in the mad rush of city life the idea of the country in winter comes as an impossibility, unless presented under the guise of a large house party up for a week of sport. It seems to indicate a certain queerness, this desire to go up to a forlorn house in January, sometimes *alone*.

“What in the world do you do with yourself?” ask my inquisitive friends. “You certainly can’t work in the garden at this time of the year. Aren’t the days awfully long? Confess, don’t you get lonesome?” Some of them even add, “Aren’t you afraid?”

I wonder if it is the contrariness of human nature that makes another’s lot in life look so much more attractive than one’s own. Or is it the mere fact that one *can* have all the diversions incidental to a gay social life that makes the peace of the country so desirable. I cannot tell, I have given up guessing, I merely

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state facts. I know that the thought of that silent house hidden away in the heart of the woods gives me longings unspeakable; that my spirit fairly sings within me through all the discomforts of the dirty station and the ill-smelling, overheated trains; that the ride in the darkness on wheels or runners is filled with happy anticipations, and that once in the beloved home, all and more than my imagination could compass of peace and felicity has come to me.

The days, instead of being long, pass like a flying shuttle, and the early evening gives one more appreciation of the flames upon the hearthstone, the glowing light behind one, the cushioned *chaise-longue*, and an interesting tale. For in order fully to enjoy all one's pleasures one must not be prodigal, so I save my novels for the evening.

The simple fact of awakening in the morning at no especial time, with no appointments, is in itself so pleasing a feature of country life that I should think it would commend itself to all city folk. The utter ignoring of time, the scorn of man's invention, the



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obliteration of the passing moment, does it not bring us to a keener realization of the eternal? For it gives one an indescribable sense of restfulness with which to begin the day's doings.

“But in the middle of winter when the ground is covered with snow, surely you can't find anything to do in the country then?” I look pityingly at my triumphant inquisitor. Shall I try to explain the daily changing beauty of the winter landscape, from the hoar frost which transforms my world into fairy-land, through brilliant sunrises and more gorgeous sunsets, through cloud effects of startling grandeur to that first wet snow which, clinging to every crevice, gives a new contour to my familiar scenes?—when, after melting days of a singular softness, follow fierce gales and silent nights of severe cold, until one day the heavens open and let down myriads of starry crystals to cover the earth as with a garment. The long struggle of the lake against the ice king is over, with the thermometer at ten below zero for three nights; the ice is thick enough for sleighs and boats.

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Now, indeed, is the country divine! In a cloudless sky without a breath of wind the sun rises, a globe of fire. Is this our sober, tangible, prosaic earth, this rich tangle of white-draped branches, this iridescent expanse of unsullied purity? Not a brown leaf stirs, not a sign of life anywhere. But wait! Is it a flutter of wings under that bush by the terrace? Is it "dee, dee" I hear close to my window?

I must hasten to spread my table, for I have left the withered geraniums in my window box to serve as a natural shelter against the rain or snow, and on the earth beneath I sprinkle the food for the birds—cracked corn and oats, crumbs and suet, birdseed and chopped nuts, to please all tastes. Nor do they need a second invitation. The chickadees look at me steadily and help themselves with dainty gusto, the nuthatches are a bit more selfish, perhaps, but not terrifying to the juncos, who calmly stand their ground. When the nuthatch is storing his bit in the tree trunk, back comes Mr. Chickadee with his bewitching little

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song and eats his fill. As I sit at my desk, ostensibly writing, my eyes are within a foot of these exquisite creatures; and I may as well acknowledge here that their interesting actions do form a large part of my daily diversion. When the thermometer gets to zero and below, the nuthatch squats down, so that his feathers protect his feet; but the chickadee pecks away unconcernedly at the food held in his claw, no matter if the gale does blow his tiny feathers all awry.

A gorgeous blue jay at times appears on my south maple. He has doubtless noticed birds coming and going from my window: is n't there something for him too? I have carefully refrained from putting whole nuts on this table, so as not to invite his lordly presence, but on the floor of the upstairs porch he spies his favorite food and darts to the jar, then to the railing with a peanut in his beak. Tucking it into a corner of the vine he is back for more; presently his mate follows him, and they take turns at their breakfast until the supply is exhausted. His blue coat with square in-

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sertions of white is dazzlingly bright against the snow; with his bayadere-striped tail, his black collar, and his haughty crest, he certainly cuts a dashing figure.

As the sun climbs higher the blueness of the snow remains in the long shadows, but the rest of the world has turned to rose. Each moment brings a different gradation of color. One cannot say more lovely, when all is so enchanting. Now the whole earth is sparkling with diamond dust. Of what use are words?

The temptation to gather a few of these snow effects is irresistible, and I sally forth with my kodak. In order to enjoy walking in the snow or rain a woman must have a special costume, so I have evolved one consisting of a *very* short skirt, high leggings, and old-fashioned "Arctic" overshoes; adding a long fur coat, a woolen hood, and gloves, I am absolutely protected and comfortable even with the thermometer below zero. Now I am free to tramp in the deepest drifts. How delicious this freedom, no one but an emancipated victim of fashion's whims can appreciate!

Not all the pleasure of kodaking consists in snap-

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ping the pictures; there is also that breathless moment when you unroll the film from the hidden tank and gaze anxiously at the results. Have you succeeded in getting what you wished? Has the whimsical lens preserved the charm of the picture which so fascinated you? This is generally a matter of degree and often gives you an opportunity to try again. The printing of these same square scenes furnishes employment for many an afternoon; and the cutting, pasting into albums, and dating keep one busy during many an evening. Then, in this systematic household the films are also carefully indexed and put away in books especially prepared for them, so that at any time one can find a desired negative from the four or five thousand already taken by the "kodak fiend."

Not having yet attained to the level of that sublimated being, "Elizabeth," content with an apple and a few nuts, my contempt for time does *not* include the obliteration of the luncheon hour or, as we country people call it, the dinner hour. To this function one comes indeed with a glad heart, for by this time the

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morning paper from the near-by city and the mail have arrived. Before the open fire, a tiny table is spread, and one feeds the body and the mind at the same time. Just outside the window the hairy and the downy woodpeckers come to feast on the suet tied to the nearest tree, and the little brown creeper keeps up his interminable perambulations. Luncheon over, I sit down at my desk to write, for never is one so inclined to answer a letter as when it is first received. After business notes have been attended to, checks sent, invitations acknowledged, then the mind is free, and we turn to the absent friend. That record of experiences and interchange of thoughts between congenial minds which our modern methods of life tend to discourage—what a comfort to find leisure for their indulgence!

I have drawn my desk close to the window and am on guard over the birds' table; for those fat rascals, the squirrels, have discovered its attractions, and the moment I leave, one of them takes possession, sitting contentedly munching the cracked corn while his companions await their turn with more or less patience.

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How like children they act, peering from their coign of vantage on the gable, ignoring my menacing gestures! Leave the window box? Yes, if I insist; but the roof and the trees are theirs; and they leap from swaying branch to slippery shingles in conscious superiority. Why can they not be contented with the peanuts on their own table on the other side of the house? I shake my pen warningly at the gray scout on the maple tree winking his bead-like eyes, but the chickadees on the sill within two feet of that weapon go on placidly snatching their bit of nut one after another; even the nuthatch seems to understand that this violent language is not for him and whirs away only after securing the biggest piece on the table.

Of course, all days are not bright. Infinite variety is one of the charms of the country. In the city the weather is of small importance and scarcely influences our daily life, but in the country it decides it. Another phase of the world appears when the sky is gray after a warm night and much of the snow has vanished, when after an hour or two of fine rain the air grows

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cold and frosty so that each trunk and twig and withered leaf is wrapped in a shining coat of ice. A soft haze blurs the opposite shore, and in this strange atmosphere distant objects acquire a curiously exaggerated aspect: two crows drinking at a spring near the island loom large as eagles, and the children's pony drawing their small cart schoolwards resembles a Normandy draft horse. The red Siberian dogwoods gleam like rubies, the orange-tinted willow becomes a topaz rare, and the drooping Forsythias are strung with diamond drops. And now the wind is rising to a gale. The thermometer drops to zero, the open water becomes ice, and the birds hide themselves in sheltered corners. The thrifty housewife devotes her fuel to keeping a few rooms comfortable, and even calks those blessed casements with cotton batting!

"Magnificent weather for ice-boating!" suggests the optimistic gardener. But I am content with less exciting pastimes. I feed the shivering birds, I feed the saucy squirrels, I feed the open fires, and between blasts I reflect on the beneficent qualities of this same Master



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Wind. From the ice-bound water come curious unearthly sounds, weird moanings, deep sighs, faint far-off groans and heavy boomings. Suddenly a distant sharp report comes nearer and nearer until with a roar the fissure splits almost at our feet and the ice edges turn up in a double ridge. - This ice is fully seven inches thick. What tremendous power thus disturbs it?

On such days I usually draw up a big chair in front of the fire and knit. Knitting seems to be such an appropriate work for the country—so old-fashioned and domestic, don't you know? One simply cannot imagine a modern club woman with a knitting bag on her arm! But in the country there is always a demand for mufflers, hoods, and little shawls for the use of guests—as occasionally friends do break away to spend a week-end with us, and my knitting bag is a resource when other pursuits might seem impolite. These little interruptions made by visitors are always welcome and are quite possibly the reason why I am so contented and do not have a chance to get lonely. At intervals, when absolute necessity arises, I do go to town.

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Now the chief pleasure in going to town is the very early start one must make to catch the train. Those early rides across the ice by the light of the rising sun, the clean, crisp air in our faces, the musical bells a-tinkle, the swift, smooth motion over the level track—almost I am reconciled to the city journey. Even from the cars one may lose oneself in delighted contemplation of the landscape; for through the pale light of a fierce snowstorm, the undulating fields of stubble, the misty marsh grasses with here and there a muskrat's hummock, the clustered haystacks beside the silo towers, the tiny villages and country roads, the long reaches of prairie are all transfigured.

Everywhere the trees show their real form; the fine curving young willows, the knotted and twisted oaks, the splendid sweep of the great elms, and the trim young fruit trees in even rows sharply contrasting with their older sisters farther on, who have developed each one according to her own individual and picturesque fashion. The slim Lombardy poplar looks like a visitor among the lindens and the maples. Here and there a



NOW INDEED IS THE COUNTRY DIVINE



THE BRIDGE TO THE ISLAND



CISCOVILLE



THE WAITING ICE-BOAT

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few evergreens, pine and spruce, stand guard over a cozy farmhouse where an ancient apple tree still bears the rope swing of summer. The small water ways are frozen over, and the only signs of life are in the companies of sociable crows spreading their wide wings and cawing cheerfully.

And then the return at night! How wonderful the ride through the blackness of unlighted country highways, the horses trotting briskly until we turn into our own almost unbroken road. Here they feel their way through the deep snow more slowly, for the windings are only outlined here and there by heaps of half-sawn timber and bundles of fagots ready for the carrier's cart. How long it seems before the lights of the big house shine forth a cheery welcome and we are home again!

Next morning the delicate tracery of the forest is blurred by the finest of gently falling snows, the wind is still sleeping and we are enclosed in a white, soft world. This is the snow which our grandfathers loved, the sticky, persistent snow; the good old-fashioned snow

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which covers the earth with a blanket, protecting precious wild growths and filtering through the ground, replenishes hidden springs, thus ensuring us a prosperous summer. Does one ever outgrow the fun of being out in a snowstorm? Not I!

Who loveth the snow  
The jolly old heart of winter shall know.  
Who braveth the wind  
A savor of life in its breath shall find.  
Who cherisheth neither fear nor grudge  
Right merrily on his way shall trudge.

Bundled up in our comfortable old "togs" we set out to visit "Ciscoville." This is the collection of huts on the ice where each ardent fisherman sits in solitary state beside his tiny stove and watches two lines in a watery trench cut in the floor of his abode. Perch also may be caught here during the winter and even now and then a pickerel; but the main industry is securing that formerly rare and dainty morsel, the cisco. Deep down in the very depths of the lake lingers this species of herring, and to lure him to the surface a pail of minnows is thrown into the water; attracted by their gleaming

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bodies the cisco rises lazily, but instead of pursuing the minnow, stupidly seizes the bright bead on the end of a line and eagerly swallows it. The lines vary in length from ten to forty feet, and by law only two are allowed in each house. Besides a door these tar-paper dwellings have two windows, also prescribed by law, in order that the inspector may be able to investigate at his pleasure. Some days the catch will amount to three hundred fish, at others only a dozen or so. Formerly the cisco could be caught only in June, when the gnat known as the "cisco fly" abounded; the fish coming to the surface to indulge in this luxury were caught in quantities, but now owing to the winter sport the supply in June is limited.

Sometimes this little village of "Ciscoville" consists of forty houses huddled at picturesque angles about the desirable localities with a stray sentry or two some distance away. I rubbed my eyes one morning as I looked out on the lake. Where was my fishing village? Had the ice opened in the night and swallowed it? Or was the mischievous snow-squall hiding it? Or had I only

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dreamed that a curious industry once flourished there? None of these things. The school of fish had departed, and the whole village after it. By man power and by horse power the small houses had been pulled along on their wooden runners to a more auspicious camp behind a projecting point. A forest of upstanding stakes marked the deserted openings already coating over with thin ice, and the noise of sawing was heard in the distance where the blocks of ice were being turned over, thereby opening a way for the fisherman's lines in the floor of his hut.

Even in winter many and various are the pictures framed in the upright panels of my windows. To be sure the *mise en scène* remains the same, but the effects are always altering. Besides the changing lights there is usually enough of life to bring a sensation of pleasure. It is the small things, after all, which stand ever ready to interest us if we only can perceive them.

That muscular figure skating in long easy strides across the bay, pushing before him a sled heaped with bulging bags, little recks he of my appreciation. He is



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carrying provisions to the fisherman's hut just off the shore. But the result reminds one of an old Dutch painting in cool grays. What is that curious mode of locomotion just appearing out of the haze from the opposite shore? A man is standing on a low sled and pushing himself along by means of a stake furnished with a spike in the end. It would seem like slow work, but he gets over the ice at quite a good pace, and I suppose it must be easier than walking on that slippery surface. Another inventive genius sits upon his sled and propels it with *two* spiked broomsticks.

Flashing across the landscape with dazzling sail and shining spars, glides a small ice boat with its merry crew of two. Back and forth it tacks and turns, keeping a keen outlook for the water holes. From my cozy corner I contemplate it with delight, and am grateful to the unconscious merrymakers for giving me so agreeable a prospect.

Who without experience could believe that the small wooden triangle with its steel runners and its two sails, could hold within its narrow quarters such possibilities

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of pleasure, such keen delight, such excitement, and such danger? The first day that we had our new ice boat, the air came in mild, irregular puffs, which made it doubtful whether we could go out at all; and when we did venture in sheer inability to wait longer, a large part of the going was furnished by the long legs of our skipper!

“Perhaps tomorrow,” he encouraged us. And when the wild geese passed in the early twilight, chattering with the same effect as an afternoon tea, our one thought was the country saying, “That means a storm.”

Sure enough, before the dawn came, not a rain storm, nor a snowstorm, but a windstorm of terrific violence. The wind was not cold, as it came from the south; the trees oozed moisture, the eaves dripped, and the surface of the lake shone as if with water. The skaters rejoiced in this change, for it meant a smooth glare when the frost came; and the hockey-players shook their sticks gleefully, and the ice-boat enthusiast felt herself aquiver with the coming sport.

Clothing for ice-boating resembles an aeroplane cos-

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tume, for every garment must be warm and close, with no loose ends for the wind to seize. Gingerly we step on the "deck" of the shivering craft, quickly we lie at full length, the fur robes tucked snugly about us; with cushions under elbows and with heads lightly raised we must bear likeness to turtles. "Ready?" sings out the captain, and "Ready," comes our muffled response. Then a moment of suspense as the sail swings into the breeze; we are off, whizzing away to the end of the lake. I confess I ducked and shut my eyes tight in that first breathless moment, the rushing ice is close to one's clasping fingers, the fierce gale is humming in one's ears, the taut sail is snapping; but when at last I dare to look, the speed seems less terrifying, and I begin to enjoy the thrill of rapid motion. "What are we going to do now?" I gasp as the shore looms threateningly before us. Nearer and nearer comes that sandy bluff, larger and larger grow those forest trees, and still our speed continues. "Shall we crash headlong into it?" Even beneath my close-fitting aviator's cap my hair begins to stand on end. "Is there anybody at the helm?"

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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Where is the captain? Why does n't he turn around?" I hold my breath for the crash which seems unescapable, when—lightly as a bird the boat swings around on the homeward tack for further races with the startled crows.

Now comes the January thaw, that singular interval of warmth when the air is hushed and the sky is gray, and when the whole feeling of the atmosphere is one of expectancy. Will it snow? Will it rain? Will the sun shine? Will the north wind blow? But for days the aspect does not vary, the thermometer lingering between 25 and 35. At night the trees are black against the remnants of melting snow and the grass is positively green in spots where it peeps through. But in the morning another world appears. That dew of winter, the hoar frost, has not only outlined every living thing with its white fingers, but changed the most sordid and ugly objects into things of beauty. The brown burlap over the terrace wall is transformed into cloth of silver; and even the straw of the fertilizer has become a fine metallic network.

An enchanted forest! Under a gray sky in absolute

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## THE COUNTRY IN WINTER

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stillness the rain of the night has frozen in drops on each horizontal spray. One fears to move lest the illusion vanish. The ground undulates beneath the mystic trees, seeming to rise imperceptibly almost as the forest deepens. Faint purples and brownish pinks are in the depths all lightly touched with silver. Here is another unexpected picture. Did someone say that the winter landscape was monotonous? Did I hear that the winter sights were always about the same? So I supposed in my ignorance, and this joy of discovery fills me with new appreciation. I must get nearer, I must go out into that mysterious woodland and look up through those shining branches and feel the crusted tree trunks and hear the birds a-calling.

In every country house there should be at least one bedroom with a fireplace; if a big one, so much the better. There is so much companionship, so much room for the imagination, so much soothing diversion in watching a wood fire. Each log has its individuality, its responsibility, each one can so plainly help or hinder the good work. We have even evolved a new way to

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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build our open fires. The back log must of course be in its proper position close against the bricks with the ashes piled up underneath it making a bed only an inch or two below the andirons. This ash bed is an important point and often difficult to carry out on account of the slowness with which the ashes accumulate and their desirability for the garden. After the back log and the front log have been separated some three inches and a newspaper crushed into the space, a block house of twelve-inch sticks is laid upon the paper, topped by a story of kindling. Instead of the kindling a huge bundle of fagots may be used greatly to the onlooker's delight. Now we are ready for the match. A line of smoke curls upward at either end and almost instantaneously bursts into flame, which, rising, catches the upper kindling, and the whole construction is alight. As the small sticks are consumed, their hot ashes fall upon the bigger sticks, which in their turn heat and light the logs, so that there is always a red bed of coals, and consequently no smoking or lack of flame.

How pleasing to the eye as well as to our other senses

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## THE COUNTRY IN WINTER

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is this glowing picture! Here is the beauty of unceasing transmutation. What is this flame that dazzles us with its nameless colors, its fantastic forms, its quivering variations? We watch it hovering above the wood and lo! it is not. Where has it gone, this gaseous bit of vapor, this part of the sun which cheers us when that mighty orb is hidden? Have you not noticed how feebly a fire burns if the sun's rays strike the flame?

Now the backlog has assumed a mottled, soft gray surface edged with a darker hue, against which lean crackling, red-streaked fragments. The fore log is a jagged bar of black against the bed of coals; and growing thinner as the fire progresses, at last it splits and falls apart. Leaping across the breach thus made, the playful flames rise in a burst of joy as if released from long imprisonment. But the minutes pass, and the back log begins to glow in shimmering waves of light, tipped by ghostly violet fingers. Now the helpful friend who has been shelling nuts for the chickadees rises and shakes her apron into the warm gray mass. Instantly a merry flame lights up the farthest corner of the room, and

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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within its warm embrace a log is placed. Tiny fiery sprites run up and down the smooth birch-bark emitting little cries of glee, showers of sparks fly up the chimney breast, and all the soft gray coals are once more molten gold.

As the day draws to its close and the shadows of twilight deepen, the glow of light upon the hearth becomes more precious. Now is the time for a back log fresh from the forest with all its sap intact. No dashing display here, but a steady attention to the important task of keeping those smoldering ashes alive and sending out friendly heat. For hours it will last, gently simmering and sizzling with a low, contented murmur which leads one from tranquillity to sleep.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SOMETIME

**I**T is always gratifying to contemplate what good we have done and what benefits we have received in the past; it is a joy to experience each day our quota of pleasures; but the future—what roseate hues surround it, what nameless joys attend it, what glorious schemes are conjured by that magical word “sometime”!

Sometime we are going to have a series of small gardens, a succession of shut-in spaces with their sense of intimacy and seclusion, providing a wealth of flowers for each month in the year; lovely nooks enclosed by high walls, with a barred wooden gate at the entrance and steps leading down, so that one can get the full effect of the spreading bloom as one enters.

Seven of these gardens are partly planned, their location almost decided on, in a hollow where few trees will have to be sacrificed. I can see in my mind's eye the

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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winding path stopping abruptly at the closed door, over which some vine must fall, and the look of expectancy in the eyes of my companion as we pause before it. I must try to remember always to pause before it, that is such a spur to the imagination. And then, the door must push open slowly. This will be the wall and water garden hidden away in the shade of deep woods. A narrow pool half covered with cress, Quaker ladies and forget-me-nots will extend its entire length irregularly outlined with sunken boulders and heaped-up rocks. Long fronds of cool, green ferns will shelter the Alpine plants nestling in the crevices especially prepared for them with fibrous, moisture-holding earth. Tiny paths will meander over and through the miniature defiles, and from the walls green vines will fall in picturesque confusion. Pampas with eulalia grass and arundos will wave their feathery plumes, and emerald mosses will cover damp corners in this delectable retreat.

Of course, one of these gardens must be devoted to roses; we can never have too many of them, and in this

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## SOMETIME

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sheltered yet open space they should flourish exceedingly. Roses more than any other flowers should have a corner to themselves. When in bloom they are an exquisite sight, but after June in order to get the best results they should have plenty of air, food, and water—especially food. The ground beneath them must be kept free for cultivation and each plant must be easily accessible for inspection. No flower repays one better for loving care, but this care must be constant. The least relaxed vigilance will probably bring disastrous results. In this garden the Dorothy Perkins shall cover one wall, and the crimson rambler another, with the gardenia and the memorial roses at one end; the other end shall be left bare as a background for so much color. Bon Silenes and Killarneys, Frau Karl Druschki and the Blanc Double de Coubert, the Arnold and the Al-taica, the Jaqueminot and the La France, the Hermosa and Cecil Brunner, the Prince Camille de Rohan, the John Hopper, and the Grus an Teplitz in quantities shall here gladden the eyes. Generally the idea of a rose garden seems to be to see how many varieties you

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can grow; I must have at least ten plants of each kind, and of course I expect each one to be healthy and to bear profusely! At the end where the wall is bare, must be the fountain with water flowing into two semi-circular basins, the smaller one about three feet above the other and made shallow by rocks so that the birds may frequent it. This will be a useful as well as beautiful feature, for close by will be a bench whose cover will lift, disclosing watering cans and sprayers, shears and various tools, even a basket or two in case of need.

In the winter garden would be dwarf evergreens, hemlocks and cedars and spruces, with the ground juniper where the lingering robin may find a refuge. At intervals must rise a Japanese yew, straight and tall like an exclamation point. Bushes with berries must line the paths of this enclosure—buckthorn and bayberry, high-bush cranberry and the Christmas berry with barberries both native and Japanese. Here also those flowers whose seeds persist during the winter must find a lodgment, for this garden is to be especially fitted up for the birds. Food bells and bird boxes, pieces of

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## SOMETIME

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suet and protected shelters of all kinds can be arranged so that in severe weather our feathered friends may know that we are mindful of their interests. In my dream above the snowy landscape I see the chickadees and juncos, even the downy woodpecker and the nut-hatch with an occasional visitor of another species, enlivening this winter garden with their merry calls.

And I am quite determined to have a yellow garden. We are always saying, I wish we had more of this or that particularly welcome flower. Now, here I shall have big masses of each plant, and yet all must be yellow, so that in the dull days, even the misty ones, on entering this enclosure a burst of sunshine will greet us. In April hundreds of daffodils will invite us to this sweet spot, nodding to their reflections in the still water of the pool. Later the tulips will make a gay parterre, then come the golden alyssum, two species of corydalis so freely flowering, with that gracious beauty the golden-spurred columbine, and the Iceland poppy—all many shades of the same glorious hue. With the doronicums and coreopsis, the helinium, helianthus, and

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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heliopsis, with the calliopsis and marigolds—both African and French—and sanvitalia for borders, with calendula and California poppies, with the œnothera from Missouri, and nasturtiums to fill in each empty corner, this open, sunny, happy garden must be a favorite refuge until frost.

Imagine an oblong space entirely surrounded with bridal wreath, our May garden, and clumps of gay peonies in every hue in front of them; what a fragrant, exquisite hiding place it would be! This could also be a September garden with Japanese clematis trained on the walls and allowed to run riot over the spirea bushes; and lilies, the Japanese, the pink speciosum, and the white rising above the peony leaves. Again a bower of beauty, yet nothing could be more different.

Think of a garden all blue and white flowers! A tangle of Japanese morning-glory and Jackmani clematis over the walls, white hollyhocks behind the varied blues of larkspur, bachelor's buttons with white double balsams, and giant hyacinths in the corners; blue flag about the pool, and later candytuft, lobelia and sweet alyssum

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## SOMETIME

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for the borders, white poppies near Carpathian harebells, the delicate beauty of love-in-a-mist beneath fragrant sprays of *salvia farinacea* and the ever blooming violas for a ground covering. White dahlias, asters, and stock could be placed where needed, and spikes of the deep blue larkspur (*formosum*) would appear more brilliant against white phlox; while in every possible spot we would put the meadow sage (*salvia pratensis*) the richest, purest blue flower that we know. This may sound monotonous in the telling, but by keeping carefully to the true blues I am sure that a wonderful effect could be produced. Would it present a cold appearance? As this would be an August garden what could be more desirable?

Of course there must be a bench in each garden and a fountain, if only a single jet of water, which falling will break into drops and splash gently on the pool below. I sometimes question which is the greater pleasure, this planning for the garden by the fire in winter with the north wind roaring and the snow covering the ground, with the scent of narcissus and hyacinth about us and

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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the call of the chickadee on the sill—or the actual planting and seeing that long thought-of experiment materialize!

And then I want an evening garden—not a shut-in space with walls, but a bit of the side hill facing south, a wide path in an open glade which the moon would flood and the stars explore. Over the entrance a trellis covered with the moon flower from Japan; within heliotrope and lovely Lady Nicotine should fill the air with fragrance; and at the edge of the woods a rustic seat overhung with masses of snowy jessamine should tempt the guest to linger. Here would be a favorite spot on summer evenings, and here once a year we'd hold the festival of the night-blooming cereus!

“In your care of the garden don't forget to enjoy it, will you?” quizzically insisted a valued friend one day; and there was so much truth in the warning that it should be passed on to other caretakers. I found that I was searching for the faults of my garden rather than for its beauties, and seeing only its imperfections instead of pausing at times to let its exquisite fairness sink into



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## SOMETIME

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my soul. And yet constant vigilance is the price of a garden, and procrastination may steal one's choicest effects.

As for instance; one warm morning in middle August, glancing at the green lawn on my way down to breakfast, I detected a strange drapery of tossing white plumes above a lilac bush some ten feet high. The wild clematis (Virginiana) was now flinging its fleecy mantle in graceful folds over the Indian currants and rose bushes, the aromatic sumac and bayberries, the dogwoods and milkweed stalks, until the whole shrubbery was again in flower; but this spiky efflorescence bore no resemblance to the stars of our Virgin's bower. With a mental memorandum to look into the matter at once I went down to my guests, and it was not until late afternoon that I found a moment to take my bag of implements and don my sun hat and sally forth on a tour of investigation, to the small grove known as the lilac bed.

Yes, high above my head, completely enveloping a mammoth shrub, flaunted that particular dislike of mine, the wild cucumber. This disagreeable weed may have

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its uses, but not here! I stop to consider how to enter this green tangle without disturbing a leaf or leaving any trace—not an easy task; but with manly strides I am finally beneath the lilac and searching for the small twining stem and its rootlet before tearing away the snowy spikes. On two separate sides the vines have taken root joining their forces in beautiful harmony upon the seed pods of the lilac; if left to themselves, the effect would be quite charming for a week or two, but later a blackened mass of twisted stems would bend or break down my proud young lilac branches; so I am ruthless and leave no trace of vine among them. With care as I make my exit, I replace a disturbed stalk of phlox, a bowed spray of cassia, and lift up any flattened leaves. No sign of entrance to that leafy heart is to be seen; the birds settle themselves again on the rosy viburnum berries, and I turn away content.

Well do I remember our very first visit to this enchanting lake, when we two couples were housed in a guest cottage furnished with every imaginable comfort and convenience, and then left to ourselves. It gave us

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## SOMETIME

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such a delightful sense of being at home. We knew that we were disturbing no one; we talked, we laughed, we even darted out in the moonlight and were strongly tempted to take a midnight plunge. That sense of freedom is the greatest compliment a hostess can receive, and is the one feeling most appreciated by her guests. I wonder if one ever builds a country house large enough; or do our hospitable intentions grow as the years progress? We are perfectly satisfied with our house, but I have always wanted a guest cottage. It could be hidden somewhere in the woods not too far away, and would, I am sure, be welcomed by our bachelor friends, our nephews and their associates, who would then feel a liberty as to hours and plans which perhaps they would not feel in the big house. My demands are few; four rooms with a bath and a screened-in porch. It sounds simplicity itself. And sometime when the hour arrives I hope that the Friendly Architect will design for us some such a tiny dwelling, and we will find a suitable spot in which to build it.

“I am trying to find a place for a gazebo,” the Con-

stant Improver broke out, after a long silence one evening, a silence broken only at intervals by deep sounds of muttered content.

"For what?" I asked in amazement. "Is it an animal? For I really think that we have all we can look after already."

"No, it's not an animal," he reassured me, "it's a lookout. From 'gaze about' I suppose; perhaps it's Scotch."

"Well," I commented, seeing I was expected to say something, "those observatories as the country people call them are anything but picturesque."

"Yes. I know. But mine will be all right. From that big maple on top of the hill you can see the whole length of the lake and the prairies on the other side."

"How are you going to get there? To the top I mean?"

"Oh! steps. I'm not going to build it right away. I'm just trying to decide which tree has the most extended view."

Steps rarely appeal to a woman; neither had I then



A WINTER CONSERVATORY



THE OLD WELL OF ST. FRANCIS



A WATER PICTURE WAS REVEALED

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## SOMETIME

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beheld the view; so my enthusiasm was halting. But some day I presume we shall run to the "gazebo" at the first indication of a sunset and on moonlight evenings find its lofty eminence a cool retreat.

In the old parks surrounding Italian villas, whether the grounds are laid out in the formal or what is known as the natural fashion, the walks whether winding or straight always lead to some definite object—either a view, a hilltop fountain, a pavilion for tea, an open space where seats are placed, or a carefully arranged shrine. After securing our long straight paths my desire was and is for some beauty spot in the deep woods as a fitting finish. I have even gone so far as to select an almost perfect circular opening standing cleared ready for my design. Not too formal must it be, nor too rustic; in the center a table instead of a fountain, low and broad, say five feet across, made of cement in a good woodsy tone, with four long curving benches of cement outlining the circle. Before many years, time and the weather would remove the crude new look, and they would become a part of the forest. The fall-

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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ing leaves would linger upon them, the passing showers would discover small hollows, the snow and the frost would crumble the edges; and I know that the squirrels would soon find them convenient for their store of acorns. At the far end of the entering path I would erect a shrine. Why not? A shrine, for want of a better name, supporting some lovely replica of Della Robbia's children, some quaint conceit suited to the forest—a dryad floating in the breeze, the ever youthful spirit of the woodland. I know a genius who could evolve just what is needed for this shaded nook. The frame must be of big timbers with iron hoops inserted for flowerpots, just as they have them in the Old World; the table-like base must include a cupboard for small tools, a watering can, a store of nuts and birdseed, a book, and even a tea-basket.

On a lonely mountain-side in the Casentino where St. Francis retreated to commune with Nature, where he preached his sermons to the birds, and where now his followers guard his relics, there are to be seen some very wonderful reliefs by the Della Robbias well



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## SOMETIME

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worth the difficult journey; but after visiting the three churches, wandering through the holy grottoes and admiring the extensive prospect, on the steep descent my perverse mind would hold but one picture, the old well-curb. Whether actually built during his lifetime or not, it has an admirable feeling of age and solidity. Sometime I want to reproduce it on our own estate. Its rugged timbers, its rough supports, its picturesque curb will not only fit into our scheme of living, but will remind us often of that holy man, the patron saint of all true nature-lovers, St. Francis of Assisi.

If we lived here all the year round we would certainly turn the dog-trot into a conservatory for the winter. It would be an easy undertaking, the glass removable in summer must merely be extended on the south to the terrace wall and so enclosed with proper ventilation, heat and light; then it could be filled with those tender plants which now go into the glasshouse. Here, with long boxes of ferns and trays of flowering bulbs, with rose geranium slips and jasmine trained on the walls, what an altogether fascinating bower we could

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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make! Why could we not bring our lounging chairs to this sunny nook and spread books and papers on a convenient table? Is there any reason why a hanging bookshelf would be forbidden or even a writing desk? And here we would have our luncheons, with only glass separating us from the squirrels disporting in the snow and the chickadees pecking at the balls of nuts hung against the windows. What matter if the north wind blew? What should we know of the frosty air? Here would be perpetual summertime.

In the heart of the deep woods, about twelve hundred feet back from the shore, is a circular hollow which would make an ideal summer theater. The banks slope down to the center on three sides at just the proper angle for about four rows of seats, and tall trees shade them perfectly; big buttonbushes outline the stage, and a shallow pool of clear water some thirty feet in diameter reflects each dancing leaf. Only one serious fault might be found with this sylvan glade. It is carpeted with poison ivy! But to get rid of that is a mere matter of persistence; and there is a certain forest grass which

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## SOMETIME

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would cover the "seats" and make a natural floor for the stage. More bushes could be easily planted in an apparently careless fashion to conceal dressing rooms, and the long vistas through the trees with the floating clouds overhead would provide ample amusement for the audience even when the stage was empty. If the practical-minded person should assert that possibly the audience might be sufficiently diverted by the attentions of the ubiquitous mosquito, I should inform them of the virtues of sulphate of copper, which destroys the larvæ and turns the water a glorious blue. Of course, this pool could be drained if desired. It is only a question of putting in pipes through the hill to the brook about 600 feet distant. Why could n't the hole for the pipes be made with a big augur so as to disturb but slightly the trees and shrubs? We have no rocks in that vicinity. In dreams all things are possible.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SECOND BEST

**W**HEN the world is glorious with the harvest; when the flowering corn is straight and tall; when the freshly-cut grain fields glisten in the sun, and the emerald of the new alfalfa awaits the greedy herd; when the woods are deep, still, and mysterious; when the swamps are gorgeous with purple ironweed and yellow sneezeweed, with dull white thoroughwort and blue lobelia, with starry spurge and the fragrant milkweed rising from among the cat-tail leaves; when the sun rises in the rosy glow of Egypt and sets under rich masses of illumined clouds; when the August skies glitter with untold millions of bright stars or flash in pyrotechnics inconceivable,—is this the time to think of anything as second best?

But what about the human being at this lavish feast of beauty? Is the farmer sitting through the long days in Buddhistic contemplation, saturating his soul with

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## THE SECOND BEST

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sweetness and light? Hardly. He is working from dawn to dark, working as he never works at any other time, hurrying the men with the harvest and pressing into service everyone who passes by. If he dreams dreams, it is not at this season; and when he does, they usually take the form of prosaic figures.

His wife, then, does she wander out in the early dew to get the effect of the sparkling sun? Does she take her camera and attempt to preserve some of these wonderful scenes for the long winter's refreshment? Does she flit like a rosy vision in her pink gingham, across the fields and down the brook, to dream long hours away beside its rippling water? Only in poetry or, possibly, on the planet Mars, does this happy condition prevail; here the lot of the farmer's wife is too well known to recapitulate; and although labor-saving machinery has revolutionized the man's work on the farm, in the kitchen the same old routine goes forever round and round. Not until washing machines have been supplemented by ironing machines, and both with the dish-washing machine are run by electricity, and all

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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meals are prepared in a fireless cooker will the lady farmer have leisure to keep up with the latest novels, to say nothing of dreaming dreams.

But the children? Ah! the children, that is another matter. Great as is his joy and pride in the old place, the farmer has a feeling that his children must not be content with doing as he has done, but must rise in the world. It has been all very well for him but it is not the best life. His sons shall not labor in the fields as he has, they shall go to college and learn to be business men or lawyers, doctors or maybe ministers; they shall lead a life of ease in the city. His daughters, too, shall have the advantage of a higher education, which will unfit them also for the farm life. And he sighs as he looks at his broad acres and thinks of the many plantings, the many harvests, the saplings that have grown into big trees, the twigs spread into twining thickets. What will become of it when he is gone?

Curiously enough, by the inscrutable ways of Providence this has been beautifully arranged. For as the

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## THE SECOND BEST

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city life dances in dazzling colors before the eyes of the country boy, so does the country life allure the city boy with singular fascination. Our agricultural colleges have never been so crowded as now; serious and able boys, recognizing the advantages of the outdoor life, wish to learn scientific farming, intending to make it their life study. They and their wives, perhaps even their children, will love the farm; but their grandchildren will probably migrate to the city to make room for another reversal of conditions. So one man's second best becomes his neighbor's best.

But the man of the present day who lives in the country, the so-called "gentleman farmer," who is not a farmer at all, the man whose agriculture is confined to experiments with his own vegetable garden—and weeds; surely he has long leisure hours in which to dream and rest and play. If tramping through the forest in rain or summer heat is rest; if pruning overgrown paths, or weeding beds of iris is play; if poring over blue-prints for contemplated improvements is dreaming, then indeed he does lead a life of ease. And

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it is a life of ease, though not of idleness; because all these things are what he wishes to do, not what he is compelled to do. Is he ever satisfied with the result of his labors? Is his place ever in perfect condition? Never. His ideals change with each new year, and no mere combination of matter ever overtake them. Does this discourage him? Not at all. If his imagination failed to picture something beyond what he actually had, his interest would soon flag and he would turn to a new toy.

So we are made. "Life is a train of moods like a string of beads," Emerson says, "and as we pass through them they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus. Nature and books belong to the eyes that see them. It depends on the mood of the man whether he shall see the sunset or the fine poem. Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung."

Lucky indeed is the possessor of a happy nature, a sanguine temperament; his ideals hover so nearly





“NATURE AND BOOKS BELONG TO THE EYES THAT SEE THEM.”



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within reach, he is so sure of final success; no amount of disappointment ever discourages him, no amount of misadventure ever dismays him, *next time his star will win*. As a people, we Americans have that buoyant temperament, that undaunted courage, that love of initiative, and the idea of being second best is peculiarly distasteful to us. We wish to be first in all matters fortunate or unfortunate, as witness our boast of the biggest telescope in the world or the greatest fire of history. The remark of the old farmer who happened to read some extracts from Plato, is characteristic of our attitude: "Did you ever read Plato, Frank? He was a mighty smart man. Do you know he had a lot of my ideas?"

Our ideals grow as we climb toward them. They are like the nearest hilltop to the child, for on reaching that he expects to see the end of the world. Instead he finds more hilltops, each one of which proves to be but a stepping-stone to farther heights, until as he ascends, huge mountains loom before him, ending in great snow-peaks glistening in the sun. It is curious

that the nearer he approaches those lofty peaks of perfection, the more humble-minded he grows; the more *simpatica*, as the Italians say, he becomes toward his fellow-man; the more charitable with regard to the weaknesses of mankind. Is it because he has, like Bunyan's pilgrim, met and fought so many of the demons besetting his way through life, that he feels he has barely escaped from their clutches, and so knows and appreciates the temptation of others?

I wonder whether I dare tell an experience of the Rev. Mr. M—'s which he related at our dinner table. When returning to his house in Dublin late one evening, a Salvation Army lass accosted him, "Man, is your soul saved?" The reverend gentleman, surprised by this abrupt descent into the sacred recesses of his being, hesitated, when the question was repeated, "Man, is your soul saved?" By this time the Irish humor of the good professor came to his rescue and he answered, "It is, my lass, it is; but it was such a close shave that I'm not going around bragging much about it."

We are taught from our earliest infancy that we

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## THE SECOND BEST

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should excel. The little boy who always behaves is held up to our wide-opened eyes as a worthy example. Do we love him and long to beat him in his own field? Not at all. We long to beat him in a much more material way, for some of us have a feeling that his airs of superiority really need correction. The little girl who never disobeys her parents, who never tears her frock, who never asks for a second piece of cake or forgets to say, "Yes, Mrs. Brown" or "Thank you, Mrs. Jones"—is she the general favorite? Quite the contrary. Isolated on her spotless throne she surveys the world about her and has no sympathy with our convulsive struggles, our futile attempts which only reach the level of second best.

A faint wonder sometimes drops into the youthful mind as to whether or no it is desirable to be perfect. Does he see perfection in the objects around him? Is every tree perfect, symmetrical, without a flaw? Every shrub and plant, every leaf and blade of grass? To his surprise, each he discovers has some slight imperfection, which makes it more beautiful. The sting

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## OUR COUNTRY LIFE

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of an insect gives more vivid color to that spot in the leaf; the fringe-winged thrips eat the green substance from the fern, and lo! a fairy texture sways beneath the cricket's leap.

If it were possible for us to select the gifts with which the fairy godmother endows each one of us at birth, perhaps no one of us would choose to be the second best. And yet the world would be a weary place without those helpful souls. To be willing to be of use to others, to be ready at a moment's notice to fly where duty awaits one, to give loving service without thought of self—many women there are who follow along these lines, but particularly the maiden aunt.

I am sorry for any family who has not a maiden aunt. Ours used to come to us often, but especially in time of need. Was one of the children ill? The dear aunt looked after the rest of us. Was the mother worn out by long service? The dear aunt came to take her place for a while. Must the parents go away? The dear aunt invited us to visit her, and great was the rejoicing thereat. Illumined by a halo of romance, she

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told us tales of her youth, and of our mother's courtship; she beguiled our convalescent hours with fairy stories and inspired us with a desire for far-off places. Were we homesick as darkness came on? We were encouraged by promises that the morrow should certainly see us at home again; and if with the brightness of day we concluded to postpone our departure, we were cuddled and made much of; even a pan of cookies was baked for us, heart-shaped ones! Only the other day I heard of two self-supporting women who adopted the three orphaned babies of their brother and divided their own scanty store joyfully with them. Dare we say that the maiden aunt has missed her vocation in this world? She herself would insist that she had fallen far below her ideals, but for the good of the race shall we not concede that she occupies at least the second-best place?

In the early days of my first housekeeping, ambitious to celebrate a particular anniversary with an especially entertaining and delightful company, I invited the most gifted talkers, the cleverest after-dinner speak-

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ers, the best story-tellers of all our acquaintances and looked forward myself with real pleasure to that notable evening. Such a bubbling over of good spirits as I anticipated, such a battle of repartee, such a scintillating fire of *bon mots!* All I should have to do would be to look pleasant and applaud at the right moment. I could not help noticing that as each fresh genius arrived, instead of the company becoming gayer, a slight chill fell upon the room, but I thought, It is probably the awkward quarter of an hour before dinner; once at the table all will go well. But alas! all went much worse. An atmosphere of vague distrust, almost of antagonism, seemed to prevail. Nobody wanted to be audience; if one ventured a story, the others, full of their own anecdotes, gave but slight attention, were restive for their turn and crumbled their bread nervously or said, "Very good, very good," in a hurried sort of way. After several interruptions and polite excuses, all conversation resolved itself into a monologue of the person with the loudest voice and the most persistence. As a dinner it was a total failure.



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How gladly would I have exchanged most of those highly sensitive, brilliant minds for a few sympathetic listeners willing to be second best.

Why should we not be content to be one of a mass, to do our tiny share toward enriching the world with goodness or beauty or truth? Do you know the Skokie when it is blue with the wild flag? Each individual flower may not be as rich, as gorgeous, as perfect in every part as the carefully tended Japanese iris. But the glory of that waving field under the wind's caress, the bending grass, the heaven-reflecting flower, as the white clouds cast flying shadows over the marsh!

Suppose that the song sparrow should say, "I am not as beautiful as the oriole nor do my notes equal those of the thrush, therefore I have no part to play in life." How different the world would be without that cheery song! I am sure each one of us can call to mind some friend who occupies the same place in the world of humanity as the song sparrow does in the bird world; a modest, active little body with a sweet, contented nature, accepting her lot without question, making the best of

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her share of this world's goods, listening to the troubles of others and ignoring her own, always cheerful! Think of it! Always, even on the rainy days, singing her small sweet song.

His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,  
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;  
*He* sings to the wide world, but *she* to her nest,  
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

But for the ambitious, talented person, those fatal words "second best" have no comforting glow; they represent failure. Thoreau went through life misunderstood and laughed at. You remember the verdict of one of his farmer neighbors: "William Henry," he asked, "what you ben doin' all mornin' settin' on that there log?"

"I 've been looking at the bullfrog, Mr. Farnham."  
"Well, I vum, William Henry, I don' know which is the biggest fool, you or the bullfrog."

Thoreau was too far in advance of his time. His precious volumes are now fully appreciated. But listen to his quaint remarks on the way the public re-

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ceived his first book; more than anything else they show the real Master Soul sure of itself—and itself its only possible judge.

Oct. 28, 1853. For a year or two past, my publisher, falsely so-called, has been writing from time to time, to ask what disposition should be made of the copies of "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers" still on hand, and at last suggesting that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. So I had them all sent to me here, and they have arrived to-day by express, filling the man's wagon, 766 copies out of an edition of 1,000. I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labor? My works are piled up on one side of my chamber half as high as my head, my *opera omnia*. This was authorship, these are the works of my brain. I can see now what I write for, the result of my labors! Nevertheless in spite of this result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen tonight to record what thought or experience I may have had with as much satisfaction as ever.

What marvelous sureness of vision! What a graceful yielding to circumstances! No bitterness, no railing against Fate or the bad taste of his contemporaries! Content for the moment to seem merely second best, undaunted and undismayed, he continued to follow his ideals.

As we grow older and the cares of the household

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descend upon us, where do we fly for respite or relief? When the pie-crust is heavy and the biscuits are burnt, is there any place *nearer than Europe* which will bring us peace? Certainly, there is always the next-best place—the garden. When the children are fractious and the opinion of the head of the house differs from ours, where do we retire to think it all over but to the garden? Even in real sorrow it offers its soothing balm, and for irritation it's a sure cure. Is this because, as Burroughs says:

We are rooted to the air through our lungs and to the soil through our stomachs. We are walking trees and floating plants. The trembling gold of the pond lily's heart, and its petals like carved snow, are no more a transformation of a little black muck and ooze by the chemistry of the sunbeam than our bodies and minds, too, are a transformation of the soil underfoot. This story of the soil appeals to the imagination. To have a bit of earth to plant, to hoe, to delve in, is a rare privilege.

When the days dance merrily down the vista of time, and the months change swiftly into seasons, and the seasons into years, then one may be sure that he has really entered upon that delectable period known as middle age. Now is he or she, and especially she, free

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as she has never been before. Now, as she opens the gate of her Garden of Eden and takes possession thereof, she is glad. For nothing can surpass that intense satisfaction which comes from the power to make things grow, to create beautiful effects, to produce exquisite harmonies. The mere fact of breathing in such an environment fills one with hitherto undreamed-of bliss; and the art of acquiring knowledge not from books written by man, but from the beguiling pages of Nature's folios, becomes a passion.

In autumn the leaves scattered over the lawn call for the rhythmic swing of the long-handled rake; in winter the brick paths covered with powdery snow are ever ready for the vigorous sweep of the broom. What better panacea for tired nerves?

But perhaps it is after the discomfort of a day's shopping in the summer heat that we appreciate the most our out-of-door privileges. What bliss in the cool of sunset to seize the scissors and go out to the delicious scents and sounds of one's own particular patch of ground! By the time the calendulas have been

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snipped and the superfluous seed-pods of the snapdragons removed, a fragrance from the freshly opened nicotine calls us to admire its starry flower until the phlox's honey-sweet perfume distracts our lingering gaze. We lift up the dahlia's modest, drooping head (who ever in the olden time heard of a dahlia being modest? It must be a modern evolution), or we stoop to hunt for the long threads of the yellow dodder among the petunias. Someway before the helplessness and response of much loved flowers and the self-will and determination of much despised weeds, our thoughts are distracted. All at once we are conscious that the dark cloud which hung over us has vanished; and in this present rosy atmosphere our troubles have assumed their proper proportions, and we can almost be amused at them. Could a trip to Europe be more efficacious than this?

Have you ever tried to cut off every single seed-pod from a flourishing circular bed in your garden? Sometimes I have spent hours without success, for in the very middle three or four *would* stand defiantly erect,



"BUT THE CHILDREN—THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER"



THE POWER TO MAKE THINGS GROW



WEEDING LONG BEDS OF IRIS



THE HELPLESSNESS AND RESPONSE OF MUCH-LOVED FLOWERS



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evading my outstretched fingers. What does the first person see that comes along the path? The neat and proper condition of most of the bed and give due credit for the work done? Not at all. He sees those three or four conspicuous examples of neglect, and he sees nothing else. Perhaps that is one difference between our finite point of view and that of the All-seeing Father. We perceive only the looming sins of the world, and say, "Can it be love that permits this?" He sees the whole scheme of the universe and patiently awaits the fulfillment of his prophecy, when all things shall work together for good.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOURS IN OTHER GARDENS

**W**HEN one has a hobby it is extraordinary how it pursues one, how it appears and claims one's interest in the most unexpected places! Perhaps this is particularly true of gardens, which were from the beginning and always have been and always will be. Some of our happiest moments when traveling have been in "discovering" them. Not only famous gardens such as those around Rome, the moss-grown villas at Frascati and Tivoli, the Villa Lante near Viterbo, the Villa Caprarola, and Cesarini on the Lake of Nemi (what enchanting pictures the mere names bring to mind!), but the others less known and even more charming in various parts of the world; the overflowing cottage gardens of England, the parks of France and Germany, the miniature landscapes of Japan, the botanical curiosities of Cairo and Ceylon, the precious turf of Rangoon kept drenched from the

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rising to the setting of the burning sun, those treasures of exquisite beauty on the hills of Florence, the Villas Incontri, Gamberaia, and Palmieri of happy memories, the cloisters of church and convent dotting the land of Italy!

Yet, though we rejoice in the French and Italian ideals, it is largely to the English people scattered throughout the globe that we owe our successful gardens, and from this kaleidoscopic picture three wonderful creations of man stand forth preëminent; La Mortola on the Riviera, Lord Kitchener's Island at Assouan, and the Garden of Eden at Venice. One a rock promontory on the sea, one a sandbar in a tropical stream, one a salt marsh; the problems were very different, but each one was solved by an English mind.

The most extensive and the most important by far is La Mortola. What art was required to compose anything so scientific and complete yet so wholly beautiful! Scientists and artists alike worship at its shrine. In May the whole country of Italy is indeed one varied garden, as England is in June. But in February—to

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discover a wonderful expanse of fragrance and bloom in February, that is an achievement—that is La Mortola. Not tucked away in an inaccessible corner of Europe, but on the great highway between France and Italy, close to that nightmare of the tourist, Ventimiglia, is the most attractive bit of landscape on the Mediterranean. And we knew nothing of it except possibly its name, for Baedeker conscientiously recommends it to the traveler.

One year however we were fortunate enough to find ourselves on the French Riviera during February, basking in the glowing sunlight of that sheltered coast. On the heights above the closely built streets of Nice, away from the shops, the clang of motor cars, the thronging multitude, rises the pleasant suburb of Cimiez, a collection of villas and hotels, each in its graceful garden. From here in two short hours, over the famed Cornice one may arrive at a stone gatehouse in the middle of a long iron fence banked with bamboo and pepper trees, carob and wild olive.

Opposite it small houses rise one above another in

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lofty terraces, and the air is heavy with dust; for in the narrow highway a long line of horses is tugging a single cart up the steep grade under the encouraging calls of the walking teamster.

“Can this be La Mortola?” cries the Enthusiast, as the motor stops.

Indeed, neither entrance nor environment gives us any hint that beyond the conventional gateway lies a paradise. But passing through we turn seaward down the rock-hewn terrace and leave the dusty outer world behind us. Before us lies the most wonderful feat of landscape gardening to be found in Italy—possibly even in Europe. Forty years ago this spot was a bleak promontory rising abruptly from the sea, to a height of three hundred feet; its hundred acres were bare of all vegetation save a few olive trees scattered here and there. Sir Thomas Hanbury must have possessed the imagination of a genius to choose so unpromising a site for his horticultural experiments.

Hither he has brought all manner of curious trees, shrubs and plants from all known parts of the globe,

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and by giving to each its own peculiar environment coaxed them to flourish as though native here. From South America and India, from Madagascar and California, from Australia and Ceylon he has gathered them, placing them among the native flora in so charming a fashion that there is no stiffness or formality, merely a delightful luxuriance. Here one may become acquainted with more than fifty-five hundred species, yet never have the fact thrust upon him, so charmingly natural is their arrangement among the water gardens and mossy fountains, the ferny glens and pine forests.

Tangles of Banksia roses fall over terrace walls, trellises of a honeysuckle from Japan (*Lonicera Japonica*), whose white sprays measure three feet in length, tumble about the scarlet spikes of an agave. The *Linum tricynum* bushes fill in many an otherwise shadowy corner, their brilliant yellow flowers as large as morning-glories. Anemones in all shades spring up through the grass in fields of bloom with hyacinths and jonquils, and iris in the moist places. Great flat bunches of yellow senecio make effective backgrounds

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for jasmine sprays; a strange holly with horned leaves bears its red berries riotously, and the Christmas rose both white and pink turns its loveliness shyly away from our too eager glances. A wonderful development of our common mustard is the *Brassica insularia* with its tufts of big white flowers. Overlooking the sea a whole hillside of yellow genista glows under straggly pines. Sixty varieties of acacia, or mimosa as it is called here, are successfully cultivated and are overpoweringly beautiful, hanging in feathery yellow tassels over rocky walls or massed in small plantations beneath lofty terraces. Special attention has been paid to succulent plants; there are sixty different kinds of agaves and about forty kinds of aloes cultivated here with opuntias and fourcroyas and yuccas and euphorbias in endless variety. The huge sheaths of the century plants about to flower have been likened to gigantic asparagus, and indeed the simile is a good one.

Just below the platform that supports the house a stately avenue of cypresses leads to the agrumi plantation consisting of orange and lemon, grapefruit and

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mandarin, citron and bergamot trees, some twenty species. The perfumed air rises deliciously from the flowers and fruit of this resplendent orchard, and in my heart I think that this must be the choicest part of the place.

“Have you seen the pergola?” a pleasant voice asks in English, and I wonder if I have been thinking aloud.

“Not yet, but if you will kindly tell me in which direction—”

“The first path to the right; mount the steps and you are there,” answers the gardener. Evidently he sees my deep enjoyment and does not wish me to miss what he considers his *chef-d'œuvre*.

One of the joys of La Mortola lies in the confidence with which its owners entrust it to the visitor. No guides are provided; a man busy at his task here and there is always ready to give necessary information and a small notice begs one not to go within a certain distance of the house. Otherwise the place is at the disposition of the nature-lover and it is so extensive that



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even with over fifty people roaming through its leafy mazes, one has the feeling of being alone, left to wander where one's fancy leads.

Very slowly I follow the path indicated, toward those mossy steps, for there is so much to see at every turn; at the top I pause entranced, for this is indeed an ideal pergola in a perfect state of tangled flowering vines. Primroses and violets cover the ground on the sunny side, vying with strange cacti for our admiration; and as the pergola curves, following the convolutions of the hillside, at the farther end framed in the long yellow sprays of the buddleia, appears the sea, blue as only the Mediterranean can be. At the foot of creamy cliffs far below us lies Bordighera, and beyond, the medieval strongholds of Castello d'Appio and Ponte Canarda.

While we sit in rapturous contemplation of this lovely scene, our senses steeped in beauty of every kind, suddenly a nightingale bursts into song! The entrancing melody moves us to tears. Then follows silence. Will he sing again? The soft lap of the waves on the

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rocks below, the hum of the bees at this feast of flowers, the half-heard sougning of the breeze in the pine woods are the only sounds. Again comes that exquisite song bubbling over as if in sheer exuberance of joy. At the end of the pergola is this inscription in Latin: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden."

A stretch of sand above the Nile's wide stream,  
A mass of broken rock to anchor it,  
An English soldier with a yearning heart,  
And lo! a garden in the wilderness.

For close to Assouan lies the "Island of the Sirdar" where many years ago Lord Kitchener laid out a garden. How refreshing its cool green above the muddy waters! From far away its palm trees sway against the sun-baked bluffs beyond. No one had told us that here at Assouan, in March, when weary with long days of tombs and temples, one might step into a garden and forget all else. No one had breathed a word of this low sand bar transformed by patience and by love into a green retreat.

In the comparative coolness of the late afternoon we

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left the dahabeah anchored beside Elephantine Island, and slipped over in the felucca to this charming spot. The harbor lies half hidden by rich vines, which trail down rocky walls to the swift-flowing stream. There is no house here, only open pavilions with seats, as shelters from the burning sun. Hedges and thick copses so subdivide the space that the area seems more than it really is and the planting has been so skillfully planned that surprises greet one at every turn: here is a cluster of dom palms of remarkable size and beauty; there, a grove of orange trees fragrant and fruitful; beyond, oleanders big as apple trees and pomegranates crimson with bloom; while rare specimens of tropical vegetation abound.

Long paths bordered with English flowers lead from end to end of the island under avenues of splendid palms. And roses—such a wealth of lavish blossoms! Such expanse of thriving shrub!

“Yes, you may have as many as you like,” says the attendant, seeing our covetous glances.

Part of this Island of the Sirdar is left in its wild-

ness; that is, after planting the trees and bushes, the natural undergrowth has not been disturbed; this ensures an indescribably lovely tangle especially at blossoming time. Trees bearing long sprays of lilac-colored flowers are particularly attractive, and I remember having seen them in Madeira and Ceylon, in India and Mexico. The botanical name is *Melia azederach*; in our own country it is called the umbrella tree or China berry, and since its introduction about a hundred years ago, it has spread throughout the Southern States.

“What is this delicious fragrance?” asks a member of the party as we simultaneously pause to look about. “It’s not orange or rose—or any leaf?”

“It’s this same tree,” exclaims another. “You know it is called the Indian lilac here.” And we linger to look up at its flowery expanse.

“Let me cut some for you, it goes well with the roses,” remarks the experienced gardener, and plucks great bunches of exquisite sprays to add to our big bouquets.

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Shell pink bougainvillæas clamber over trellises vying with other vines luxuriant, brilliant, but alas! to me nameless. From benches shaded by feathery acacias one looks out on the Nile with its many islets and feels the mysterious peace of old Egypt soothe his restless New-World spirit. How can we be grateful enough to the distinguished General who in the midst of his heavy burdens, his grave problems, his significant reforms, found time to conceive and carry out this ideal garden?

Quite another problem faced an English couple bearing the prophetic name of Eden, who more than twenty years ago set about to make a garden in Venice. At that time no such thing existed in that city of the sea. Does not the old proverb say, "*Venezia, tomba dei fiori?*"

But hidden away beyond the Redentore was found a piece of land, four acres in extent; later two more acres were added. It was once a monastery orchard, later a gentleman's playground, but at this time in a

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sad state of disrepair. How the boundary wall against the sea was made good, the worthless trees felled and young ones planted, light pergolas constructed over the paths to support rose and grape, sea-shells by the boatload brought from the Lido to make paths, which were then bordered with box or bricks—all this foundation work is most entertainingly set forth in a volume modestly called, *A Garden in Venice*. Here also are related the experiences of this pleasant pair with different kinds of helpers, their difficulties in obtaining proper water, their curious discoveries (among others that the salt soil absolutely forbade any deep-rooted trees or plants), their blending of features from many much loved places, and their acceptance of traditions and ancient customs. For example:

These mulberries are a source of income. We have five trees large and widespreading. In their season, July, they are purple-black with delicious fruit, their branches so laden that they are sometimes broken with the weight. When I bought the garden I found that a family of Furlani (men who live in the mountains in summer and come down in winter to Venice and the neighboring towns to earn money) came yearly from the mountains of Friuli, paying a rent of seventy lire for the right to pick and sell the fruit;



BARBARY FIGS AT LA MORTOLA



THE LODGE HAS DISAPPEARED UNDER A TANGLE OF ROSE AND WISTERIA—A VENICE GARDEN



LANDING AT THE ISLAND OF THE SIDAR



DOM PALMS ON THE ISLAND OF THE SIDAR



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first, however, providing a supply for the master's use. In addition to money they bring—a relic perhaps of the old payment in kind—two mountain cheeses, bound up in green-leaved boughs, one of fresh, hard, creamy curd that is generally eaten with sugar, the other smoked and seasoned. I would not disturb their tenancy, and the children of those days now carry on the trade their father is no longer fit for. . . . The Feast of the Redentore is the mulberry sacrifice or triumph. It is held on the third Saturday and following Sunday of July. . . . On the Saturday, the eve of the Redentore *fešta*, all Venice, poor and rich, gentle and simple, spend their night abroad. From dark to dawn the Giudecca quays, called *Fondamente*, are crowded with sightseers and pleasure wooers of every age and size and sex. Among them the Furlani have a ready sale for their fruit. For there are few on bank or boat who do not eat that night of mulberries.

To the present-day visitor alighting from the gondola beside a graceful bridge, where a green gate opens in a wall smothered with creepers and overhung with tamarisk, the effect is delightfully wild. The lodge, a remnant of monastic reign, has disappeared beneath a tangle of rose and wistaria, a dome-like pink May dominates the *cortile* and in the midst of the garden four cypresses straight and strong, towering above a mass of greenery, beckon the nature-lover on from one beauty to another.

For this estate is really a series of small gardens

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divided by pergolas and arbors, each with some special feature; for instance, two ancient mulberries boasting four hundred years above a grassy court, an oblong pool reflecting rosy oleanders and pomegranates, a playful fountain in the midst of hyacinths and strawberries, a tiny marsh for iris and Canterbury bells! Imagine a hedge of cabbage roses on either side of a vine pergola one hundred and fifty yards long, with Madonna lilies blooming as the roses fade! Fancy "a dozen rose gardens carpeted with tulips and anemones! . . . From April to Christmas we can cut from thousands of plants of hundreds of varieties." It is overwhelming! Think of a walk more than a hundred yards long leading through masses of iris, purple, pale-blue, white, bronze, and yellow to the square of a cherry orchard in full bloom! English primroses star box-edged spaces, meadows of daisies and buttercups, jonquils and narcissus, flourish under peach and apricot, apple and pear trees, each splendid with blossom.

This garden is so individual, so filled with thoughts;

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a bit of merry England, a hint of the Alhambra, a touch of medieval Italy, all blended into an exquisite home-like whole. How the founders must have enjoyed its planning and its development! "There is no other soil or climate so full of whim and fantasy." Their very failures led them to discoveries of value; and when the soil did respond, it was with an incredible profusion: "Small islets of foxgloves or columbines or larkspurs spread themselves into continents, and a splash of love-in-the-mist flowed over into a sea of blue."

The radiant color of this enclosure is intensified by the brilliant Venetian sunshine, by the white dome of the Redentore above the cypresses, and by the orange and brown sails drifting lazily along in the lagoon. Is it surprising, then, that to the visitor in Venice this captivating place has come to be known as "The Garden of Eden?"

As the year swings to its close and the evenings grow longer, we turn from the contemplation of our own problems to relive the refreshing hours spent in those

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other gardens. What happiness we found in them!  
What lessons of courage, patience, devotion, triumph!  
What pictures for our memory book! Sitting in front  
of our open fire, we turn its pages joyously and find  
in it our spring of perpetual youth.

THE END













