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An Explorer Comes Home

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF

ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS

With drawings by Thomas W. Voter

1947

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FIRST EDITION

*Billie and I dedicate this book with much affection to
GEORGE and MARY NANCY*

Foreword

An Explorer Comes Home is a continuation of my autobiography begun in *Under a Lucky Star*. It is not a chronicle of high adventure at the ends of the earth as was the earlier book; these adventures took place on a farm in Connecticut. It is a tale of how, after thirty-five years of sailing all the oceans of the world, my personal ship came to anchor in the quiet waters of Pondwood Farm; of why it anchored there and the kind of life we made for ourselves in the Berkshire Hills. It is also a part of my wife's biography, for our existence is so closely interwoven that there could be no separate story.

There was deep satisfaction in cutting our own home out of the ruin and devouring underbrush, somewhat as did the Connecticut pioneers when they came to this virgin Green Woods country. It was the personal effort and labor that made them cling so passionately to their log cabins and little fields, even when they rose each morning to face the possibility of an Indian massacre. Like them, every foot of ground we cleared, every rock we moved, every bush we planted, sunk our roots deeper into Pondwood soil.

Mere existence in impossibly crowded cities becomes more difficult and more unpleasant every day. It is a major operation to find a place to lay one's head at night, food to eat, and clothes to wear. One takes what one can get, not what one wants. The advantages that once made city life delightful have vanished into the limbo of the past; I doubt if they will return in our generation. Even diversions are so fraught with difficulties that they seem hardly worth the effort. Going deeper underground or higher in the air and double-decking streets will only make it possible for more humans to exist, but not to live, in the same area. The saturation point has almost been reached. Census statistics show that a large part of our population is rural but non-farm, and that the percentage is increasing every year. Those wise ones, who have seen the writing on the wall and abandoned cities for the country, know how interesting and satisfying such a life can be, whether it is lived on one acre or a thousand, whether one is rich or poor.

This book, however, is in no sense propaganda for country living or subsistence farming. Pondwood is a farm in name only. It is merely the story of how one explorer solved the problem of what to do when he stopped exploring and of two people who are enjoying themselves hugely in rural Connecticut.

I have written the narrative more or less chronologically as our life moved and expanded at Pondwood Farm. Its unpremeditated beginning was motivated by a rather blind confidence that that highroad would lead to happiness; its development has been a complete justification of our intuition.

The surroundings of Pondwood are redolent of New England's early history. Some of the houses were built by the first settlers and are still occupied by families whose ancestors came here when America was young. A century and a half seems only yesterday to them for they live with the furniture brought to Connecticut on oxcarts and maintain many of the customs of pre-Revolutionary days. Thus it is inevitable that sketches of Colebrook history should invade this book because it is the background against which we live. The interest, however, is more than local, for Colebrook typifies many other New England villages and its story is part of the heritage and tradition of the pioneer stock that constitutes the greatest stability of our national life.

My information about Colebrook's past has been largely derived from Irving E. Manchester's excellent *The History of Colebrook* and from those gentlemen who are mentioned in the book. To them I extend my thanks. I am grateful, also, to Mrs. Dorothy Byers of Groton, Massachusetts, who has read the manuscript and has offered much constructive criticism.

ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS

Pondwood Farm

Colebrook, Conn.

Contents

I	<u>Discovery</u>	1
II	<u>Local History</u>	12
III	<u>Lord Jitters</u>	28
IV	<u>A Forest Interlude</u>	54
V	<u>Two Anglers Are Born</u>	81
VI	<u>The Lord and the Queen</u>	102
VII	<u>Rebirth</u>	123
VIII	<u>Spring Comes to Pondwood</u>	145
IX	<u>The Great Pig Derby</u>	169
X	<u>Prisoners in Pondwood</u>	198
XI	<u>The Hunter's Moon</u>	217
XII	<u>Pondwood Queen</u>	237
XIII	<u>Glamor Girl with Wings</u>	249
XIV	<u>Making Movies</u>	263

I

Discovery

My wife and I were driving over a Connecticut road, each absorbed in thought. Suddenly Billie looked up. "Have you," she asked, "the remotest idea where the farm we have just bought is located?"

"No, I haven't," I answered. "You're the navigator. Don't you know?"

Billie giggled. "Only vaguely. Were there ever two such complete idiots? We've purchased a hundred and fifty acres of land, a house, a pond, and a forest, and neither of us knows where it is. I only followed the route numbers Louise gave me. Let's stop at the next filling station and get a map."

We did. Parking beside the road, we traced our expedition from New York and discovered that our newly acquired property was in the extreme northwest corner of Connecticut, bordering the Massachusetts line.

"We're idiots all right," I said, "but I wouldn't have cared whether it was in Connecticut or Canada after I saw that pond. By the way, the owner said she called it Seven Hills Farm. That's silly. There are lots of hills and it doesn't mean a thing."

Billie had an inspiration. "Let's name it Pondwood. We've got a pond and it's *in* the woods."

So our farm was discovered, bought, and christened in one day. It all came about because of a sign we saw on a Long Island wood lot the Monday after Memorial Day, 1937.

"Acre for sale." Just those three little words on a white wooden board. The man who nailed that sign to a tree probably never imagined it would vitally affect two human lives. Of course he might have been a psychologist. Even as we passed, he may have been sitting behind a bush charting the effect of his startling announcement on the traveling public. Probably he was an unimaginative individual who had an acre of woodland for sale. He hoped to get a good price for his acre. Just that. Because it happened to be the detour sign that turned my wife and me off the low road of cities into the highroad of the Berkshire Hills would not have interested him in the slightest, for we didn't buy his acre. We often wonder who did.

For four years I had been Director of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. I loved the Museum, but after more than a quarter of a century of exploration I felt like an animal in the zoo which, captured late in life, could not adjust itself to crowds and people. In spite of interesting work, the longing for woods and fields, the smell of fresh grass, and the songs of birds, instead of carbon monoxide and the blare of motor horns, was an insistent call.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," I said, "to buy an acre, put up a prefabricated house, and go there week ends? Not let a soul know where we were. Just disappear from Friday to Monday and roam the woods."

Billie thought a moment.

"Yes, it's a good idea, but not Long Island—Connecticut. I've heard there are abandoned farms one can buy very cheap. We might get a little one."

My wife lets no grass grow under her feet once she has made up her mind. The next day she called a friend, Louise Lundy, of New Canaan, Connecticut, who deals in real estate.

"I think," Louise said, "I know just the kind of a place you want. It's in Colebrook. It has a lovely pond and a trout stream. But it's more than one acre and there's a house. I'm coming to town tomorrow. Let's lunch together and I'll tell you about it."

Lunch they did, and Billie came home excited. The fact that instead of the one acre we had visualized there were one hundred and fifty acres didn't disturb her in the least. We are both accustomed to having an idea expand in our minds like the proverbial oak tree growing from a tiny acorn. Billie had a pencil sketch of the house drawn by Louise on the back of a menu card. Letting her imagination run riot, she spent a delightful two hours deciding how she would furnish the

cottage. That we might not like it never entered her mind.

As I look back upon our naïve enthusiasm I realize that we had a cardinal advantage over all country-place hunters I have ever known. Our salvation lay in the fact that no preconceived ideas cluttered our brains. It required no mental struggle to fit what we were about to see to what we believed we wanted. The idea had been born too suddenly for us to create an image of our future home. As a matter of fact, we were not looking for a home; only some spot where there was water, trees, birds, and flowers, to which we could escape for week ends. Had anyone prophesied, at that time, that I would retire and settle on a Connecticut farm I would have said he needed immediate examination by a brain specialist.

It makes me shudder now, when I realize that had our search been conducted in the orthodox manner, we probably never would have purchased Pondwood Farm. But we seldom do anything in the orthodox manner and were blissfully unaware that finding a satisfactory place in the country may become almost a lifetime job; that the pathway is beset by thorns and often ends in disillusionment. We were exposed to none of the insidious propaganda of realtors, ready to addle the minds of prospective clients, induce a state of hypnosis, and sell them something they don't want. Our only real-estate agent was Louise Lundy, and she happened to be a friend. She did not try to sell us anything. She merely said:

"I know a place I think you'd like. You'd better go and see it."

In that wholly delightful book *A Home in the Country*, Frederick Van de Water tells pathetically of the trials and tribulations he and his wife, Althea, experienced in finding a place to suit them. Real-estate agents became their *bête noir*. They knew the patter by heart and began to shudder when the familiar phrases dripped from fluent tongues. The Van de Waters saw house after house, only to reap bitter disappointment. For two long years they traveled the highways and byways of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and eastern New York. Their minds became so confused that when, at last, they found their place, Mr. Van de Water frankly admits they didn't know it. Only by degrees was it borne in upon their weary brains that this was the spot where they were destined to end their journey. Unlike us, they had pictured the home of their dreams and deliberately set out to find it.

When Billie lunched with Louise Lundy on Wednesday she made arrangements for us to visit the place on Saturday and listed the automobile route numbers to Colebrook. Louise said it was a hundred and twenty-five miles from New York—about three hours' drive. Carried away by our enthusiasm, we never thought to ask where Colebrook was located. It was in Connecticut—whether east or west didn't seem important.

So off we went Saturday morning up the Saw Mill River Parkway and by devious paths reached the Housatonic River. It was a brilliant day, the trees had donned their new dresses of variegated green, and the scent of flowers drifted into the car window as we sped along winding roads beside the stream. The Housatonic foams over great boulders between steep wooded banks or widens into placid stretches, like secluded ponds, where the hills roll back, wide and gracious, under the sky. I was enjoying the drive with an indefinable sense of pleasure. The day was lovely, to be sure, and the scenery superb, yet it was not only that—there was something else. Suddenly I knew.

"Billie, do you realize we haven't seen a roadside advertisement for miles and miles? Not a single one!"

What a blessing! We had not been apprised of the merits of a particular shaving cream; no flaring atrocity had urged us to stop at Dad's Dandy Diner for a super-duper hamburger; neither had we been informed that Jones's Clothing Emporium would be delighted to outfit us from top to toe at an amazingly low figure. Lord, how I hate those road placards! I don't know why they irritate me so unduly, but it seems like an intrusion on my personal privacy. To be exhorted to buy some mundane product right in the middle of beautiful natural scenery is like a blob of mud on a lovely painting. I can't avoid reading the darned things and this mental weakness makes me furious. My only satisfaction is to vow that I will never use the shave cream; neither will I eat one of Dad's hamburgers if I starve by the wayside, or visit Jones's Clothing Emporium were I to walk naked through the streets. The extraordinary psychology of advertising by irritation certainly backfires with me. I am sure there is no Connecticut law prohibiting road signs. It is a matter of sentiment in each particular community.

Just before one o'clock we reached a tiny village. We were not certain it was Colebrook, but we hoped so, for it couldn't have been more charming. A farmer of whom I inquired said laconically, "You're here." It amused us immensely, for we thought of the answer given a couple driving through Maine who propounded a similar question to a man in a rocking chair on a hotel porch. "Can you tell us how to get to Twin Pines?" The rockee spat. "Don't you move one god-damned inch," he replied.

Colebrook might be the picture of a village out of a Revolutionary chronicle. On a triangle of green lawn, surrounded by a white wooden fence, stands the church—a colonial church with pillars and steeple complete. At one side is an inn built in 1790; opposite it rises a pillared general store and post office with a wide porch. Four or five houses, all dating from the late seventeen hundreds, rest sleepily under immense trees. Wrapped in their mantles of history, they placidly watch the ebb and flow of life about their doors as they have done for almost two centuries.

"Billie," I said, "it doesn't seem possible there could be anything like this left in America. Isn't it delightful?"

Doubtless there are many other villages in New England just as unspoiled, but I had not seen them. So finding this living image of the past was for me like discovering a lost civilization.

After luncheon at the inn we drove away with the lady who owned the property we had come to see. Three miles from Colebrook Center, at the entrance to a dirt road rising steeply up a hill, stood a lovely little white church in a grove of magnificent pines. "First Baptist Church established 1790," read a small sign. Nearly a mile up the road the owner exclaimed:

"There's the house; there's Seven Hills Farm."

I looked eagerly, and Billie looked eagerly, and then we looked at each other. Billie managed a sick little "Oh," but I didn't even attempt that. Nothing could be less charming, less colonial, or less inviting than what we saw. I suppose each of us had unconsciously formed some sort of a mind picture of the house. I know mine was a nebulous vision of a salt-box cottage set among rosebushes. Whatever Billie had envisioned couldn't have resembled, even remotely, what sat there so forlornly in the June sunshine, like a displaced person in a shabby dress trying her best to put on a good face. The house was tiny, badly in need of paint, and sagged distressingly in spots. Moreover, a recent chimney fire had left ugly black scars on the roof. It was, the owner said, a replacement built by the insurance company when the original building burned. It looked just that. My envisioned rosebushes were there but they were not pretty. Scraggly shrubs, adorned with sick-looking blossoms, swarmed over the front porch, which seemed to be the only redeeming feature of the place. What had obviously been a meadow years ago was a well-nigh impenetrable jungle of birch and poplar sapling and blueberry bushes that pressed in upon the uncut lawn. An unsightly hole filled with tin cans and garbage proved to be the cellar of the old colonial house. The owner sensed our disappointment. "Now we'll look at the land," she said brightly. "That's the real charm of the place."

From the front porch I had caught the gleam of water just across the road. We pushed through a screen of scrub birch and alder to a revelation. There was a perfect jewel of a pond. It was completely surrounded by heavy forest. Great pines towered above the shore and white birches, maples, and oak trees brushed the surface with their lower branches. I had visualized the usual sheet of water in an open meadow—just a pond—but nothing so lovely as this. A path carpeted with thick green moss led down an avenue of white birches along the shore; all through the woods were masses of laurel.

"A little later," said the owner, "when the blossoms are out, it will look as though the bushes were covered with pink and white snow. It is really beautiful."

Billie and I were entranced. From utter depression we leaped in one moment to the heights of excitement. It was simply too good to be true. Behind the house a wood road drifted down a gentle slope through a gorgeous mixed forest, as untouched as the wilderness of Canada. White, gray, black, and golden birches, maples, oak, beech, ash, hemlock, and pine. The place was alive with birds. Five wood thrushes were singing at one moment.

Back on the porch I whispered to Billie, "The place is heavenly. We've got to buy it. Of course the house is impossible but we'll pull it down and build a new one. What do you think?"

"You know what I think! We'd never find anything else as perfect for us. Of course we'll buy it. But about the house. I could do a lot with paper and paint and country furniture. It isn't so impossible as you imagine. We can't afford to put a lot of money into a place for week ends. The thing to do is to fix it up and live in it for a while. Then we will know what we want if we ever do rebuild. It would be just plain stupid to tear it down."

I had no answer to that. She was right, as usual.

In a decorator's trance, my wife prowled about the rooms. The owner and I talked. Half an hour later Billie returned and I left the two alone for a conference on price. I've learned that when it comes to discussing business I am best out of the

way. I went down to the pond and prayed fervently that all was going well. I'd have paid the asking figure and more rather than lose the place. Pretty soon a toot of the auto horn called me back. Billie didn't say anything specific but I knew the answer from the satisfied look on her face.

I give you my word it all happened just as I have written it. On Sunday we had never even thought of buying a place in the country; by Saturday we owned a farm. At the bottom of the hill bordering our property was Sandy Brook—not just a trickle of water, but a rushing stream that foamed over rocks, slipped through bowers of dipping branches, and spread into quiet meadow pools—one of the best pieces of trout water in Connecticut.

Billie asked the owner to have a local lawyer, Mr. Manchester, draw up the necessary papers and "search the title." I wouldn't know what he was searching for but apparently he didn't find it. Billie spoke learnedly of "clouds on the title" when I asked her, but did not elaborate. It is my private opinion she was just repeating something she had heard. Anyway, when we drove up the following week to sign the papers, he said there wasn't a cloud in the sky. We certainly couldn't see any, even when we visited the place again and realized how completely overgrown and down at heel it was. But the pond was there and the glorious forest. What could be made of it was up to us.

II

Local History

When sensible people buy a place in the country they inquire about the neighbors. Good neighbors are important. But we never thought of that. There was only one house nearer than three quarters of a mile. We were told it belonged to Louis Guerin.

"What does he do?" I asked. "Is he a farmer?"

"Oh no. He raises guinea pigs and sells them to scientific laboratories for experiments."

That sounded interesting. He must be just the sort of neighbor we would like. I suspected that Lou Guerin and his guinea pigs would mean much to us before long. He did and he does.

The possibility that any of our friends lived near Colebrook never entered our beclouded minds. It was a long way from New York and our only Connecticut acquaintances were commuters. They traveled back and forth every day to their offices but still maintained that they lived in the country. The Tuesday after we bought Pondwood I saw William Chenery, publisher of *Collier's* magazine, at the Dutch Treat Club in New York.

"Bill," I said, "you see before you an embryonic farmer."

Bill was nice and pretended interest. "That's exciting. Where are you going to farm?"

"Oh, way up in Connecticut. A little village of which you probably never heard. Colebrook."

"What do you mean I've never heard of it? I've got a place there. Also Charlie Colebaugh and Walter Davenport. It's a *Collier's* community."

Wasn't I surprised! Over luncheon Bill told me more. Ex-Senator Fred Walcott, one of my oldest friends, lived at Norfolk, six miles away. So did Frederick Barbour and Reginald Rowland, both sportsmen of note. John van A. MacMurray, formerly United States Minister to China, and later Ambassador to Turkey, spent his summers at Doolittle Lake two miles from Pondwood. For twenty-five years Jack and Lois MacMurray had been among my most intimate friends in China and Japan. Often in Peking we had dined in the Legation gardens, with soft-footed Chinese servants ministering to our wants, while we talked of this and that. Norfolk sometimes crept into the conversation, for Lois was born there, but then it was only a name to me. With no conscious effort of our own, Fate, or whatever you wish to call it, had brought us together again on the other side of the world.

Colebrook, Bill said, was a mixture of residents whose families had lived there for more than a century and city dwellers. Most of the latter came for week ends or a month or two in the summer.

"By the way," he asked, "what are your political affiliations? I hope you are a Republican. If not, you'd better become one pronto. Otherwise, you'll be out of luck. You won't get any work done. Democrats are about as welcome as a skunk at a tea party."

I assured him we were dyed-in-the-wool Republicans. He said that filled all the requirements.

Before operations to repair the house began Billie and I spent a week end at Pondwood. That first evening was a high spot in our lives. Not a breath of wind; the pond like a mirror; golden shafts of light from the setting sun flooding the woods. We walked along a path bordering the water, silent from the spell of sheer beauty. All through the forest pink and white snow seemed to have drifted over the bushes. Because the laurel was early that year, it had overtaken the last of the wild azaleas, which filled the air with spicy fragrance. The solemn bell-like notes of hermit thrushes changed the forest into a vast cathedral. Across the pond a blue heron fished majestically against a background of emerald green. We sat down on a thick carpet of moss. At last Billie said, "Just suppose we had missed all this! Suppose we had never found Pondwood Farm!" But we had found it, and we owned its good earth, its rocks and rills, its trees and water.

That night and the next day we began to plan our new domain. Billie had already conferred with Uno Stenman, a local

contractor, about the house. She knew exactly what she wanted and his job was to tell her how much of it could be done. It seemed like attacking a mountain. We didn't know where to begin on the outside—smothering vegetation, fallen stone walls, the garbage dump in the old foundation. Something had to be done about them and soon. As we surveyed the problem we agreed on the two things of first importance. The view to the pond must be opened and the meadow cleared.

My son George came up with us the week after he had finished his freshman year in Princeton. That he would fall in love with Pondwood was a foregone conclusion, for I know George. In many respects his reactions are exactly like my own. I asked him how he wanted to spend his summer vacation. Without a moment's hesitation he replied: "Working on the farm. I could take the place of one man."

Carpenters and painters had already made the house unlivable, so he pitched a tent—one I had used in Asia—in the orchard, and I produced my sleeping bag, cooking equipment, and rifle. One side of the tent had been ripped from top to bottom and neatly mended. That happened in the Gobi while we were exploring the Valley of the Jewels. I remember waking in the middle of the night with a feeling of deadly oppression. Breathless stillness bore down almost like a physical weight. Gradually I became conscious of a subdued hum, increasing in tempo every second. It was the voice of the Gobi's marching sands, warning of approaching destruction. Before I could wake the men the gale struck like a bursting bomb. Every tent went down; clothes, pots, pans, and food vanished into the air, to be dropped half a mile away; our caravan of sleeping camels was half buried in sand. For two days we collected equipment and repaired the tents. I told the story to George as we set the poles beneath our apple trees.

The sleeping bag of Mongol sheepskins had kept me warm even on below-zero nights. I remembered how I used to wriggle my cold toes in the soft wool and bless the fat-tailed sheep who had sacrificed their hides for my comfort. It had been spread beneath the stars on the summits of unnamed peaks in the Altai Mountains and the red sands of the Flaming Cliffs, where dinosaurs laid their eggs a hundred million years ago. Now it was doing its duty again for George in the orchard of a Connecticut farm.

For his protection he had the Mannlicher rifle that was my constant companion during more than a quarter of a century. To its bullets had fallen game in almost every country of the world. Two notches on the stock were reminders of how it had saved my life from Chinese brigands. In Arctic snows or tropic jungles it never failed. Whether or not George felt a thrill from using these things I could only guess, for youth is not sentimental. Nevertheless, it gave me a very happy feeling about the heart.

Hardly had George's tent been pitched when a charming boy about fourteen years old arrived on his bicycle.

"I am the society reporter of the *Winsted Citizen*," he said. "I'd like an interview. What are your plans?"

I have been interviewed by reporters for many papers, but never did I have less to say that could be put in print. Society was the one thing we wished to avoid at the moment. He was nice and I told him about the sleeping bag, the rifle, and the tent. He "oh'd" and "ah'd" and seemed properly impressed. What he wrote about our society plans I never knew.

People did make friendly calls, but we seldom saw them in those early days, even though we appreciated their neighborly interest. It was not because we were being anti-social. We had very definite reasons. First, there was so much to do, and only week ends in which to make the house livable, that every hour counted and we hated to be interrupted. Second, there was no place to receive visitors except to seat them on a pile of lumber, at the eminent risk of getting a nail in their pants. Moreover, both of us were usually hot, dirty, and disheveled. We could not appear to advantage for the judgment of a new community in that condition. So, if a motor sounded on the road, we took to the woods. From behind a bush I whispered bulletins to Billie, lying in the tall grass. When the visitors departed we sneaked out and returned to work.

Once we nearly got caught. A car arrived while we were working on the second floor of the house. Billie peeked from the window and saw a couple, dressed in their best, climb up the half-planked porch. They "yoo-hooed" but we kept still. Finally we heard the woman say:

"They aren't home, but I'd like to see what they are doing to the house. I'm going to look around."

After a tour of the lower regions she started up the stairs. Her husband protested.

"You can't go up there. It isn't decent."

"I can too. Nobody's home and anyway they aren't living in it."

By that time Billie and I had retreated to a newly plastered closet which smelled to high heaven. We were for it, and no mistake, if they inspected the bedrooms as thoroughly as the downstairs. Of course Billie whispered, "I'm going to sneeze."

"If you do, I'll strangle you where you stand," I hissed, in the best melodramatic tradition. She didn't sneeze and the woman came only to the top of the stairs; her husband absolutely refused to let her go farther. This was lucky for us as we wouldn't have had a chance to remain undiscovered.

As a matter of fact the residents of Colebrook and Norfolk were remarkably understanding of our situation in those first weeks and we are eternally grateful. After a hard day's work we were dead tired and only wanted to enjoy the peace and quiet of the farm. When at last we were reasonably settled, and began to see people, it was evident the neighbors had not held our early seclusion against us. Not all communities would be as tolerant.

Billie's prediction about the house was completely fulfilled. The ministrations of Uno Stenman, paint, paper, and country furniture had done wonders. It was small, to be sure, but fresh, bright, and attractive. Outside, the work progressed. All the scrub trees had been pulled out by the roots along the edge of the pond, opening a beautiful view from the house. The meadow was almost cleared, but it had cost much more than we expected. That was true about everything.

The garbage dump is a good example. The old cellar brimmed with debris of all sorts; also it smelled distressingly on hot days. Clearing it became a "must," and, moreover, a surprising archaeological investigation in early American history. Here, right in our own front yard at Pondwood Farm, lay a kitchen midden such as I had traveled to the ends of the earth to find. It revealed, in a remarkable state of preservation, successive strata of primitive human cultures. Never have I watched the story of prehistoric man unfold with greater excitement.

After the recent upper layer of auto tires, springs, tin cans, bottles, broken plates, cups, and rusted knives had been removed, rare and unusual specimens appeared with startling frequency. The workmen's shovels exhumed a corset. I examined it with breathless interest. Whalebone stays! Yes, it certainly was from the almost extinct Arctic bowhead whale, probably harpooned by one of the Nantucket or New Bedford ships. What beautiful maiden had pinched her ribs in that rigid framework to fit the size of a man's two hands! If only the corset could tell its story. When a wire hoopskirt was exposed I knelt reverently and excavated it with my own hands. In Grandmother's attic I had once seen a similar ghastly contrivance and, even as a boy, marveled at feminine vanity.

The middle stratum produced a shattered whalebone carriage whip, the remains of a double sleigh, and a horse collar. The people of this period undoubtedly knew, and used, horses. Obviously we were dealing with an advanced culture, when animals had been domesticated.

Carefully removing the upper layer of the lowest stratum, we uncovered evidences of a still older, and more primitive, civilization. A broken oxbow, beautifully preserved and capable of reconstruction, lay beside a rimless wooden wheel, with hickory spokes, showing no signs of fossilization.

By the time hardpan was reached and the deposit exhausted, I had accumulated a voluminous sheaf of notes and several trays of specimens arranged on cotton. Each had been carefully measured, photographed *in situ*, and recorded, so there could be no possible doubt as to the cultural horizon it represented. This research material was sufficient to occupy my leisure hours for many days. Although I was pleased at the unexpected good fortune in discovering this highly productive kitchen midden at our very door, the yawning chasm which confronted us appalled me. Not so my wife. I saw her prowling about with the speculative gleam in her eyes which I have learned to fear; inevitably, it means some new project with which I shall have to cope.

"There are," she said, "definite possibilities in this place."

"The only one I can see is to fill it up and that's going to cost plenty," I retorted gloomily.

"Not at all. We could put the foundation stones back in position, get a few loads of topsoil for inside, and have nice grass. I'd slope the outside down to the lawn and make a rock garden."

I thought we could meet the estimated cost. After the walls were restored and the topsoil purchased and graded, Billie said, "If only we had an open fireplace at the end we could use it for barbecues and picnics. Let's do it."

I visualized a small brick camp-fire sort of thing that I could build myself. That wasn't Billie's idea at all. So a real tailor-made stone fireplace with a chimney had to be constructed. Then we discovered that the inside lawn became a morass after every rain, for water from the meadow continually seeped into the depression. Without drains it was useless. Eventually the rock garden became a beautiful spot. We use it constantly, but it almost ruined my bank account.

Although we avoided society, rehabilitation of the farm brought us in daily contact with some Colebrook residents, for they did the work. We soon discovered that, as in all New England villages, community life revolves about the church. Voting in national and local elections is conducted in the basement; civic gatherings and social events of every description are held there. It is the meetinghouse in the most literal sense of the word. Our association with the church began immediately. When we first arrived as property owners, Mr. Cooper, one of the deacons, asked:

"Are you coming up for the Fourth of July celebration? There's going to be a sociable on the lawn and lunch. There'll be a speaker too. We don't know who he'll be yet but he'll be good—you can be sure of that—he'll be *good!*"

A few days later I was asked to be the speaker!

My theme was the Fourth of Julys I had spent in various parts of the world. None of the audience could have enjoyed it half as much as I did. Looking into the faces of the people who were to be our neighbors and friends, I felt that we were being accepted into the community. From that time on we were a part of Colebrook.

After my talk we ate a New England luncheon at small tables on the lawn. Women of the neighborhood produced the food. One baked a pie, another a cake, others furnished salad or brought a ham. Dozens of articles made by the women during the long winter evenings were sold from little booths: aprons, pot holders, baskets—things not only useful, but necessary to any country household. The church reaped the rewards of their virtuous labor.

I feel a particular pride in our church, for I helped to pay for the steeple. Shortly after we came to Colebrook a donation was requested to help liquidate the debt of six hundred dollars, incurred in constructing a new steeple. Why, I thought, should I not offer to give a lecture on my Gobi explorations with motion pictures? That same lecture had helped bring polo clubs out of the red in Shanghai, Tientsin, Peking, and the Fairfield Hunt Club in Connecticut. Steeplechasing and steeple building seemed definitely related. My suggestion was accepted with enthusiasm by the church committee. They drummed up patronage in the surrounding towns and charged a dollar admission. The performance, which took place in the Congregational church of Winsted, netted almost enough to clear the debt.

I learned something of the history of the church from Clarence Stotts. He is not only one of the oldest residents, the storekeeper, local historian, and general information bureau, but has represented the town in the State Legislature. I never tire of talking with Mr. Stotts. The back room of his store is a veritable museum of Colebrookiana. I was particularly interested in an old woodcut of the village, made long before the days of photography. (It might have been done yesterday except for an unobtrusive gasoline pump near the store.) Then, as now, the church dominated the center.

"Have you heard of the church war?" he asked.

I hadn't, but I did have time and interest, for I was keen to learn Colebrook's colonial history. I am recording the story, since it is typical of what happened in many other New England villages during colonial days. The bitter disputes as to the location of the churches almost amounted to civil strife.

The Colebrook quarrel began in 1781. Until ten years earlier the village was minus both church and preacher. For spiritual consolation the settlers repaired to Norfolk, six miles away. Attending divine service became a real expedition during the winter, when bitter gales piled snow waist high. Moreover, no decent New England community, however small or remote, could be without its meetinghouse. Something had to be done. Locating a place of worship was a momentous question for reasons far removed from religion. The business and residential center would grow up around the church, thus vitally affecting property values. The shrewd Yankee farmers were not ones to overlook such a bet.

"Setting the stake" for the meetinghouse became the all-absorbing topic of that day and many days to come. Some of the settlers wanted it north of the Mill Brook; others vehemently demanded that it be south of the unoffending stream. The "Northerners" and "Southerners" campaigned with all the energy of major political parties. The Northerners won by two votes.

In spite of a revival meeting in Norfolk, where many Colebrook residents were inspired, bitterness still smoldered in the

hearts of the Southerners. Efforts to build the meetinghouse were frustrated until 1784. In that year timbers were cut and a foundation laid. But the house of worship was never raised, for the Southerners hung grimly to their slogan, "South of the brook or not at all."

In the meantime counter-activities started in the once-peaceful community. Would you believe it, the Baptists seized the opportunity to descend upon the town and proselyte the inhabitants! The Congregational fold began to slip badly. The Northerners were especially susceptible to the invaders, and thus began the Baptist Society in North Colebrook.

The Baptists held their first meeting not far from Pondwood Farm on September 29, 1794, under the leadership of Elder Rufus Babcock. The elder seems to have been an exceedingly stout fellow and a man of many parts. For thirty-seven years he served the church and finally directed its destinies to the foot of our hill. It might be a church in a stage setting. Diminutive, but exquisite in every detail, it stands against a somber backdrop of magnificent pines. Many years ago it ceased to be a "working" church, but the tiny lawn is always mowed and its paint is fresh and white—evidence of the loving care bestowed by the few parishioners, now widely scattered over the hills and valleys of Colebrook town.

The conditions in the church war had become well-nigh intolerable. Everyone was thoroughly disgusted with a controversy which set neighbor against neighbor, family against family. The Mill Brook was a Rubicon which no one dared to cross. An unknown person eventually proposed a brilliant solution. Why, he said, should the dispute not be settled by the flip of a coin—heads, north of the Mill Brook, tails, to the south? Cheers from both factions greeted the courageous diplomat's suggestion. The lot was cast and drawn. Lady Luck favored the Southerners. The timbers for the original building, parked north of the brook, were duly transported south of the brook, and the stake was set at a spot almost opposite the present site. The sacred timbers were raised and put in place. A church was actually born, roofed, floored, and lighted, ready for an occupant to thunder against sin and expound upon the virtue of religious unity.

But the Northerners were poor sports; no worse, be it said, than the Southerners had been a few years earlier. They rejected offers to join in procuring a preacher, or in building up the society. More than half even refused to enter the portals of the new edifice. Worship they would in Norfolk or Winsted but not in Colebrook! Called upon to explain their intolerant attitude, the Northerners contended they had been cheated by a game of chance, assented to in a moment of weakness. They had consulted their consciences in the stilly night and said consciences made it clear that they could not possibly go to church south of the Mill Brook.

Persistency is its own reward. The Southerners were worn down and eventually voted to transfer the church north of the brook, the expenses to be defrayed by a tax on society. The month of February 1794 was selected as a propitious time for the "Great Removal." One hundred and fifty pairs of oxen were harnessed to the church, "gees" and "haws" shouted, and the edifice moved majestically forward. But when a slight decline was encountered the church seemed to forget its dignity and slid downhill in a most unchurchly manner. After two days of "exceeding labor" it had been moved only five hundred feet and a greater descent, a veritable precipice compared to the other, lay immediately ahead. Obviously the building would be wrecked long before it could be towed to its designated resting place. So there it sat for upward of a year, mute but accusing evidence of human obstinacy.

Whether or not buildings have personal preferences I will not argue, but this particular house of worship evidently had decided not to go north of the brook. Another attempt with ropes and pulleys demonstrated that if the edifice moved forward at all it would do so only at breakneck speed. The church won out. The Northerners and Southerners sat down to ponder on whether or not it was all worth while. That it was not became the unanimous verdict. The church, they agreed, would be put on a suitable spot. There it stands today, after fourteen years of wrangling and controversy. The record says, "Measures were immediately adopted to procure preaching." The preaching they got was Dr. Jonathan Edwards, Jr., one of the most distinguished men of his times. He was the son of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards, a former president of Princeton University, and perhaps the greatest theological writer in colonial history. Dr. Edwards came to Colebrook as so many of us have done, to obtain peace, quiet, and fresh inspiration from its immortal hills. Thus ended Colebrook's civil war.

III

Lord Jitters

Could Lord Jitters read, he would never forgive me for having neglected to mention him thus far in any chronicle of Pondwood Farm. That he is not the most important personage in the narrative would never enter his mind. It is fitting, therefore, that I introduce him properly, as becomes his dignity.

"Lord Jitters, may I present your readers?"

Lord Jitters bows gravely. He is delighted to meet you, he assures me in "catonese," a language which we both understand. I forgot to say that Lord Jitters is a white Persian cat. The last part of his name was bestowed upon him when he was only a fluffy ball of fur because he was never still. He finds it most undignified. He prefers always to be referred to by his full title. Elevation to the peerage came by divine right at the age of four months. At that time he assumed his seat in the House of Lords. His inheritance included my wife, me, George, an automobile, an apartment in New York, and Pondwood Farm. For a cat one might think he has done very well for himself. He, however, does not consider that to be so. There are certain annoyances in his life which he bears as a cross; to wit, other lesser domestic animals that have tried unsuccessfully to encroach upon his sovereignty. These have been dealt with firmly but justly as each one appeared.

Lord Jitters has an infirmity which he endeavors to conceal from the public. He is stone deaf. Not a sound can penetrate his eardrums. Were he consulted on the subject by a psychoanalyst, however, I am sure he would maintain that deafness is an asset. His thoughts are not disturbed by conversation which could hardly fail to be of less importance. It enables him to live in a world completely his own.

In order that His Lordship's character may be properly understood it is necessary that I present a short account of his early life and education. Lord Jitters was a precocious child—I might even say an infant prodigy. Still, he could not entirely escape the intrusion of certain inherited instincts which, at his early age, it was impossible to understand or analyze. One of these was the desire to watch a hole. His New York apartment did not abound in holes. After diligent search the only one he could discover was the drainpipe in the bathtub. Very shortly he made it evident that it displeased him to have the stopper left in the pipe. Then he settled down to prolonged concentration upon the hole. I do not think it was clear in his mind as to what might possibly emerge from the cavity. Nevertheless, this was a place to be watched and a duty to be done.

Being pure white, Lord Jitters accumulated a vast amount of soot during his excursions on the roof garden of his New York domicile. He had to be washed with soap and water. Talcum and brushing only changed the black to dirty gray. In regard to baths, his position has been made quite clear. He likes to be clean. Being scrubbed and soaked is not his idea of pleasure; still, he will not object if we put bath salts in the water and use sandalwood soap. "Ferdinand the Bull" had nothing on Lord Jitters in appreciating pleasant odors. When it is all over, and he has been dried with a Turkish towel and sprayed with perfume, he spends hours admiring himself.

Of Billie's flower arrangements he is often critical. After sniffing delicately at each of the blossoms he stands off to pass judgment on their arrangement.

"Not so good, if you ask me. Much too massed. A little more separation would make them easier to smell. Now these on the piano—much better. You see I have no difficulty in inhaling the odor from each separate flower without disarranging my hair. Yes, this is quite satisfactory. I shall remain here and let the perfume drift over me."

To be honest, I must report that Lord Jitters is exceedingly vain and laps up admiration with more avidity than he does cream. When we have guests he waits for the proper moment to make a stage entrance. Stalking into the room, his white plume waving, he greets each individual in turn. With gentle dignity he will allow himself to be stroked, purring in response. Then he selects a stool or a yellow satin lama coat on the piano, where he can pose in full view of the room. Although he will court the attention of strangers, Billie and I are not allowed to pick him up except when it suits his mood. We have often discussed this matter with him. His viewpoint is logical.

"I have a lovely house," he says. "I am decorative, as everyone admits. I also am host. Therefore, it is my duty to be

gracious to my guests and to enhance the beauty of our surroundings by showing myself to the best advantage. This, however, does not mean that I must submit to being pawed after the guests have gone. When I wish to be fondled I will let you know. I do not like to be touched at all times, as you are very well aware."

Once we made a great mistake of agreeing to care for a tiny monkey belonging to one of our friends. Its body was about eight inches long. The little beast, which rejoiced in the name of "Spooky," was as near perpetual motion and chain lightning as any living thing I have ever seen. Even Elsa Maxwell had been unable to cope with it after a week's trial. Lord Jitters was absolutely outraged. He tried to ignore it, but the limit of his endurance was passed one day when Spooky made a flying leap, landed on Jitters's back, tweaked his tail, and disappeared behind a chair. The Lord delivered an ultimatum to Billie and me.

"I have endured the presence in my house of this distasteful creature," it ran. "I have endeavored to overlook your undignified conduct in the traffic you have had with it. I will not, however, be subjected to such personal attacks as that which you have just witnessed. I intend to retire to the rock garden and I refuse to enter this house again until that objectionable creature has been permanently removed."

Out in the garden he went, there to remain for two days. Even though it rained Lord Jitters preferred to crouch under a bush (where we could witness his misery, of course) rather than capitulate. That broke us down, and the monkey was sent away.

At the age of seven months Lord Jitters was taken to inspect his newly acquired country estate, Pondwood Farm. Not being entirely sure of his reactions to motorcar transport, his guardians, Billie and me, deemed it advisable to insure his safety by purchasing a beautiful green leather harness for him. Lord Jitters, however would have none of it. He simply lay down. Obviously he considered it *infra dig* to be trussed up like a street dog and led about on a leash. If we persisted in fostering this indignity upon him he would not get to his feet. His deportment in the car was exemplary, as we should have known it would be. Stretching out on the back of the driver's seat, he watched the passing show interestedly until such time as he deemed it had received enough of his attention. Then he settled in Billie's lap to sleep away the hours before our arrival at his country seat.

Pondwood Farm, however, offered so much that was new and unexpected that for the first time we saw his composure shaken. Never before had he left the monastic seclusion of his apartment. The world of outdoors was as strange to him as it would be to one of us had we suddenly been transported in a rocket ship to the planet Mars. Every sight and smell was unknown and exciting. Grass in the orchard was three feet high interspersed with daisies, black-eyed Susans, and other flowers. Each one must be sniffed and investigated. Before he knew it, he had ventured far into what, to him, was a grotesque jungle. Great stems of grass stretched far above his head; enormous branching weeds cut off his view of the sky; a tangle of creeping vines made it well-nigh impossible to walk. He could see nothing. He was lost—hopelessly lost. For the first time in his life fear descended upon him like an enveloping cloud. Gathering all the breath his lungs would hold, he wailed in terror. Billie and I heard the first shriek and waded through the grass to his assistance. We found him crouching at the base of a huge milkweed, his little face contorted with fright. Into Billie's arms he came with a soft croon of happiness, clasping both paws tightly about her neck. Then in a series of rapid "pur-r-ups" he related the harrowing experience through which he had passed.

The maple trees in the yard offered the next adventure. Clinging to the trunk, he looked about excitedly. This was infinitely better than the scratching post in his New York apartment. It was wonderful to spread his toes and sink their sharp claws into the soft bark. Ascending experimentally step by step, in a few moments he was sitting in a crotch twelve feet from the ground. It was delightful up there among the leaves and swaying branches. He had a feeling of exhilaration and achievement such as he had never known before. He remained until a certain discomfort in the region of his stomach told him it was dinnertime. All right, he'd descend. But how? It was easy enough going up head first, but that didn't work on the down trip. Finally he sent an SOS. Billie came on the run, as he knew she would, and stretched up her arms. That must mean she wanted him to jump, so jump he did. Lord Jitters landed on the top of her head, clung desperately to her thick hair, and slid to her shoulder, leaving several small scratches on her face. I had viewed the performance with disapproval. "No cat of mine," I said, "shall go for another hour without learning how to come down a tree."

Therefore, after his heart had regained its normal rate, we gave him the first lesson. In a few minutes he had learned to switch his rear about while hanging on with his front claws, and to come down backward. This was a turning point in Jitters's life, for it opened to him the World of Trees.

Lord Jitters never had seen a dog until he went into residence at Pondwood Farm. Our neighbor, Lou Guerin, came on the lawn followed by his Irish setter, Cobb. Jitters was busy sniffing roses when he looked up and saw us patting the big red animal. Every hair on his body stood erect. His plume swelled to twice its size. He crept toward us, eyes blazing, and suddenly flew at Cobb like a white demon. The setter yelped in fright and legged it for the road. Lord Jitters followed to the gate. There he stopped, glaring. Then he paraded along the stone wall to make sure the dog did not venture again upon his property. Moreover, we got a lecture upon what would happen if he ever saw us touching that red animal again. The ease with which he had defeated his first dog engendered in his mind a complete disdain for the canine world. He scrupulously attends to his own business, but let a stray dog so much as cross his property line, and Jitters launches a furious attack. The bigger they come the faster they run. From every encounter he has emerged the victor, but we are in mortal terror that someday courage will be his downfall.

Strangely enough he does not at all object to water as do most cats. Only a drenching rain will drive him indoors. I believe the baths to which he has been subjected since infancy are responsible. One day he was with us in a canoe on the pond. We landed but he remained playing with a bug. The canoe floated off ten feet or more before Jitters discovered that he was adrift alone. Without the slightest hesitation he jumped overboard, swam to shore, shook himself, and continued about his affairs. He will splash through mud in swamps and refuses to be carried even when the water is inches deep.

Almost immediately he became a country cat. Silk and soft raiment were discarded when he arrived at the farm, and, figuratively, he donned overalls just as I did. From short excursions into the woods he learned to take care of himself on an expedition. At first he was often lost in the underbrush and tall ferns but soon that problem was solved. Since he cannot hear, he must depend entirely upon sight. When we disappear he climbs the nearest tree, looks about until he locates us, sets his mental compass, and makes a beeline through the bushes, yowling for us to wait. He is certain we never will go far without knowing where he is.

Shortly after we bought the farm Billie and I started one cloudy morning to explore the more distant parts of our domain. Lord Jitters was with us. On this particular day, I must admit, frankly, that I got lost. It is the cause of deep humiliation to me and of never-ending teasing by my wife. I would much prefer to let the distressing incident remain dead and buried, but that she will not do.

"You, an explorer," she gibes, "getting lost on our own property!"

I quote Daniel Boone. Someone asked if he were ever lost in the woods. "Well," he said, "I was never actually lost, but I was *confused* for three or four days."

Of course with a compass, or had there been sun, I would not have been confused. I will cite only a few examples from my past to demonstrate that my contention is true. I have traveled the unexplored forests of northern Korea, up to the Long White Mountain, and down the headwaters of the Yalu River, with only a compass as guide. On the trackless desert of Outer Mongolia, where the plains roll away in great waves and every wave looks like every other wave, I wandered hither and yon, returning unerringly to that little dot in the vast land-sea that was our camp. Through the jungles of Borneo, amid trees stretching up and up until their summits seemed to touch the sky, walled by creepers and ropes of vines like a barbed-wire entanglement, and hedged about with oozing swamps, never for an hour was I confused. Modesty forbids more details of my exploits, but I think the picture is clear; always I had a compass.

On that unfortunate morning we plunged into the forest behind the pond. Lord Jitters trotted along at our heels, now and then investigating a hole or sitting on a log purring contentedly when we stopped to rest. Finally an enormous thicket of laurel confronted us. I took a deer trail which began beautifully but petered out in a tangled maze after we were far into an almost impenetrable growth. It was tough going. Sometimes we had to crawl on hands and knees. We could not see twenty feet in any direction. Billie and Jitters stayed close at my heels. Our hands and faces were scratched, clothes torn, tempers worn thin. When, finally, we emerged from the infernal place, after twisting and turning a hundred times, I did not know north from south. Clouds hung low and the tall trees obscured every possible landmark. Poor Billie hadn't uttered a word of complaint—in fact she hadn't uttered a word, which was ominous. Lord Jitters dragged a bit. He was panting visibly and his little pink tongue hung out. We stopped often—silent—and he just sat there regarding me with accusing eyes. I was definitely on the spot but tried to present a front of confidence and lighthearted abandon.

"Darling," I said, "you and Jitters rest while I prowl a bit. I want to have a look at those pine trees on the hill. Aren't they magnificent? Probably we own them. Isn't that exciting?"

Billie looked at me through narrowed eyes.

"You're lost," said she. "Why don't you admit it?"

"Lost! How absurd. Of course I'm not lost. That laurel was hard to take but now we're out of it and I'll pick a short way home."

"I don't believe it," was all she answered.

Up to the summit of the hill I plodded. Emulating Lord Jitters's procedure, I swung into the lowest branches of a tall pine, climbed almost to the top, and gazed hopefully about. No soap. Only trees and more trees. Not a vestige of a landmark that I could recognize. If only I could discover which way was north! When we left home a light south breeze was blowing; that might give a clue. So I tossed dry leaves into the air. They dropped back lifelessly, straight down. I wet a finger and held it aloft like a torch. One side was just as cool as the other. I examined the trees carefully. Moss is supposed to grow thickest on the north side, though I don't believe it. On these darned pines, where there was any moss at all, it had distributed itself about the trunks in the most impartial manner. I was utterly defeated. North could be any one of four directions. A single alternative was left. The slope we were on indicated a valley. Probably in its bottom would be a stream, which must eventually reach Sandy Brook at the foot of our hill. That was the drainage of the land. In any event it meant a long trek.

Returning to Billie and Jitters, I forced a smile and said brightly, "We don't want to return the way we came. We're out to see the country. Let's go down through this lovely pine grove until we find a stream and follow it to Sandy Brook. Won't that be fun?"

"No, it won't be fun," my wife said in a flat voice. "You're lost."

Without reply I started pushing through the undergrowth down the hill. Billie and Jitters followed listlessly. Sure enough in the bottom of the ravine we did find a stream. Slipping and sliding along its bank, it led us through a god-awful alder swamp into a wide valley and eventually to the state road where it crosses Sandy Brook. We trudged along saying nothing. Lord Jitters plodded behind us, his beautiful white fur a mass of mud and briars, but game to the end. I tried to get him to ride on my shoulder but he indignantly refused. He was determined to finish it the hard way.

We arrived wearily at Pondwood Farm. My stock was very low, but at least I knew what to do. First, I ran a hot bath for Billie and mixed her a cocktail. Jitters rated a large dish of cream and a place on the bed. While he stretched luxuriously, I combed out his fur, restoring a semblance of his immaculate self. Before an hour passed both my wife and my cat were speaking to me again.

At that, I need not have been so crestfallen at being lost in our own woods which were unknown to me. Mile after mile of unbroken forest sweeps over the mountains and down into wild, rugged ravines. On some hillsides one can glimpse a farmhouse, but farm lands are few and far between. The forest is nearly a duplicate of what it was when, in 1633, that great explorer and Indian trader, John Oldham, made his way through the trackless wilderness from the Massachusetts Bay Colony into the beautiful Connecticut River Valley. Like Daniel Boone and his vision of Kentucky, Oldham was inspired by this New England paradise with an almost religious zeal. His enthusiasm for the green hills, tall trees, and fertile vales brought settlers from Salem and Boston to establish a colony at Wethersfield, not more than fifty miles from Pondwood Farm. The Dutch had already sailed up the river from Saybrook and erected trading posts at Hartford and Windsor.

Some of the Wethersfield settlers were massacred by raiding Pequot Indians. Oldham himself lost his life and scalp at the hands of these same savages. But the English colonists stuck to their guns and the homes they had cut out of the wilderness with such infinite labor. They found the river tribes peaceful Indians and in 1635 were buying land by the square mile from the redmen. The "big chief," Sequassin, set the style for others and went into the real-estate business like a modern tycoon.

"How about a nice home up in the Green Woods country? Very cheap. Just a few bottles of rum and it's yours."

Of course he did not mention the fact that the same parcel had already been sold half-a-dozen times. A small cloud on the title meant nothing in those days. Nevertheless, these friendly transactions with their red brethren possibly were the basis for the later claims of Windsor and Hartford to these "Western Lands." Be that as it may, after a bitter dispute, which

lasted forty years, our particular region, comprising 18,199 acres, was eventually allotted to seventy-nine proprietors. "In 1732 the General Assembly enacted that it should forever be called 'Colebrook,' named for Colebrook in Devonshire, England."

It was all very well to have a parcel of land in the Green Woods, but how to get there! It might as well be located on Mars unless a road were built. There were Indian trails, to be sure, but that was all. One could not take one's wife, family, and household furniture over an Indian trail. Roads lose their significance to modern city dwellers. We take them as a matter of course, driving over them in high-powered cars, criticizing every tiny bump. But I have firsthand knowledge of what roads mean to a new country. As a matter of fact, I have made them myself. In Mongolia the trails which we broke through the desert are now the highways of civilization.

Never will I forget one night in the Gobi when we were camped near a caravan trail, old before Marco Polo was born. For thousands of years it had been used to transport silk from Cathay to India. Darkness was creeping in, but a faint trace of sunset glow still lingered in the western sky. Out of the east sounded the melodious tones of camel bells, and a long line of grotesque two-humped forms, with curving necks and swinging legs, materialized like silent ghosts. The swish, swish, swish of great flat feet and the creak of swaying loads were the only sounds. A Chinese driver plodded beside the lead camel. He spoke in the soft, slurring dialect of the Shansi district, which I understand. "For six moons we have been on the road," he said, "carrying tea, cloth, and tobacco. The geese will fly north again before we return." Curiously he gazed at the motorcars beside the tents. "*Chi chur* [wind carts]," he remarked laconically. "You go very fast in them."

That line of camels disappearing silently into the night made me sad. We, with our automobiles, were destroying the sanctity of the age-old desert. Never after our passage would it be the same again, for others would follow in our tracks.

The first road to Colebrook built in 1760, is still called the Old North Road. "According to tradition," writes the Hon. John Boyd, "it was a wonder of the age that a direct and practicable route could be found and opened through the jungles and over the succession of steep, rocky hills and mountains of the Green Woods, for travel and the movement of troops and munitions between Hartford and Albany. It soon became, and continued until 1800, the great and almost the sole thoroughfare of the colony in the direction of Albany. Continental troops passed over it for frontier service. Detachments of Burgoyne's army, as prisoners of war, marched over it to the quarters assigned them. 'It should not be inferred from the amount of travel that this road was an Appian Way,' said Mr. Boyd. 'On the contrary, direct as it was, it went up and down the highest hills, on uneven beds of rocks and stones, and passed marshy valleys on corduroy of the coarsest hemlock structure.' . . . This historic road is still open for travel over most of its course."

A few days after our unfortunate initial experience Billie and I made another exploration to the southwest toward Nap Hill, which we could see from the house, rising in a great sweep of green. Lord Jitters trotted along behind us as usual. The object was to discover the limits of our property. Most of the old deeds delineate the holdings by such marks as "a stone wall running east and west" or "from a crooked pine tree on the top of a knoll ten rods from a glacial boulder."

This time we had a compass. Billie's confidence in my ability to navigate the woods was still somewhat shaken but I persuaded her to give me another trial. We took a line from the house and followed it through the forest, skirting the great thicket of laurel which had been our Waterloo on the first expedition. Eventually we found a stone wall that probably marks the limits of Pondwood Farm. It appeared so from the map given us by the former owner, but I am not sure of it even to this day. Beyond the wall a magnificent grove of pines sweeps up to the edge of a great ravine that drops away in a sheer precipice for a hundred feet.

We climbed down one side to a mountain stream which tumbles over rocks through close walls of green. It was the upper reaches of Brummagem, the brook we had found when I got lost. Trout lay in the pools and a mink spat at us from a fallen log like an angry cat. Lord Jitters gazed at the slim brown ball of living fire with every hair erect. This "Thing" was something new in his life and he didn't like it.

"She has a litter somewhere near," I told Billie. Her feminine instincts immediately saw something more interesting than natural history.

"That's wonderful," she said. "This fall you can catch the whole family and make me a mink scarf."

On the other side of the brook an overgrown abandoned wood road which we had missed on the first expedition led down the valley. While we rested, Lord Jitters made a historical discovery. He had wandered off on a personal exploration and soon we heard the peculiar yowl that means we must drop everything and come at once. He was sitting

on the edge of what evidently was an old house foundation with a white-footed mouse under one paw. Presently he deposited it at Billie's feet, flirting his somewhat bedraggled tail with the greatest pride and waiting to be praised for his prowess.

It seemed a strange place for the remains of a house, but nearby were several others and a slag pile. Then it became clear. This was the site of a forge built by Capt. Ezekiel Phelps more than a century and a half ago. I had learned that, during the Revolutionary War, Colebrook forges played an important part in furnishing cannon, mortars, swivels, shot, hand grenades, camp kettles, and other army necessities. Most of the iron was mined at Salisbury on the eastern slope of the Taconic Mountains, twenty-five miles away. Ethan Allen, afterward the hero of Ticonderoga, with three other gentlemen, erected the first blast furnace at nearby Lakeville. Allen, a rip-roaring adventurer who took the law into his own hands, feared neither God, man, nor the devil. He rejoiced in the price on his head, which the governor of New York never could collect, and became one of the Iron Kings of Connecticut. His concessions reached as far as Norfolk, but eventually his interests centered in the New Hampshire Grants, and he sold the property to Richard Smith, a Boston merchant of doubtful colonial sympathies.

Smith had originated a process of making high-quality iron instead of ore from pig metal, and probably chose Colebrook for the erection of forges because of its abundant water power and wood for charcoal. The pigs were brought over the rough, hilly country in oxcarts and saddlebags. The Colebrook region became the site of a dozen or more forges. Part of the immense chain that was stretched across the Hudson River near West Point, to prevent the British from sailing up the river, was made at Norfolk. The iron industry continued at Colebrook until well into the nineteenth century. I am glad it is ended. It would seem a desecration to me, who am not industrially minded, that these beautiful hills and forest should echo to the sound of clanking metal.

Billie and I poked about among these ruins of colonial history which Lord Jitters had discovered, trying to reconstruct, in imagination, what had happened here so long ago. Probably the workmen were from England, for "Brummagem" is a corruption of Birmingham in the local speech of that great wrought-iron center. Captain Phelps doubtless imported them to operate his forge. The overgrown trail, I learned later, was the ancient road to the forge and led us down to the state highway. The valley east of the stream through which we had floundered was once a pasture, but is now a jungle of scrub birch and alder where we shoot woodcock and grouse. Stone walls are everywhere in the woods—mute evidence of a land that has returned to its virgin state. A century ago they separated pasture from pasture, home from home. Who built the walls, and what happiness or tragedy went on behind them, no one knows. Even tradition has lost their names.

But some of the stories of these stout-hearted, strong-willed men have been set down in records of the town. We know that Benjamin Horton was the first settler. He came in December 1765. Captain Samuel Rockwell was the fifth pioneer to build a house in Colebrook. It stands on a tree-shaded knoll overlooking the center. He, too, was a winter traveler and chose February, the coldest and stormiest month of the year, to do his trek. With Hepzibah, his wife, and four sons, aged eight, not quite seven, barely three, and Reuben in his mother's arms, to say nothing of another on the way, who became Alpha, first baby born in the town, the doughty captain set out for Colebrook from East Windsor.

Bag and baggage were piled on an oxcart. Hepzibah rode on horseback with the baby; that is recorded. Presumably the remainder of the flock took their chances on the oxcart driven by Sam, or ran about in the bushes beside the trail like rabbits. I am glad to state that Hepzibah issued an ultimatum to the captain: "Not one foot will I move without my Windsor chairs, my chest of drawers, and my desk."

Captain Sam had already done a spot of work in Colebrook before he brought Hepzibah and the family. The frame of his house was up, and while Hepzibah and the children stayed with his brother Joseph, two miles away, Sam finished the dwelling. It was a one-story room with a large chimney in the center and a big attic.

The Rockwells, I assume, did the usual. They girdled the trees, cleared the dead timber in the third year, and sowed the land to rye, herd grass, and white clover. Later oats, potatoes, and turnips gave the family their vitamins and kept them up to snuff. It is well that Sam was a powerful man. He had need of all his muscles to do the job.

Captain Samuel Rockwell became one of the pillars of Colebrook and remained so until his death. It was in his house that the little band of settlers met on December 3, 1779, for the first town meeting and "took the action necessary to start business as a body politic." For years almost every meeting of consequence, political or social, was held at the Rockwells'. After the battle of Saratoga a hundred and twenty-four Hessian prisoners spent the night there on their way to Boston. Could the walls speak, what a fascinating story they would tell! Only a few weeks ago Billie and I were

shown over the house from ground to attic by the lovely Mrs. Edward Hinchliff. We sat before the great stone fireplace in the "keeping room" where town meetings were held, saw the furniture, read the original land grant, reverently handled Hepzibah's wooden mortar for grinding corn, and tipped the cradle in which the baby Alpha was rocked.

Digressing for a moment, here is a problem for psychologists, or those who believe in the "Wheel of Life," to ponder. With absolutely no premeditation, or knowledge at that time, of where my father's family tree began, I have returned to my ancestral soil. John Andrus, or Andrews, came to America from Essex County, England, in 1640. He settled in the pioneer town of Tunxis, now Farmington, twenty-nine miles from Colebrook, and became one of its eighty-four proprietors. A grandson, John Andrews, moved to John Oldham's town of Weathersfield, thirty-eight miles from Colebrook. All of my father's family continued to live in Farmington, Weathersfield, or New Britain, except my great-grandfather, Noah Andrews, who migrated to Worthington, Ohio. His son, my grandfather, moved to Worthington, Indiana, where my father was born. He married my mother, Cora Chapman, in Beloit, Wisconsin, and there I first saw the light of day. Thus the wandering swallow has flown back to the ancestral roost.

There is also an interesting and rather strange association between Colebrook and Beloit by way of the Rockwells. Eliza Rockwell, granddaughter of Captain Samuel, married Ralph Emerson in 1817. He had a divine call to preach in Rockford, Illinois, twelve miles from my home town of Beloit. His brother, Joseph Emerson, followed him westward and became one of the revered professors of Beloit College. Emerson Hall, the women's dormitory at which I was a constant visitor in undergraduate days, was built and named for him. I used to see the white-haired professor, a frail little man, on the campus, although I never attended his classes. The Rockwell house is now in possession of Edward C. Hinchliff, great-great-great-grandson of Captain Samuel. He lives at Rockford, Illinois, but summers in Colebrook. From him I obtain Beloit College news.

It was from the Rockwell house that town edicts were issued and records kept. Many of them concern the small things that are of importance to us who live in a country village today. It is comforting to know that in 1778 the council stretched their legs before the fire, drank a beaker or two of rum, and voted that "the rams found within the bounds of this town running at large and unrestricted from the first of September to the middle of November next ensuing should be forfeited to him or them who secure and take them up." Of course we know what rams are up to at that season of the year and I highly commend the foresight of the town statesmen. At the same meeting pigs were given a better break, for it was decided that swine could run at large on the highway and common for another year.

I was distressed to learn that, even in the days of its infancy, Colebrook had a relief problem. At the town meeting, held on February 23, 1789, which was adjourned from the church to Captain Rockwell's house (doubtless for refreshment), it was voted that Samuel Phillips be permitted to sell his land in Colebrook on condition that the purchaser transport said Phillips up the Mohawk as far as Fort Herkimer. But "said Phillips" seems to have evaded transport for at a subsequent meeting the selectmen were directed to make provision for the Phillips and Martin families "now on the town cost."

Phelps is another name that carries back to earliest Colebrook history. Carrington Phelps is the last male of the family which has had possession of the property continuously for one hundred and eighty years. Cary was middleweight wrestling champion at Yale and, even today, though I am younger than he is, I should hate to tangle with him. Half-a-dozen buildings are of Revolutionary time or earlier, and the tavern, just at the bottom of our hill, is one of the most romantic houses in all New England.

The tavern seems as much a part of the living present as of the past. Whenever I go to our mailbox I half expect to see a stagecoach drawn up at the door, men in ruffled shirts, long coats, and high hats, helping the women alight on the stone horse block. Ladies, front to the parlor; men, right, to the taproom entrance in the rear. Captain Phelps, behind the corner bar, filling beakers of rum and hard cider for the passengers gathered about the great fireplace.

Nothing is much changed outside, except that the sign "Phelps Tavern" no longer hangs over the door. One side bears a painting of the British lion; the other flaunts an eagle, symbol of the Colonies. English travelers could look at the lion if that made them happy, while colonists gazed upon the eagle. Captain Phelps was concerned only with their physical needs, not their political faiths. He was an innkeeper and in business; then, as now, "the customer is always right." But the Phelps family were no lukewarm patriots. They typified the "Spirit of '76." Captain Josiah, sixty-seven years of age, his two sons and grandson, little Josiah, a trumpeter only fifteen years old, fought in George Washington's army.

The tavern was more than just a stopping place for stages from Hartford to Albany. The ballroom on the second floor was the gathering place for social events and dances of the neighborhood. Its pine paneling has become a lovely olive green with a patina as soft as satin. Of course the tavern isn't operating any more. Its doors were closed about 1840, when railroads ended stagecoach travel. But Cary has preserved it as a part of family history.

Colebrook's contribution to the Revolutionary War in man power was in proportion to its population which, at that time, was only thirty-nine families and one hundred and fifty individuals. Probably the village got the news of Lexington two days after the event by courier over the Old North Road. Six Colebrook men responded and fifty or more did their bit in the struggle before the war ended. Some went to the siege of Boston; others to hold the forts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and at least four were with Benedict Arnold on the disastrous expedition to Quebec.

We do have a most enviable record of substantial people. Colebrook was the home of several governors, preachers of distinction, college professors, and statesmen. Aaron Burr came with his bride, the beautiful Madame Jumel, to stay with the Hoyts. It is even recorded that when Governor Henry Edwards visited his cousins, the same Hoyts, he arrived "with all the pomp and fine livery of those days." So impressive was he that the butler stubbed his toe and spilled the soup!

IV

A Forest Interlude

All during my summer vacation Billie and I worked early and late on the farm. We could talk, or think, of nothing but the projects planned for the next day. By the end of August the meadow had sprouted young grass to cover the unsightly scars left by the tractor; flowers made the rock garden a riot of color, and red swamp maples gazed at themselves in the pond's mirror like Narcissus at the pool. The house, we were sure, rejoiced in its new white paint and green blinds. Its stark nakedness was a thing of the past, for transplanted junipers and laurel bushes clustered about its feet.

It was only the beginning. Our immediate concern was to make the surroundings presentable, but every improvement called for something else. Before we knew it we were involved in a vicious circle, yet it was difficult to deny our land what it needed. Gratitude for its renaissance was so obvious that it possessed us like a child being brought back to health after a long illness, basking in the love and care of devoted parents. Nothing was ever demanded. It just sat there, smiling wistfully, mute, happy for what we gave, but hoping for just a little more. It seemed to know we would take pity on its helplessness.

The farm absorbed every cent we had. Long ago the money allotted for improvements had been spent. We began to deny ourselves accustomed pleasures.

"What about the theater?" I'd say when we were in New York.

"Yes, it would be nice," Billie invariably answered. "But we need quantities of topsoil for the garden and a load of manure. Let's go to the movies and put the money into the farm."

So we'd go to the movies and feel exceedingly virtuous.

At last Billie made a thorough study of our financial situation.

"We are," she said, "about to become a charge on the community. Either we stop spending money on the farm, or you've got to make some. The answer is, write."

When she speaks in that tone I've learned not to argue. I was having a wonderful time fussing about the place, leaving practical details to her, and hated to stop. Nevertheless, I had to admit that a period of mental concentration would do me no real harm. I was the picture of health, and brown as an Indian. So I thought of an article for a magazine, telephoned the editor, and sat down to write. The only comfortable place in which to work appeared to be the living room, and that turned out to be about as private as the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. Things happened all about me. People came to the door, thousands of them, it seemed. I'd glare ferociously, snarl like a saber-toothed tiger, and they'd beat a hasty retreat. Most were workmen whom Billie had summoned. Having been shooed off the porch, they would slink furtively about the place until they discovered her. Usually I read my stuff aloud to myself. The first time our colored cook, Florina, who was new, sought out my wife.

"The doctor," she said, "is talking out loud and there's nobody there. I looked. Nobody. I think you ought to know about it."

Billie assured her that I was reasonably normal; that it was merely the birth of an idea; that when those spells came she was to ignore what went on and continue about her work. She did, and started to clean the dining room. Why she had to do it just then, God only knows. At last I could stick it no longer and, muttering curses, retired to our bedroom. No sooner was I settled and just about to capture a beautiful but elusive thought, than Billie appeared with a man from the Winsted Furniture Company to lay a rug.

"Oh, you're here," she said. "I thought you were working downstairs. For goodness' sake, why can't you stay put? I got everything fixed for you and now you won't use it."

What I actually thought would not bear repeating. The oral edition ran something like this: "How in the name of Tophet

can a man work in a traffic jam? You've told me to write and make some money. I want to write. I'll write till hell freezes over and then I'll write on the ice. But I cannot and will not write downstairs."

"Poor thing," she said soothingly, "you really are put upon. I'll bring up a card table and fix you a nice place in the guest room."

It was hot, the room was stuffy, and, in addition, just to annoy me, I was sure, the lawn mower hummed like a swarm of bees right under the window. "Oh, damn it all! Me for the woods," I said. "Maybe I can get a little peace and quiet there."

I discovered a spot under a great beech tree, deep in the forest, where the birds twittered, the woodpeckers pecked, and I was alone. Blessed silence, except for the subdued voices of wild things. There I could write and "list to nature's teachings."

I spent three days under my tree. Not only did I finish the article but a great idea was born. Why shouldn't we build a studio here in the woods? A log cabin where I could have my books and my thoughts all undisturbed by maids, visitors, workmen, or rug layers.

Billie favored the plan. In fact she embraced it, for even her angelic disposition was strained by having me under foot during the throes of composition. Moreover, she knew someday it would rain, I couldn't take to the woods, and she'd have the problem in her lap again. "But," she said, "you will have to write a lot more if we are going to build the cabin."

Heaven favors the poor workingman! In the next mail came a suggestion from a magazine that I do an article for them on dinosaurs. Would I do an article on dinosaurs! Would I! It solved my studio problem if I could satisfy the editor. Dinosaurs were right down my alley. Of course the blessed editor didn't know it, but dinosaurs were practically sitting on our doorstep. He visualized the thousands upon thousands of miles I had traveled in quest of dinosaurs; he remembered that I had dug up some eggs, which I am never allowed to forget, in the Gobi Desert. To him I was the "big egg man."

But Pondwood Farm is all things to a naturalist. Was there not a kitchen midden of extraordinary archaeological interest in our own front yard? The editor had asked for dinosaurs. Certainly. I had only to travel a few miles to be in the ancestral home of dinosaurs. Even Connecticut folklore has tales of the footprints of "Noah's Raven." They happen to be fossilized tracks of a birdlike dinosaur, but what is that to folklore?

The first dinosaur bones ever discovered in the world, or at least recorded, were found at East Windsor in 1818, only about thirty miles from Pondwood. No one knew what creature the bones represented, for even the word dinosaur had not been coined at that time. So our local fossils remained incognito until six years later, when part of a skeleton was unearthed near Oxford, England. Then the impressive name, *Anchisaurus colurus*, was bestowed upon our poor reptile by Professor Marsh. (Its bones rest in peace in the Yale Museum, Catalog No. 2125, in case you wish to view the remains.)

The Connecticut dinosaurs have a further distinction—they are very, very old. While I was frantically scrambling about Asia searching for dinosaurs, the best we could do was to dig up virtual children so far as age is concerned. Ours could boast only a paltry one hundred million years—mere infants when compared to the *two*-hundred-million-year-old reptiles that wandered over Pondwood Farm.

The face of our state has changed since those dim, dark days of the Triassic period. It wasn't very attractive then—a sub-arid climate and a dull, drab landscape of somber green, for the vegetation was only conifers, ferns, and cycads. Not a single flower to give color to the forests; no brilliant tints of autumn leaves in October. Neither were there birds. Even the ancient *Archaeopteryx*, with his startling array of teeth, had not yet been born. Turtles swam in the ponds, lizards basked on the rocks, and dinosaurs skipped about the uplands in incredible millions. The record is baffling in the paucity of its remains. Bones are amazingly scarce. Why, no one seems to know. The story is told by "footprints on the sands of time," for our state produces the finest and the greatest number of dinosaur tracks in all the world.

Some two hundred million years ago, when the dinosaurs disported themselves in the Connecticut River estuary, they used to travel across the exposed mudflats. Eventually high water again covered the expanse, filled in the footprints with soft mud, and left perfect casts. Thousands upon thousands of them show that the reptiles had a regular thoroughfare from west to east; some, even, are imprints of dinosaur posteriors where they squatted down to rest. Years ago I had studied

the Connecticut bones; thus, with my Gobi experience, I was well equipped to write a treatise on dinosaurs.

Retiring to my sanctuary under the beech tree, I sat early and late. A chipmunk became very friendly. I always brought some peanuts in my pocket. Within a few hours he was sitting on my knee and taking them from my fingers until his cheek pouches would hold no more. Then he scurried off to a hole under a root where he was storing his winter's provender.

One day I had an experience that made me forget all about dinosaurs. I was writing comfortably when a great black-and-white woodpecker, as big as a crow, with a red topknot, swung to the side of an oak tree and began pounding industriously at a rotten branch. Being a naturalist, I knew him to be the pileated woodpecker, second largest of all woodpeckers. Never had I seen one before on his native heath. He is primarily a bird of the northern forests, but individuals who find our climate congenial and discover wild woodlands will remain here during the summer. I sat very still until he swooped away into the lower forest. Then I ran to the house, got a chunk of suet, and pounded it into crevices of the bark. I was too excited to write more about dinosaurs that morning. Returning to my tree with a pair of field glasses, I sat down to watch. In half an hour the magnificent bird was back again. He discovered the suet immediately and devoured every smitch in great gulps as his long beak dug it out from beneath the bark. I replenished the supply and he returned each day for his accustomed meal. Once I fooled him by putting in some salt pork which he didn't like. I could see the expression of disgust as he spat out the distasteful mouthful. As if to vent his annoyance, he began attacking a dead tree with vicious blows of his pile-driver bill. Finally I called out:

"Hey, woodpecker, if you keep on you'll give yourself a splitting headache and go blind and deaf. No brain can stand that pounding."

Apparently he didn't understand English, for he continued throwing out chips as big as my hand. Then I remembered that all woodpeckers not only have very strong neck muscles but special compensation for absorbing shock. I need not have worried about his brain. With the field glasses I could see every detail of his operations. He was sitting comfortably on the stiff spikes of his tail, just as a telephone repairman rests on the spurs strapped to his legs when he climbs a pole. Whenever the woodpecker excavated a beetle or a grub in the dead wood, his barbed tongue shot out, impaling the food on the hard spearlike tip. Apparently my friend liked our forest, for he brought his wife and they remained all summer.

"Dinosaurs" progressed slowly because I had another visitor of the feminine persuasion. A beautiful doe came up the hill through the forest as I sat under the beech. Her dainty feet sounded like raindrops on the leaves and I snuggled tightly against the trunk of my tree. Fortunately, I was wearing a dark blue shirt and she came within twenty feet, nuzzling the moss for beechnuts. Suddenly a breath of vagrant wind brought the scent of me to her nostrils. With a "wo-o-osh" she threw up her head, gazed intently for a second, and then leaped off into the forest. But she did not go far. Something, some instinct unfathomable by human minds, told her she need have no fear. In ten minutes she came stepping lightly back, head up, exploring the wind with distended nostrils. She saw me this time, but because I remained absolutely motionless she began to feed on the scattered beechnuts, continually stopping to gaze at me, with a curious mixture of suspicion and confidence. For half an hour I sat perfectly still, but aching muscles at last made me move only an inch or two. Instantly she was off, her white flag waving in the air.

The dinosaur article was half finished when, one morning, I heard a peculiar sound off in the forest. I thought it might be another doe and stalked it silently, slipping from tree to tree like an Indian. On a fallen log, below the entrance to a hollow tree, sat a mother raccoon with two babies, playing just as kittens do. I watched them for a few moments when some movement sent them scurrying into the door of their home and out of sight.

I had a pet coon when a boy. It followed me like a dog and was as mischievous as a monkey. Although he had the run of the house I kept him in a cage at night, for no one could predict what devilish trick he would devise while we were sleeping. One day I gave him a lump of sugar. He sniffed it eagerly, for coons are passionately fond of sweets, then carried it to his basin. Clashed daintily in his little humanlike hand, he swished it in the water. Suddenly it disappeared right before his eyes. Completely mystified, he ran back to me. I gave him another lump, and the same performance was repeated. There it was, and then it wasn't! Never have I seen an expression of such complete bewilderment on an animal's face. Dumping the water out of his basin, he turned it over, searching the floor cracks and the corners of the room. Defeated, he sat on his hunkers in front of me as much as to say, "Please explain what happened."

I refilled his basin and gave him another lump. Again he washed it and again it disappeared. At last his patience was exhausted. He refused to come near me or touch more sugar. Obviously he thought I was trying to make a fool of him. No animal will stand for that. It is surprising that he could not connect the disappearance of his sugar lump with water, but

the inherited instinct of washing food was too strong to be denied. Eventually I think he would have discovered it by "trial and error."

Young raccoons, as a rule, are easy to tame, but one George caught in the pine grove above Brummagem Brook utterly defeated us. After a fortnight of patient effort the little fellow was still as savage as a tiger. Finally we gave up and turned him loose at the edge of the pond where he could find frogs for himself.

Our woods are full of birds and animals because they have remained undisturbed for so many years. It has become a veritable sanctuary. Most of the original Connecticut fauna, except wolves, bears, panthers, and wild turkeys, live here today. It is doubtful whether moose and wapiti (elk) were ever in Connecticut—at least in historical times. But even as late as 1934 a black bear wandered into Litchfield County, probably from the Adirondacks, where bears have been increasing during recent years. Others may come. I should not be surprised any day to see one rooting in our garbage pile at the edge of the woods. The last wolf was killed in 1842 and there seems to be no record of panthers later than that same year. Wild cats are not rare. We saw one from the porch; and I disturbed what I am sure was a Canada lynx while shooting grouse on Lou Guerin's place. Beaver have recently taken up residence on Brummagem Brook and Benedict Pond, and an otter visits us at infrequent intervals.

We have one animal that was not here during colonial times—the opossum—which is extending its range northward year by year. Opossum, of course, are the only marsupials found in the United States and, not long ago, appeared no farther north than parts of New York State. During our ten years at Pondwood Farm we have seen them more and more frequently. Unfortunately for them, they seem to like paved roads. At night Billie and I often catch a glimpse of two greenish spots and know it is an opossum. The color is unlike that of any other animal. The eyes themselves do not shine. It is a reflection of the light from the car's headlamps on a layer of crystalline substance in the back wall of the eye, called the *tapetum lucidum*. Animals vary in the amount of this crystalline substance. Man has virtually none—so little that it does not reflect light and our eyes do not glow. The eyes of alligators show distinctly red in the dark, because the light is reflected by passing through the blood vessels of the eye. A cow has fewer blood vessels and the glow is white. Of course animals see better than humans at night. There is some light in what is usually called "the dark" and, because the *tapetum* acts as a reflector, it causes the rays of light to traverse the lens a second time. This, with the ability of some animals like cats to greatly enlarge the pupils, affords a larger reflecting surface.

Due to the interruptions of animal friends and my natural-history investigations, it was two weeks before "Dinosaurs" was completed and accepted by the magazine. Now the cabin was assured. Within a fortnight I solemnly took out the first shovelful of earth for the foundations of my woodland studio. After such strenuous literary exertions, I felt impelled to exercise my muscles. Across the road lay a tangle of untouched jungle, where blueberry bushes were laden with ripe fruit. That had been a great surprise to both Billie and me. We were accustomed to the low-growing shrubs of the Adirondacks, hardly more than two feet high. Here the bushes reached ten feet, with berries as large as the end of my finger. We found them everywhere through the woods. There was enough fruit on the place to supply fifty families.

We began an ambitious undertaking. Our object was to clear the tangle of vines and bushes and make a park opposite the house where the blueberries grew in greatest profusion. It was hot in those first days of September, and while I swung the brush scythe my body dripped as from a shower bath. So I stripped off my shirt and reveled in the sun on my bare back. Billie followed behind with her sickle, cleaning up where I had cut the heavier growth. We were working close to the road one day when a gentleman in impeccable attire drove up to call. Never will I forget the expression of amazement and disgust on his face when he found the Director of the American Museum of Natural History naked to the waist, dripping with sweat. His pride would not allow him to alight, for which we were duly thankful. A few days later he drove by again, only, I am sure, to see whether I had been shamed into donning proper garments. Fortunately, I was doing the same thing in exactly the same state of undress. He waved his hand and passed on. Some days later I saw him downtown.

"I went past your house the other day," he said, "but you were in your—ah—usual raiment, so I did not stop."

"Well," I replied, "just as long as this weather continues I shall be working without my shirt. If it gets any warmer I expect to wear only bathing trunks."

He is a very nice man, really, and I should not judge him too harshly. Doubtless he had expected to find me dressed to the teeth in blue serge coat and white flannels. It was a grievous disappointment to his sense of propriety that I did not live up to his expectations of what the head of a world-famed institution should be like.

Billie and I pecked at the jungle across the road every day. Clearing becomes a fascinating job. Each stroke of the scythe offers something new. You get tired and think you will stop, but not until the patch in front has been laid low. That exposes another and your goal advances a few yards. There is still another beyond that, and so you are continually enticed to do just a little more. When you finally cease, it is always with reluctance, and you can hardly wait to get back next morning.

Billie enjoyed it as much as I did. She and Lord Jitters were the clean-up squad. At first her arms and back ached distressingly but she was soon doing a full day's work and asking for more. Jitters took his part very seriously. He learned that my scythe disturbed field mice, crickets, and grasshoppers. Obviously these pests must be eliminated or the job could not be considered well done. He worked continuously, as busy as a bird dog. Sometimes, in sheer exhaustion, he would rest on a log or a stone with his little pink mouth half open, but soon was back at his self-appointed task. Just before sunset we would go to the house to luxuriate in a cool bath. Dressed in clean clothes, we often returned to the "workings." Sitting on a stump, with Lord Jitters purring contentedly beside us, we planned our next day's project and tried to visualize what it would be like when the clearing was ended. That day came in early October. We stood beside a huge glacial boulder looking over the lovely park filled with pine trees, white birches, blueberry bushes, and laurel. In a month we had cleared more than two acres. At first it had seemed an impossible task, but steady pecking away defeated the jungle, just as rain and frost and wind wear down the highest mountain.

That little park is peculiarly our own. It will remain so as long as we live at Pondwood Farm, for it is redolent of memories shared by no one else—memories of happy labor and pride in accomplishment. It was, of course, because we were beautifying our own land and had done it with our own hands.

One morning when we went out to the clearing we were amazed to see a brown bush that had been green the night before. No bush could have died and turned brown in a single night. Then we noticed that the bush seemed to be in gentle motion, even though there was not a breath of wind. It was covered with great brown Monarch butterflies from top to bottom. They clustered like festoons of grapes on every leaf and twig—thousands of them. I had seen a similar phenomenon some years before on the Connecticut shore and knew this was the migration of the Monarchs. But these were off their course. The flight usually starts from the Hudson Bay region in August, follows a coastwise highway, and reaches the Gulf states in November. Most butterflies have only a few days of life which centers about the spot where they were hatched, but the Monarchs are an exception. They travel thousands of miles before reaching their winter home. Sometimes they move southward in small flocks; more often the flight numbers millions, which requires days to pass a given point.

When they reach their destination in the Gulf states, exhausted from days and weeks of flying, they settle in vast swarms on trees and bushes there to sleep away the winter in a state of semi-hibernation. Often Monarchs use the same trees year after year in their southern home, although the same individuals never return a second time. The great flocks break up in the spring and the Monarchs go northward, stopping to lay their eggs on the leaves of milkweed over almost all of North America from California to Alaska, and from the Gulf states to Hudson Bay. The larvae have greenish-white bodies banded with black and white and bear on their backs two pairs of slender filaments. Because this butterfly secretes an acrid fluid distasteful to birds it is immune from their attacks.

The Monarchs rested in our little park all day. We counted them carefully and found two thousand and twenty-three on that single bush. The next morning they had gone; whether in the night or with the first light of day we never knew.

During the first week of October the curtain rose on the Berkshire pageant. Golden days in a golden world. Gradually, hour by hour, rainbow colors crept over the forest like shifting sunlight through a cathedral window. The birch and beech leaves changed to burnished yellow; oaks, sugar maples, and blueberry bushes blazed with tongues of slow-burning fire. In the pond, softened by the water, the reflections were as exquisite as a pastel painting.

My vacation had ended and I was back at the Museum. But we spent each week end at the farm even though it was becoming really cold. We had given little thought to heating problems because at first we did not expect to use the house during the winter. But all that had changed, at least in my mind. To test Billie's reactions, one evening while we were sitting in front of the living-room fire I remarked casually:

"I'll call the plumber next week and have him drain the pipes. Then we can close the house for the winter."

"What do you mean, 'close the house'? Do you think we are going to let it sit here all by itself during the whole winter

and not come near the farm? It will be wonderful when the snow comes."

"Well, we come, but there isn't any heat. You'll be awfully uncomfortable."

"I won't either. We can get oil stoves and be perfectly warm."

That was what I had hoped, but I wanted her to propose it. So we proceeded to buy oil heaters for every room. Since electricity did not come nearer than four miles we already had a kerosene stove in the kitchen, the refrigerator ran by oil, and our only light was from lamps. I loathe kerosene. It took me an hour every day to fill the damned lamps and trim the wicks and another hour to get the smell off my hands and clothes, for a few drops of oil always managed to lodge on my pants. I used candles exclusively on my expeditions in the Gobi, for the taste and odor of kerosene inevitably found its way into food, sleeping bags, and every item of equipment. Still, it seemed to be the only answer to the problem of the farm. Our experience was no happier than I feared. The smell of kerosene permeated the house like cheap perfume, and one day the caretaker lighted a heater in our bedroom while we were away. He left it turned too high. Greasy black soot covered the fresh blue paper, the filmy white curtains appeared to have been dragged through mud, and the rug was a sight to behold. Of course the room had to be redecorated from floor to ceiling. Nevertheless Pondwood Farm was not deserted during a single week end.

Having decided to make a winter of it, we filled the cellar with wood, put down beets and carrots in sand, bought half-a-dozen pumpkins for Thanksgiving, and made ourselves snug. Nature did likewise. The leopard frogs and old bull croakers ceased to entertain us during the day; no longer did box turtles sun themselves on the rocks or break the mirror surface of the water with tiny ripples. They had dug far into the mud at the bottom of the pond, there to sleep away the cold months in a state of half-life. Chipmunks and white-footed mice disappeared from the stone walls and woodchucks, which had sunned themselves in lazy abandon on the rim of the rock garden, went far underground. I discovered a burrow with tracks leading inward but none coming out.

"Let's see what he is like when he goes to sleep," I said to Billie. "I'll get a pickax and a shovel and we'll dig him out."

It was a bigger job than we anticipated, for he had dug much more than a foxhole. We followed his corridor ten feet until it widened into a snug chamber lined with grass. There was Mister Woodchuck, curled up in a ball, sound asleep, his tail wrapped about his head. Not a sign of life could we find even when we moved him. Because I am a curious sort of fellow and spent two years in medical college studying comparative anatomy, I have a stethoscope in the house. Billie ran to get it while I let the cold wind of winter play over the body of Mister Woodchuck. With the instrument clamped to his chest, I could get only fourteen or fifteen faint heartbeats a minute instead of almost a hundred. At first I thought he was not breathing at all. Then I discovered he would not have a single respiration for about ten minutes, followed by ten or fifteen breaths. Normally he would breathe eighty or ninety times a minute. He seemed to be out like a light, but I knew he wasn't.

"Why don't we take him into the house and warm him up before the fire?" I said. "Then he'll think spring has come. We can say the woodchuck has come out of his hole and create a sensation."

Billie was outraged. "You wouldn't be so mean! And anyway we'd have a woodchuck on our hands all winter and what on earth would we do with him? When we were away he'd probably go to sleep under my dressing table as soon as the house got cold. I'm not going to have woodchucks lying about all over the place. We'll cover him up and let him sleep."

And so we did. He came out next spring as happy as a lark and never knew we had invaded his bedroom during the winter.

The gray squirrels did not hibernate. All through the winter we saw their little tracks in the snow, and some rabbit footprints, but for weeks in the coldest weather there might not be a sign of life in the woods. The rabbits had buried themselves deep in the snow under brush heaps and gone into a state of semi-hibernation.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we humans could avoid food shortages and fox John L. Lewis's perennial coal strikes by just hibernating? As a matter of fact it is reported that some Russian peasants who suffer from a chronic state of famine, retire into a somnolent condition four or five months of the winter. They sleep almost constantly, eat sparingly, and move only to replenish a fire or to drink a swallow of water. They endeavor to keep down the body metabolism and to waste as little animal heat as possible. Of course this is exactly what other animals do. The condition resembles hibernation.

Until mid-December the weather was superb. I remember one bright windless day when Billie and I were clearing a grove in the pine forest. Dressed in a wool shirt and flannel trousers, I swung the ax while she beavered away with her hatchet. It was really hot. I stripped to a lightweight undershirt and was perfectly comfortable. To our intense surprise, the thermometer registered only ten degrees above zero. The days were often like that.

We looked forward immensely to the first snow. Snow in the country! How lovely that would be! I said as much to Deacon Cooper.

"Well, we don't like it. We don't like it at all. Can't get about. You'll find out. See if you don't."

Willys Smith, the First Selectman, echoed the same sentiments when I asked if he would keep our road open.

"I'll do my part if you really do come. Winters up here are pretty hard. I don't think you'll like it." Still we were unconvinced.

The first snow arrived just before Christmas. Sitting in the window, we watched the great cottony flakes transform Pondwood Farm into a world of incredible beauty. Stone walls lost shape and became only rounded ridges; the road disappeared; the lawn was an unbroken expanse of purest white, level with the porch. All day and all night the snow drifted down. By morning we were prisoners in a white-walled castle. Delight changed to consternation. How on earth would we get out? I had important engagements at the Museum on Monday and a radio program. Frantic telephone calls eventually brought our caretaker and Willys Smith with a snowplow. We were evacuated just in time.

Of course then we were not real country dwellers. Five days of the week our bodies were committed to New York while our hearts remained at Pondwood Farm. Had there been no necessity to reach the city on a definite day we could have sat comfortably at home until normal procedure cleared the roads. Nevertheless, we definitely do not like snow. Winds pile drifts eight and ten feet high and thaws often form a crust. One cannot walk in the woods; travel anywhere is fraught with difficulties. It obstructs our particular style of living. Our skiing friends hoot with derision.

"Why don't you learn to ski? Then you would look forward to snow."

Billie and I were heedful of their advice that first winter. We purchased two pairs of superior skis; two pairs of poles, or whatever they are called; two pairs of boots; skiing jackets and pants. We looked very professional. Any sporting-goods store would have been proud to have us model what the well-dressed couple should wear when about to ski. But there the similarity to professionals ended.

We were able to shuffle along on level ground or a slight decline, awkwardly, to be sure, but still we shuffled. Even the gentle slope of the meadow produced no evil results. Thus encouraged, we laboriously climbed to the summit of a steep hill. I had been told that real skiers waxed their skis. So we waxed ours. That was a great mistake. We would have moved quite fast enough without the wax.

"I'll go first and show you how to do it," I said to Billie.

For a hundred yards all was well. I felt a thrill of pride and mounting exhilaration in mastering a new art. But speed increased alarmingly, in spite of frantic prods with the steel-shod poles. I was no longer Captain of my Ship or Master of my Fate. Suddenly the skis spread apart in front and crossed behind. Motion ceased so abruptly that I pitched forward on my head. How it was possible to assume the position in which I eventually found myself I shall never know. Folded like a jackknife, head between my legs, an ostrich in the snow! By no possible effort on my part could I move an inch. My skis were locked as securely as in a vise. To my everlasting humiliation I yelled lustily for Billie. She did not hear the cries muffled as they were by snow, but saw my predicament. Down the hill she came, intent only on rescuing her husband from what was not only an extremely undignified position but one of apparent danger. She met her Waterloo just above my location. An unpredicted wobble of the left ski precipitated her on her back. Although unable to rise, she could unbuckle her skis, which was accomplished in record time. She waded over to me. I regret to report that she could not refrain from a bit of wifely gloating, once it was apparent that I was uninjured and only mad. I never got in that position again—it is doubtful if anyone ever could—but our skiing progressed virtually not at all. We made tentative dates with ourselves to obtain instruction but nothing ever materialized. Eventually we agreed that skiing was not for us—that we didn't like it. Of course that was only sour grapes, for it must be one of the most thrilling sports in the world and I wish devoutly that we were able to enjoy it.

Even though snow locked us in we never feared privation, for "Benny, the Traveling Butcher," became our steadfast friend. Every Saturday morning he arrived on schedule with meat or left it in the mailbox at the foot of the hill if the road was impassable for his truck. Not only does he provide our sustenance but he is the purveyor of neighborhood news. Billie seldom misses a visit in the kitchen with Benny. Moreover, he is her source for information of every conceivable kind. Whenever there is an emergency in household economy Billie says; "I'll talk to Benny."

His conversational idioms are typically New England. One day Billie was talking with him at the wagon when I stepped off the porch, slipped, and fell heavily. She leaped to my assistance and herself did an Imperial Purler. For a few moments she was half-unconscious.

"Benny," I called, "is she all right? Do you think she's hurt?"

"No, Doctor, not bad. But it ain't done her no real *good*."

So the winter passed, but spring came slowly up our way. Mentally, Billie and I rushed the season. Whenever a bit of green showed on a bush, or the willow stems blushed a brighter red, we were sure that spring was just around the corner. Eventually the snow disappeared, warm sun started the buds, and by the middle of April the pond was entirely free of ice. Frogs croaked and peepers called in the swamp. My cabin had been built and furnished. There could be no excuse, so far as privacy was concerned, if I did not produce a masterpiece of literature.

At the far end of the pond, just inside the margin of the woods, a depression intrigued Billie. Several times I found her seated on its edge in deep thought. She said nothing to me until one day at luncheon. Then, with an air of finality and great satisfaction, she announced:

"I've figured it all out. We can dig as far as that tree and it will make it twenty-five feet long and put in a pipe from the pond and change the outlet of the dam and let the water run in through the pipe and out over the lip."

"What in the name of common sense," I asked, "is this gibberish?"

"Why, the swimming pool, of course. What else?"

"How should I know? You've never mentioned it to me."

"Don't be silly. I must have. I've been thinking of it for days." (In parentheses I may say that Billie always believes I know exactly of what she is thinking and often considers it superfluous to use the English language.)

"You know," she said, "that the pond has a mud bottom. Even if we put in a lot of sand it isn't deep enough. We've got to have a swimming pool. And I want one right in the woods. An 'ole-swimmin'-hole' sort of thing."

I didn't argue. After luncheon we walked along the edge of the pond to the appointed spot. She demonstrated that the surface of the pool would be several feet below the level of the pond; therefore a ten-foot pipe through the bank would give us a continual flow of water into the pool and out at the other end.

I was completely sold on the idea. How much? That was the question. We consulted a well-known contractor. He gave us a price. Another so-called contractor pooh-poohed that figure.

"I'll do it for less. I've made dozens of pools."

Well, everyone learns by experience. We were lured by the lower estimate but discovered later that the man had never constructed a pool in his life. The hole was dug, walled with stones set in cement, and the outlet and inlet pipes installed. The great day came when the pool was to be filled for the first time. Our contractor brought his mother, brother, and fiancée. We provided a bottle of wine. Everyone drank a toast as the pipe was opened. The water gushed in—and right out again! A sieve would have been about as useful.

I will not enlarge on the remainder of the story. It was too sad a chronicle. Our contractor tried cement in spots. It didn't work. After I had consulted the chief engineer at the Museum, who understood water pressures, it was evident that the inside must be completely cemented. It taught us a lesson we won't forget.

The pool, however, was entirely successful in giving us pleasure. To lie on one's back in the cool water gazing up at a canopy of green leaves, with flowers, moss, and ferns making a colorful margin, is a Berkshire paradise. In later summers it became the center of our social activities on hot days. We have pool parties when friends spend hours loafing in the hammock and garden chairs, taking a dip now and then, and devouring the luncheon which Walter brings over in the boat. Our pool gave ideas to several neighbors who had brooks running through their woods. By merely digging out a basin they discovered it was possible to make an "ole swimmin' hole" at little expense. But if any of you try it, take a leaf out of our book and use cement.

Two Anglers Are Born

"Billie," I said one day at the pool, "there are pickerel and perch and probably bullheads in that thar pond. With mine own eyes have I seen them."

"What about it? Don't expect me to believe you are going to catch them. I've heard you scoff at fishermen too many times."

"True. But we've worked on the farm exclusively for a year. It's time we looked about and appraised some of our other assets."

"Well, if by 'other assets' you mean fishing, I'm not interested. I never caught a fish in my life and haven't the slightest desire to do so."

That was that, so we took a dip in the pool and discussed the matter no further. But I am not one to be easily dissuaded once an idea is born in my mind. That same afternoon I betook myself to the Highland Hardware Shop in Winsted to consult our friend Harry. I had seen fishing equipment in the store.

"Harry," I asked, "have you ever heard of fish in our pond?"

"Why, Dr. Andrews, of course. It's a famous place for pickerel and perch. I'm no fisherman, but I've heard others talk."

"Give me two casting rods and an assortment of your best lures. I'm about to find out what is in our piece of water."

That afternoon, when the sun was beginning to dip behind the trees, I suggested we go for a row on the pond. A rod with a spoon hook attached was concealed in the boat. Once away from shore, I remarked casually:

"Why don't you just drop this thing in the water and pay out the line? We're not fishing, just rowing. I'm curious to see what will happen."

Billie did as I suggested, albeit with a bored expression on her face. We had not gone fifty yards when a vicious jerk almost pulled the rod out of her hands.

"A fish! I've got a fish! Quit rowing. Do something. For goodness' sake, don't just sit there. Do something!"

"Do something yourself," I retorted. "Reel him in."

She reeled. The fish leaped two feet clear of the water in a spectacular arching dive.

"Oh, he's gone. Why did you let him get away? No, he isn't. I feel him pulling. I'll die if he gets off."

He didn't get off, and in due time I lifted out a beautiful pickerel twenty-five inches long that weighed two and one half pounds.

That was not the only one. Before the shades of night had fallen nine pickerel lay in the kitchen sink, not one less than eighteen inches in length. The pond had not been fished in years and swarmed with pickerel. Billie admitted she had had a wonderful time. It needed no persuasion on my part to convince her that fishing was fun.

The next week we trolled every day. I have forgotten how many pickerel and perch we took, but it was about thirty or forty. Some we ate; others were given to the neighbors. But a time came when the fish were no longer interested in our lures. Perch were rising all over the pond to a hatch of flies. So I bought some artificial flies; just any flies, for I did not know one from the other. I remember there was a Royal Coachman and a Pink Lady, but that meant nothing to us. The only Pink Lady of our acquaintance was a kind of gin drink. I tied a fly to a casting line without benefit of leader, and we sallied forth. But we could not get the darned thing out with the steel rod. The measure of our ignorance was that we even tried. Finally Billie deposited her fly on the water and I paddled gently away while she payed out line. Believe it or not, a big perch grabbed the fly. He must have been hungry or felt that he had a mission to perform. Anyway he

demonstrated that fish really could be caught on flies and stimulated us to advance further in the piscatorial art. That night I telephoned a neighbor, Frederick Barbour, one of the most expert anglers I know.

"Frederick," I said, "would you be willing to give a couple of amateurs a bit of instruction?"

He agreed, and arrived the next day with his fly rod. First, he fished us on the lawn. He tried to instill in our minds only the mechanics of the job—the wrist action, basic principle of all casting, which brings the tip of the rod into play. As he flicked out forty or fifty feet of line it was so graceful and looked so easy that Billie and I were entranced. This was art. Whether or not we caught a fish it would be fun to cast a fly. We would learn to do it or darned well know the reason why.

Frederick extolled the trout streams in the neighborhood and the bass to be caught in Doolittle Lake and Benedict Pond, almost adjoining our own property. Before night had fallen a letter was in the mail requesting Mr. L. L. Bean of Freeport, Maine, to send us two fly rods, lines, and reels. Fortunately I ordered cheap ones. I had sense enough to know that any decent equipment would be ruined before we learned the rudiments of fly casting. The new rods were seven feet long and weighed three ounces.

Our first experience nearly brought disaster. Frederick emphasized that we must learn to cast with a gut leader and fly complete. I affixed a tiny bit of cork over the point of the hook and began to practice on the lawn while Billie watched. Lord Jitters was in attendance, of course, and tried to catch the line. It was a new game, he thought, especially devised for his enjoyment. To my delight I made a passable twenty-foot cast but the cork flew off. The hook snagged Jitters firmly in the back. Yowling, he raced for the nearest maple tree. My reel sang and kept on singing as the Lord climbed higher. With every twitch of the line he went up a notch or two. I could not extricate the hook and Jitters was nearing the topmost branches of the tree. We tried to entice him with a dish of milk, but nothing would bring him down. He was outraged that such an indignity should have happened to him, of all people, and prepared to spend the day, or even the night, in the tree. At last, aided by a ladder, I climbed to within a few feet of his roost and cut the line. After an hour he descended and Billie removed the hook and soothed his injured feelings.

Both Billie and I became fascinated with casting. We practiced hours on the lawn, each criticizing the other. It was the blind leading the blind; nevertheless, competition was involved and we made progress. One day Frederick invited us to the Hollenbeck Club near Canaan. There we both took a trout on a wet fly—a bucktail, to be exact—and our pride matched the weight of the fish.

The season ended before we could present a dry fly well enough to fool even the most stupid trout. But bass fishing began on July 1. That was something else again. One of our friends had given us a dry fly designed by Dr. Jack Hartranft of New Rochelle. An extraordinary creation it is, three inches long, of white and brown deer hair with a red wool body. The Museum's entomologist assures me it bears not the slightest resemblance to any known insect. Nevertheless, it takes bass when everything else fails to bring a rise. Billie and I almost despaired of learning to cast the thing. We called it the "Stuffed Albatross." Wind resistance makes timing very difficult, and with our little seven-foot rods we were lucky to get out even twenty feet of line. But in the evening of opening day we sallied forth to Benedict Pond hopefully, although without conviction.

Benedict Pond is a beautiful place. Only a hundred and twenty-five miles from New York, it remains as lovely and remote as though it were in the depths of the Canadian wilderness. One might well expect to see a bear amble out from the surrounding forest or a moose champing lily pads in the marsh along the northern shore. It is only fifteen or twenty feet deep and a mile long by half as wide, but it could have been designed by a bass architect for his fellow fish. The interlocking roots of water plants and low shrubs form floating islands, some of which have anchored themselves in deep water. The bushes swarm with insects, frogs, and mice. So at feeding time, in the evening and early morning, largemouthed bass lie close under the rim of the vegetation, waiting for food to drop into the water before their very noses.

Billie and I were alone on the pond that evening of the opening day. We agreed she was to fish first while I paddled. The pond was "working" and the water far from clear. That suited our lack of skill, for the fish could not see so well. Billie caught a small bass and I got another—the first fish either of us had ever taken on a dry fly. We were thrilled. It was Billie's turn again. Indicating a tiny cove in the marginal bushes, she said:

"Right there is where I am going to hook a real fish. If I can only get the darned fly out!"

After a couple of false casts to judge the distance, she dropped the Stuffed Albatross in a really professional manner right at the entrance to the little inlet. Hardly had it touched the water when a submarine volcano erupted. A great bronze body shot into the air in a welter of spray. Instinctively Billie set the hook. The bass jumped again, this time so close to the bushes that he almost landed on a projecting branch. She gave the little rod everything it would stand and turned the fish toward the open pond. In a wild rush it dashed for a weed bed. There it sulked on the bottom. She might have been hooked to a stone so far as any sign of life was concerned. Neither of us knew how to meet such a situation.

"If you pull hard you'll break the leader," I said. "Why don't you just twitch the rod? Perhaps the prick of the hook will make him move."

Billie thought it a sound idea. She twitched and twitched for what seemed hours. Actually it was only about ten minutes. Slowly the line began to cut the water upward.

"Get ready," I yelled. "He is going to jump. Pull him down."

Jump he did, breaking the surface like a leaping salmon, shaking his great head as a bulldog worries a rat. Then the bass headed for open water. I paddled frantically to keep pace as he stripped line off the reel. The rush ended well out in the pond. This way and that he dashed, but the pressure of the rod at last wore him down. The fight suddenly ended and the huge fish drifted to the surface on his side. We had no landing net, so as Billie drew him in I slipped my fingers under his distended gills and lifted him into the boat.

"I want a cigarette," Billie said weakly. "I'm glad that's ended."

"I do too. But look at that fish if you're strong enough."

In my box was a tape measure and scales. Twenty inches long and five pounds two ounces. The largest bass taken in Benedict Pond during the past ten years! Moreover, the tackle was a seven-foot, three-ounce rod and a dry fly! Fishermen, put that in your pipe and smoke it.

The soft darkness of a summer's night enveloped hill and dale before we reached Pondwood Farm. I could hardly wait to telephone Fred Barbour, Bud Smith, Reg Rowland, Reg Lewis, Freddie Wildman, and other sportsman neighbors. I think I gave the correct weight the first time. But unconsciously it upped a bit with each recital. Soon we had convinced ourselves that the bass weighed seven pounds and was thirty inches long. That evening two anglers were born.

This new interest in fishing came as a godsend to me. Aside from shooting, my recreations had been confined exclusively to horses. Polo, fox hunting, and training ponies were my only sports. I could not conceive of a time when I would be divorced from horses. But the time came, nevertheless. Shortly before we purchased Pondwood Farm a bad spill in a polo match ended all that. Two vertebrae were severely injured. The doctors said another fall would either kill me or I'd be crippled for life. It wasn't worth the risk. I sold my ponies and gear and have not had a leg across a horse from that day to this. It was hard to give up. The smell of a stable was like the smoke of a forbidden cigar to a tobacco addict; watching a polo game made me miserable for days. I tried golf and tennis but could develop no real interest. So far as sports were concerned I was completely baffled, left in the air. For one who has lived an active life, to be suddenly cut off from all outdoor recreation is a very real tragedy. The farm supplied an outlet during that first year. We were so busy that we had no time or thought for anything else. But most of the work was in the past and I wanted something else.

Fly fishing, since Billie enjoyed it, too, solved my problem. Possibly it may solve the problem of others; I recommend it to them. Some of our friends feel that a woman spoils their sport; they assume that she can never fish or shoot well enough to be anything but a nuisance in the field. Of course that is simply poppycock. How do they know she cannot learn to cast a fly or shoot a gun as well, or better, than they themselves, if she is never given a chance to try? Most men will spend neither time nor trouble to teach their wives or daughters to shoot or fish, but take infinite pains with their sons. To me, it doesn't make sense. It is just plain unfair discrimination because of sex. It is true that few women care for outdoor sports as much as men. Billie is by no means so keen as I am but she enjoys both fishing and shooting in moderation. As she puts it: "I always like to fish but I don't like to fish always."

Well, I don't expect her to shoot or fish to the exclusion of feminine pursuits. If she is not in the mood for either I never press the point, for I know she would not enjoy it. But a day in the field or on a stream with her gives me not only pleasure but happiness, and there is a vast difference between the two. If she makes a difficult shot, or takes a trout that will rise only to a perfectly presented fly, I am bursting with pride. I think we have had some of our happiest hours while

we were fishing or shooting together.

Companionship in the woods is a very special kind of relationship which is achieved nowhere else. Moreover, it is not to be taken casually. How many of you know men who are delightful in a club, or at a dinner, but would you take them fishing or shooting? No. They wouldn't fit and you realize it instinctively. Nature makes one shed conventions like a garment. The veneer of social life is as brittle as glass and breaks as easily in a grouse cover or on a trout stream. Fundamentals inevitably appear in nature's cathedral. It is an unseen confessional where men and women unconsciously reveal their true selves.

Billie and I fished together almost every day that summer and I became a passionate dry-fly addict. Trout, of course, are the ultimate in an angler's life because they offer so many interesting problems and know so much more than one expects. Discovering what fly they will or will not take; where they lie at certain times of the day and their moods; how to present a fly to entice or fool them requires experience and study. Then there is the variety of casts to cope with unusual situations in a stream; the skill and artistry in learning to float down a fly like a natural insect; the peace and quiet of a brook when one becomes a part of Nature's Great Revival in the spring.

These and many other subtle joys are what gives a man "troutitis." It is a dread disease for which no permanent cure has ever been discovered or ever will be. Medical practitioners themselves are most susceptible to its pernicious effects. Bacteriologists poring over microscopes have explored the little-known worlds of autointoxication, prickly heat, and *herpes zoster*, but without success. The bacilli never have been isolated. They swarm in countless millions through the angler's bloodstream, play leapfrog in his lymph, impregnate the very marrow of his bones. The attacks come periodically and with startling suddenness. During the winter the germs lie dormant. The patient pursues his normal vocation with no outward sign that his body is host to a deadly virus. But, like malaria, a change of seasons revives the sleeping bugs. The first sight of a trout stream in the spring, rushing between banks of pregnant vegetation, leaping, laughing, calling, reduces the patient to a pitiable semblance of his once-normal self. He shakes as with a palsy. Hot flashes pursue each other up and down his spine; the palms of his hands sweat profusely; every nerve in his body pushes through his skin and curls at the end. In a matter of moments he has become a sick man, a very sick man, indeed. Quick action is advised after the initial attack, else the patient will lapse into the secondary stages. These may have disastrous consequences to domestic felicity.

If, however, his wife follows these simple directions, immediate and gratifying results are guaranteed. She must rush for his fishing rod and creel, fly box and waders, and lead him to them, even though he may be in a state of daze and ocular disbelief. Once arrayed, she should point him in the direction of the nearest stream, give a little push, a pat on his back, smile brightly, and carol: "Have a good time, darling. Don't come home till you feel better." Then let nature take its course.

Thus the crisis of the disease will be avoided, the recovery almost instantaneous, and the dividends enormous. The patient will return a well man, a more loving husband and father, and a being at peace with all the world. Billie has learned not to push with bare hands against the onrushing wave of my early spring troutitis.

So one morning in May, with a song on my lips and the blessing of my wife, I hied to the enticing waters of Sandy Brook, just at the edge of our own property. In my hand rested the "Fairy Rod," a wand of split bamboo weighing one ounce and five eighths made by Leonard of angling fame. True, it is not a practical rod. Wind renders it virtually useless, and only short casts are possible. But for me it is not the number of fish in my creel; it is the thrill I have in catching them that counts. On that lovely morning I decided to fish a stretch of water where no big trout lay. At most twelve-inches running, perhaps, to half a pound. With them the Fairy Rod would give me real sport. Turning off the main highway beyond Grandpa Phelps's house, I swung across the meadow to my favorite pool where Brummagem enters Sandy Brook. As usual, I lighted my pipe and sat down to watch the water. It is important to know what is happening in the trout's day before one begins to fish.

Above the junction of the two streams the current swirls close to the left bank, curls about a glacial boulder, and swings outward through a narrow funnel, to spend itself in the basin of a gravel pool. Feeding trout invariably lie near the big rock. There floating insects are caught for an instant in the backwash before they lose themselves in the downward rush of fast water.

The sun-warmed flannel shirt was very comfortable and fragrant smoke drifted up from my pipe in white plumes and spirals. Not a swirl broke the surface of the stream. I became interested in a kingbird dashing off from a branch to catch

flying insects. How could that tiny bill make a clack like castanets? I didn't know. A muskrat poked its nose out from a fallen tree across the smaller brook, regarded me with friendly eyes, swam downstream, and landed not ten feet from where I rested against a log. In his mouth was a trailing lily bulb. He sat up on his hunkers, held the root in both forepaws like a squirrel, and nibbled leisurely. At any moment I expected him to offer me a bite, but while the appreciation of my company might extend to his heart it did not reach the region of his stomach. I got no taste of bulb.

For half an hour I sat motionless, enjoying the sun's warmth and the wild creatures that did not resent my presence. Then, suddenly, a cloud of insects appeared above the pool. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, danced in a close-packed ball, dipping, climbing higher, only to drop again. Some of the little flies were caught in the swirling water and drifted downward, struggling on dampened wings to free themselves. Black gnats. A hatch had just been liberated from the eggs. That meant trout. Just to be sure I scooped some of the tiny things from the water with a three-inch pocket net. My artificial flies matched them but there was nothing half so small. Stringing my rod, I extracted a nine-foot 4X leader from the wet felt in the round black box, affixed a Black Gnat, tied on a Number 14 hook, and sat down to wait.

In less than ten minutes the surface of the pool was broken by a rise; then another and another. Trout were feeding eagerly above the rock. I waded out, half concealed by an overhanging hemlock on the left, and dropped my fly at the near end of the pool. A fish rose, hung doubtfully for a moment, but turned away. The fly drifted down until the current caught the line. At the next cast a ten-inch trout leaped in a beautiful curve over the fly. It happened again and again. Fish rose right beside the artificial fly, leaped over it, but would not take. Sometimes they slapped it with their tails. I sent a long roll cast to the backwash above the rock. Same result. Obviously the fly was too big. It looked unnatural in the midst of those diminutive gnats.

Wading downstream, to avoid becoming silhouetted against the sky, I stepped out upon the bank. In the pocket of my fishing coat was a half-forgotten box of flies—Lady Beaverkill, Royal Coachman, Gray Gnats, Apple Green—all too big. But there, nestled in a separate compartment beneath a mass of Quill Gordons, lay a single Black Gnat tied on a Number 18 hook, so tiny it was well-nigh invisible. I whooped with joy. My temperature rose three degrees at least.

Wading back to my position behind the hemlock, I dropped the first cast just at the edge of the grassy bank on the far side of the pool. For an instant the fly remained motionless, then drifted downward a foot or two. In a splash it disappeared, and a thrill like an electric current shot up the line through the sensitive rod in my hand.

A flick of the wrist set the hook. The battle was on. In nine minutes by my watch (I am curious about the time it takes to land a fish) I slid the net under a twelve-inch trout. Then it was all excitement. The little fly did the trick. Standing in that one spot, I took eight fish during the next hour. Three of the smaller ones were returned to the water because the limit is ten and the day was young.

To release a trout without damage requires care and understanding. In the first place the skin of a fish is alive. The outermost layer is composed of living cells. It is quite different with humans. The living part of our skin is covered with several layers of hardened cells which, although transparent, are completely dead. These protect the vital cells underneath. A fish can expose the living cells only because it exists in a liquid medium. Yet even so fish are not completely without protection. They are covered with mucus or slime secreted by the living cells and exuded onto the surface. This slime, in addition to other functions, protects the skin against bacteria, fungus, and aquatic parasites. When one finds fish with sores on their bodies it usually means that an accident has removed a section of the slime. Susceptibility to injury by loss of mucus varies in different species. Trout are particularly vulnerable. They should never be touched with dry hands. When I wish to return a fish to the stream, I grasp it by the tip of the lower jaw while under water and detach the hook with a pair of tweezers. If it is necessary to hold its body, one should be particularly careful not to squeeze unduly. By exercising care, ninety-five out of a hundred trout will survive. I have fished with men who took great credit to themselves because they released most of their catch during a day's sport. Yet the next morning the stream shores were spotted with dead fish. Their will was good but they simply did not understand the physiology of a trout.

Five fish from the Junction Pool were enough for me. Other days were coming. So I sat on a cushion of star moss and smoked my pipe. The insects were still swirling above the water, but the trout stopped rising as suddenly as they began. Evidently their stomachs were full. From a bank above the pool I could see half-a-dozen beauties lying quietly on the bottom obviously enjoying the process of digestion. Being careful not to disturb their peace, I waded upstream, casting at the edge of the current or seeking shady spots beneath overhanging banks. The Black Gnat fly was no good up there. I tried half-a-dozen others and at last found that the Lady Beaverkill, with its little yellow egg sac, was what they wanted.

Just below the bridge across Sandy Brook a plume of white water shoots out from a narrow funnel between two boulders.

"If," said I to myself, "a rainbow is on the prowl, that's where he will be lying. Just for fun I'll try a Spent Wing Coachman."

My first cast landed at the tail of the plume. The fly drifted a few feet and I flicked it out a moment too soon, just as a swirl broke the water. The dark shadow looked nothing like a ten-inch trout.

"By Jove, there's a big one there. What'll I do if I nail him with this Fairy Rod? Well, we'll see."

By luck I dropped the fly again within six inches of where it first touched the water. Actually the Spent Wing did not reach the surface. A lithe body shot out and caught it in midair. I set the hook, and a shiver ran up my spine. This was no hatchery fish. He was an old sockdologer from the Farmington River. As he felt the prick of the hook (a Number 14) the rainbow made a spectacular leap, landing full on a midstream rock. In one flop he was off. After two circles about the pool he dashed directly toward me down the brook. Frantically I stripped in the line. The fish passed within six inches of my leg and started back to the Farmington River five miles away. Of course I could only let him go. I gave the tiny rod everything it would stand but he hardly felt the check. Fifty feet of line was out before the trout came to a temporary rest behind a ledge.

I stumbled downstream, recovering line, for I knew he'd start another rush. They say there are no atheists in a foxhole! Neither do atheists belong on a trout stream. I prayed mightily that I might arrive at his stopping place before he broke the hairlike leader against a rock. Slack line, plenty of it, that was the thing, and it saved my fish. I got to the edge of the pool just as he began another rush toward the Farmington. Thank God, I knew the stream. Below him was a stretch of fast water over shallows ending in another pool. Mentally I measured the distance and the line on my reel. About sixty feet and there was eighty feet of line! If he didn't stop, my trout was lost. The delicate rod bent almost double and I blessed the maker. That willowy seven-foot length of split bamboo was never meant to fight such a fish but it stood the test. My rainbow headed straight for a boulder in the center of the pool. There he halted.

Even though I was wearing hobnailed wading sandals over my boots, the loose stones were my downfall. Dashing downstream, I slipped, wildly waved one arm, and sat down with a terrific splash in the middle of Sandy Brook. Both boots were full of water, my hat bobbed away happily on the current, and my left hip ached where it had struck a stone. It hurt awfully. But the rod was safe. I struggled up, took two steps, gurgled like a drainpipe, and sat down again.

Eventually I arrived at the rock in the pool. There was the leader, swept by the current under a projection of the trout's haven. One backward pull would snap it like the hair it was. I reeled in every foot of line and surveyed the problem. Also there was a severe mental struggle. It would have been possible to slip the net under the rock and capture the fish, but that would have taken all the joy out of the battle for me. No. The odds were on his side but he'd have his chance. I would win fairly or not at all. I decided if I could float the leader downstream and persuade the trout to go forward, he couldn't break the gut. Nothing would do, but I must start him moving in the right direction. With the rod high and free in my left hand, I leaned down and tickled his tail. Now no self-respecting trout will stand for that. Out he shot, just as I planned, and was off to keep his date in the Farmington.

I'll refrain from giving the other details. They might be boring, but I assure you they were not to me. Suffice it to say that I fought that fish through a third of a mile of stream just like a salmon. At last he reached the Junction Pool and there he holed up. I came down, gloating, to see him lying on the bottom, half on his side. Not one to savor victory lightly, I twitched the rod and saw him shiver but barely move. "Leave him lie," I said, "till I get set." Walking along the shore, I took up my station at the friendly hemlock. Then I gave him the works. He was a tired fish. After two or three half-hearted circles around the pool he turned on his side. I drew him in, gently slipped the net under his shining body, and waded ashore.

I don't mind telling you I was well-nigh as exhausted as the trout. First I extracted a tape measure and scales from my fishing coat. Eighteen inches and two pounds even. What a fish to be taken on an ounce-and-a-half rod with a 4X leader in a mountain stream! I lit my pipe and thought, "Ain't life grand!"

Half an hour later I plodded painfully up the road. One shin was skinned where it had come in violent contact with a rock; my hip hurt, and my hat was gone with five dollars' worth of flies, but in the creel was a two-pound rainbow trout.

Moreover, the Fairy Rod remained undamaged. I could have kissed every strand of its bamboo splicing. What a rod! What a fish! What a day!

I met Cary Phelps in front of the tavern.

"Cary," I said, "you see before you an angler. Never to this day have I dared claim that title. But I do now. I took that trout on this rod. It weighs just one ounce and five eighths. Weigh that fish. Here are the scales. I hooked him at the bridge. He was netted at the Junction pool. Am I an angler? I ask you."

Cary is not a fisherman. Nevertheless, he is a gentleman. He sensed it was a great moment in my life.

"Roy," he said, "I hand it to you!" Of course he couldn't begin to know what I had been through. Only an angler could. But he did see that I was a mess.

"You're as wet as a muskrat," he remarked. "Aren't you cold?"

"No, I'm not. I'm hot. I love the sun, the birds, I love Colebrook. By God, I love everything."

VI

The Lord and the Queen

We discovered Queen, an English Setter, in Carmel, New York. She captured our hearts instantly but we were exceedingly uneasy as we brought her in the car to Pondwood Farm. How would Lord Jitters, the autocrat of our household, receive a dog? Although we had decided that we could not continue to be ruled by a cat and keep our self-respect, we fervently wished the ordeal of presentation were over.

Lord Jitters left his post on the stone wall and, as usual, walked sedately out to the car to welcome us home. Suddenly he caught sight of Queen with Billie's arms about her neck. Frozen in astonishment, he turned a look on her that would have withered a cactus. Then he stalked, with indignant flirts of his tail, to the stone wall, where he proposed to watch proceedings. Queen disappeared into the house with me to be fed and petted and introduced to her new home. No dog could have been nicer. I sat in a chair with Queen's head between my hands. Her brown eyes gazed into mine.

"Now, Queen," I said, "we'll have some wonderful times together. Out in those alders are woodcock, and every day I hear grouse drumming in the forest. You love to hunt and so do we. You'll find them for us and we'll shoot. But about the white cat. He is going to be difficult, I know, but you've got to be patient with him. Keep out of his way as much as you can for a while, and above all things don't chase him! If you do, you'll get scratched. Barking won't do you any good, for Lord Jitters is stone deaf. Just be nice and friendly and remember that this is his home and he thinks we belong to him completely and he's jealous. After a while I'm sure you will win his friendship."

Queen did tail-rappings on the floor and pushed her head farther into my hands. "I'll do just as you say," she told me with her eyes and low, gurgling barks. "Anything, anything, only just tell me."

Queen was true to her pledge, but her role was not an easy one. For forty-eight hours the Lord left the stone wall only at night. With cold eyes he gazed at us, jerking away if we tried to pet him, and refusing to eat in our presence. Even fillet of cod, his favorite dish, remained untouched during the daylight hours. With the delectable smell of fish in his nostrils, how he was able to resist I cannot imagine. But the hunger strike ended after dark concealed his movements; or at least I suppose it did, for in the morning the fish was gone, although he pretended it never had been there at all.

Queen roamed the house and fields, always at our heels, but never approached Lord Jitters. Eventually time broke Jitters's resistance. In frigid silence he returned to the house, but not to his usual place on the bed in our room. Instead, he took up his residence in the guest room, there to sleep in lonely grandeur on a pillow. Billie and I hated to admit, even to ourselves, how much Jitters's conduct distressed us. His feelings were so deeply hurt that we wondered if he would ever forgive us. However, now that the break had been made, we decided we might as well "die for a sheep as a lamb." We had long wanted a black Persian kitten. Better get it now, for Lord Jitters could not be more disturbed than he was at present. The kitten arrived. It was only a month old—just a tiny ball of coal-black fluff punctuated by two yellow eyes. "Smoke" was his name, but we eventually changed it to "Poke-Poke" because he always poked along behind everyone else. Jitters took one look, spat disgustedly in the little thing's face, and walked away. I followed him into his room and endeavored to remonstrate. He stood stiffly just inside the door and heard me out. Translated, his reply was as follows:

"If you have quite finished, I will state my position once and for all. It is this. For three years I have given you my complete loyalty and affection. I assumed that I had yours. Evidently I was mistaken. Your introduction of these animals into my household has made it impossible for me ever to look upon either of you as I did in the happy past. I shall go my way and you will go yours. All I ask is to be let alone. Under no circumstances will I fraternize with these interlopers. So far as I am concerned they do not exist."

I bowed meekly and retired with a heavy heart. We hoped that time would bring a more tolerant attitude on Jitters's part and effect a cure to his injured feelings. In the weeks that followed Lord Jitters gave the most perfect exhibition of ignoring I have ever seen by man or beast. He would walk within a foot of Queen, never betraying by look or action that he knew the dog was even on the same planet. Pokie made a few kittenish attempts to play, without response from His Lordship. Only when he actually touched Jitters was there the slightest sign of recognition. It came in the form of a hiss and a smart slap from a white paw.

Toward Billie and me his attitude eventually softened. He was polite but it ended there. The old companionship was gone. Never did he cross the threshold of our bedroom where he had always lived. No longer did he accompany us on walks through the woods. If we went on the pond we could never persuade him to enter the canoe. No more did he follow along the edge of the water while we were fishing, sitting patiently on a rock or picking his way daintily around the margin of an overflow. He had withdrawn completely within himself, devoted only to his own affairs.

All this time Queen behaved like an angel. Only once did she cross Jitters's path and that was more by accident than design. There is a small patch of thick alders near the canoe landing which we call "Jitters's Jungle" because he appropriated it as his own special territory immediately upon arriving at Pondwood Farm. There he has the most thrilling adventures with bugs and leaves and frogs and sometimes a garter snake. He would come to us, his eyes wide and dark and his little face working in excitement, to recount the story of experiences with what, to him, must have been lions and tigers and boa constrictors, and perhaps even dinosaurs. Hour after hour we would see him stalking an imaginary enemy or watching a hole from which anything might suddenly emerge. It was sacred territory and we were careful never to invade it. From the first Queen seemed to realize that Jitters's Jungle was taboo, but one day, while chasing a butterfly, she blundered into the outer margin. Suddenly there was a flash of white, an anguished yelp, and Queen leaped out bleeding from three raking scratches on her delicate nose. Then along the edge of the thicket Lord Jitters paraded, every hair on end and his plume twice its normal size. Queen ran to Billie for comfort while I tried to explain to Lord Jitters that it was all a mistake.

"Queen didn't mean to go into your Jungle," I protested. "She was only chasing that butterfly. She won't do it again, I'm sure."

In a series of indignant growls, pur-ups, and tail flirts, Jitters replied: "I, too, am sure she won't do it again. Mistake or no mistake, she had no business here. I tolerate her in the house and in the yard. I never go to the house except when necessary to accept food or retire from the rain. This, however, is my territory. It has always been so and I intend to keep what is mine. You may tell that to your dog and your black kitten with my compliments."

I sighed and left Jitters to his sentry duty. It was obvious that hurt pride and jealousy still rankled in his little breast and there seemed to be no remedy except to admit defeat and send Queen and Poke-Poke away, which we could not do. Each of them, with his own separate and individual witchery, had woven a spell about our hearts and we loved them dearly.

Lord Jitters retained his frigid attitude toward both Queen and Poke-Poke for many months. But as time wore on he became accustomed to their presence and accepted it as inevitable. Naturally he softened first toward the black cat. No one, animal or human, could resist the indolent sweetness of Poke-Poke's nature. Jitters seldom played with him—as a matter of fact, Pokie is too lazy to play much and Jitters too dignified—but he adopted a sort of protective big-brother attitude which is very amusing. Poke-Poke seldom washes himself because Queen and Jitters have taken the responsibility for keeping him clean. When Pokie's appearance becomes intolerable to Jitters, who is always immaculate, His Lordship sits down to it like a job which must be done and gives him a thorough cleaning from head to tail. Queen finishes the operation by nibbling up and down Pokie's back with her front teeth while he purrs ecstatically. With Queen, and other dogs which came later, Lord Jitters has never gone much beyond toleration. After all these years he has accepted the fact that they are permanent members of the family but he brooks no familiarity.

Lord Jitters dearly loved to go for a walk with us up the wood road in the evening. After Queenie's arrival he no longer accompanied us. Eventually, however, he dropped back into his old habit. We are again a happy family. Queen dashes about in front; Lord Jitters precedes us sedately by a few yards, now and then jumping off the road to stalk a bug; behind, plodding along, with many a pause for rest, comes Poke-Poke. After a short distance he calls for us to wait. Then he asks to be picked up, for he is utterly exhausted from his unaccustomed exertions. During the remainder of the walk he rides comfortably, draped over my shoulder, interestedly watching the passing show. If he must take exercise that is the way it should be done.

For a year after Queen and Poke-Poke arrived Lord Jitters never entered our bedroom. Then one morning, just as the breakfast tray was being brought up, he walked in as though he had never left it. Queen and Poke-Poke were already there, for they invariably arrive coincident with the food. Jitters jumped on the bed.

"Good morning," he said, "I hope you slept well. Let's see what we have to eat this morning. Cream! Yes, I'll have a little, not too much—just a spoonful. And a piece of buttered toast with marmalade. No, not on the toast—there, on the side of the plate, where I can lick it as I wish."

Queen and Pokie backed off and made not the slightest effort to get their accustomed bits until His Lordship had finished. Then he jumped to the floor and, with a flirt of his plume, signified they had his permission to eat. After his initial appearance he returned to his accustomed place on our bed even though he had to share the room with Queen. One night he was restless and I put him out about eleven o'clock but let Queen remain. At first he could not believe that I really meant him to go. This was his room and who was I to dismiss him from it! When I gave a gentle push to his lordly rear, he favored me with what can only be described as a "dirty look." About two o'clock in the morning a scratching and yowling at the door waked Billie and me. There was the Lord with a mouse. He jumped on the bed and deposited the limp rodent in Billie's lap.

"You evacuate me from my own room for no reason that I can fathom," he said, "but I return good for evil. I rid the house of mice while you sleep."

Having delivered himself of this reproof, he stalked out the door and down the stairs. For two nights he punished us by refusing to enter the bedroom.

Lord Jitters is as keen a sportsman as any human. I shoot grouse and catch trout and spend hours in the forest or on a stream only for sport. Jitters does his hunting for exactly the same reason. His game is mice, shrews, chipmunks, moles, and sometimes a garter snake. With his head held high, so his quarry will not drag on the ground, he brings it to the house. A peculiar deep-throated yowl summons Billie or me. After his skill has been sufficiently praised, he presents his catch to Poke-Poke for ultimate consumption. The Lord never eats his game; in this he is like some of my sportsman friends. If a mouse were broiled in butter and served on toast with a cream sauce, Lord Jitters might possibly find it appetizing. I wouldn't be sure. But Pokie's tastes are more catholic and he devours a mouse, *au naturel*, with gusto.

Lord Jitters has discovered that his most productive hunting ground is the stone wall in front of our house. Small animals are attracted there by the grain which birds scatter from the feeding boxes on the maple trees. A mouse or chipmunk can duck into the holes between the stones with impunity but Jitters has solved that problem. The wall is interrupted by two or three breaks for entrance to the yard. Jitters settles down comfortably just above the gateway. When an animal runs across the opening he pounces like a flash of white lightning. Queen recognizes that the wall is as much the Lord's territory as is Jitters's Jungle. She never trespasses but watches interestedly while he pursues his sport.

From the living-room window Billie and I observed one game for weeks. A chipmunk obviously had discovered that Jitters is deaf. So, after the Lord chased him into a hole in the wall and began his vigil, it would pop up behind the cat chattering, frisking about, and figuratively putting its fingers to its nose in derision. Once it actually tweaked Jitters's tail but ducked into a crevice before he could turn. Watching this performance became our daily diversion. Whenever the chipmunk discovered Jitters in the yard, it danced about like a tiny monkey, daring him to catch it. The Lord never could resist the challenge. But when he saw Billie and me in the window his pride was dreadfully hurt; particularly because we laughed. He would stalk into the house, flirting his plume, and giving us black looks.

"All right, laugh if you wish. But I'll get him yet. Just you wait. No chipmunk can make a fool of me forever."

Eventually the little animal became too daring and careless. One day Jitters lay on the wall above the opening, apparently sound asleep. The chipmunk started to cross. Jitters dropped like a striking falcon before it had gone two feet. Billie and I witnessed the proceedings from the window much to the Lord's delight. He brought the chipmunk to the door and deposited it at Billie's feet, simply bursting with pride.

"Now laugh! I told you I'd get him. Let me remind you that 'he who laughs last laughs best.'"

Lord Jitters's personality and character so fascinated me that I wrote his biography for a magazine. Public reaction to that story demonstrated to my satisfaction that cat lovers are a class apart. They constitute a closely knit and rather exclusive society which definitely stands on the defensive. With dogs it is different. Almost everyone likes dogs, and those who love them are as numerous as black flies in June. But people do not just *like* cats; they either love them or they dislike them, often intensely. Ailurophobia is a common disease among women.

Lord Jitters's biography had been published only a few days when letters began pouring in. Men, women, and children seemed impelled to write me stories about their own cats. I was asked to become an associate editor of a cat magazine; the director of the Cat Hall of Fame requested a photograph of Lord Jitters to be enshrined with the Cat Immortals; I was deluged with telephone calls; people stopped me on the street to talk about their feline favorites. No other magazine article I ever wrote produced such a fulsome response. At first I was bewildered. Then it was slowly borne in upon me

that, by acclaim, I had been elected to the International Society of Cat Lovers without knowing that such a body existed. It was not that the story was particularly good; its merit seemed to have little to do with the matter. The importance lay in the fact that I had publicly proclaimed myself a lover of cats. I had stood up in meeting, as it were, and given a testimonial.

Just because I like cats, however, does not mean that I am any less fond of our dogs. But for some reason the two do not go together as a rule. Either one likes dogs or one likes cats, but not both.

My public declaration regarding cats led to continual discussions with dog-loving and cat-hating friends. Their chief accusations against felines fell into four "categories" (forgive me); to wit: 1, cats show no affection; 2, no personality—one cat is like another; 3, they have neither loyalty nor strong attachments to individuals; 4, they are independent. I maintain that the first three items of the indictment are false, slanderous, and due either to ignorance or prejudice. The fourth, independence, I freely admit, and it is, in my opinion, a virtue.

Opening my argument for the defense, I suggest that he or she who believes cats show no affection just doesn't know cats. People judge cats by dogs, which is unfair. Moreover, a cat is much more choosy than a dog. It gives its loyalty very slowly and only after the recipient has proved worthy of the distinction. It is quite true that a cat does not exhibit violent manifestations of joy. That isn't cat nature; it doesn't do things that way. But I wish any skeptic could watch when Billie and I return to Pondwood Farm after even a short absence. As our car swings into the drive we see a white ball of fur walk sedately from the stone wall and a black muff, punctuated by two yellow eyes, running down the steps. The Lord waves his plume, rubs against our legs, and "purr-ups" his pleasure. Pokie murmurs "meow, meow," and asks to be taken up. With both paws clasped tightly about my neck, purring like a motor engine, he licks my eyelids and snuggles his head under my chin. That is their way of welcome. Meanwhile, the dogs are leaping about with frantic barks and such violent body wriggling that they seem to be trying to shed their skins. That is their way. Of course they aren't alike, for cats are cats and dogs are dogs.

If either Billie or I am ill and have to stay in bed, the Lord is in constant attendance. He cancels all the day's engagements and remains in the room where he can be on instant call if his services are required. He knows the doctor as well as we do, greets him at the bedroom door, and watches with anxious eyes while symptoms are being diagnosed. When we go into the woods with Jitters he feels that our safety is his responsibility. If we separate, he is in a desperate quandary. After running frantically from one to the other, trying to keep us both in sight, he sits down and howls miserably.

So far as the second item of the indictment is concerned, that cats have no distinctive personality, I will present Lord Jitters and Poke-Poke to any jury. One is as different from the other as is an Eskimo from an African Negro. Lord Jitters is the most consistent aristocrat I have ever known, be it man or beast. His every move is dignity personified; no matter what the circumstances, I have never seen him lose that dignity. He would go hungry rather than push for his food; if he cannot eat in the manner befitting a gentleman he will not eat at all. He not only picks daintily, but prefers the most epicurean viands like any gourmet. Green turtle soup is an especial favorite, and for caviar he will purr ecstatically. He even enjoys a sip or two of wine when it is being served, particularly a haut sauterne, but sometimes we have the uncomfortable feeling that he is criticizing the vintage. Poke-Poke, on the other hand, has plebeian tastes. He gobbles his food, will consume virtually anything at any time, and the more of it the better.

Lord Jitters stalks into a room with the air of majesty at a formal reception; one feels that his entrance should be accompanied by a fanfare of trumpets. Poke-Poke scuttles. He carries his head down, like a tiger, and makes no pretense at dignity. He is just a lazy, incredibly affectionate cat with the disposition of a cat angel. Pokie loves to be carried in my arms in any position and petted at any time or place. I have never taken him up that he did not purr. Lord Jitters, on the other hand, cannot abide being handled except when he so indicates. Jitters is full of energy and a very busy cat. He always has more important business than he can possibly transact. Pokie is an indolent cat. He has no business whatever except to eat and sleep. He will sleep indefinitely wherever he happens to be.

This habit cost him his beautiful plume. How Pokie lost his tail is a sad, sad story. One rather warm winter's evening he climbed the vines to the porch in front of the guest room. Meowing at the door elicited no response and he knew not how to descend. So he solved the problem, as he does all problems, by going to sleep. During the night the temperature dropped. When Pokie awoke in the morning he discovered, to his horror, that he could not budge. The long hair of his plume and trouser legs was frozen solidly to the deck. His frantic howls brought Billie and me on the double-quick. We laughed until our sides ached, which made his ridiculous predicament all the worse. Any animal loathes being laughed

at. With a hatchet, ice pick, and scissors we carefully chopped Pokie out, but some of the hair from his tail and trousers remained in the ice. His plume never has regained its former beauty.

That cats form no individual attachments is the third of the indictments. Again I need only refer to Pokie and the Lord to prove it false. Although both of them try to distribute their affections between Billie and me, Poke-Poke is definitely my cat. He comes to me before any other member of the family. Some years ago he contracted a dangerous infection in the glands of his mouth. After an operation and a week in the hospital he was brought home. The dressings were agonizing and the doctor found him very difficult; no one could touch him. But if I held him in my arms he would rest quietly, his eyes, dark with pain, fixed intently on mine, only whimpering a little while the washing and probing were going on.

Lord Jitters is just as much Billie's cat as Pokie is mine. His trust is touching; if anything is wrong he runs to her like a child to its mother. Early in the winter I set a fox trap in the forest below my log cabin. It was so far from the house I thought there could be no possibility of danger to either our dogs or cats. But Lord Jitters wanders far afield. He did not come home for his dinner at four o'clock one afternoon; neither did he appear that night. The next day I telephoned neighbors and searched the road. We were afraid that, being stone deaf, he might have been killed by a motorcar. Reg Rowland and Frederick Barbour were at our house and they suggested that we look at the fox trap. There we found the poor little fellow, caught by the front paw. The moment he saw me his eyes lighted, he stretched out his free foot, and began to "meow" and "purr-up."

"Better cover him with your coat," said Reg, who has no love for cats. "It will hurt when you release the trap. He'll go wild and probably claw you."

I knew better. As I stepped on the springs he pulled his foot loose without a sound. When I gathered him in my arms, he relaxed like a tired child. Utterly exhausted, he was almost asleep by the time we reached the house. I laid him on the bed in our room. Billie was in tears. She wrapped him in a warm blanket and gave him a few spoonfuls of cream. Then I examined his paw. He lay quietly while I pressed the bones. I found that none were broken. But there were ugly cuts on both sides of his leg made by the jaws of the trap. Obviously he had not pulled or struggled, for had he struggled his leg would have been fractured. I wish I knew what went on in his little cat brain during those interminable hours. I am sure that with his wonderful philosophy and his abiding trust in us he simply said to himself: "I know they'll come. I *know* it. So I must just sit quietly until they find me."

Jitters slept for twenty-four hours, waking only to whimper when the returning blood started a throbbing ache in his swollen leg. He felt very sorry for himself and wanted to spend every moment in Billie's arms. No longer was he the untouchable, self-sufficient Lord of pre-trap days. He was just a little hurt animal wanting to be mothered.

After a fortnight the cuts and bruises healed sufficiently for him to move about with an exaggerated limp. He thoroughly enjoyed being a cripple and only reluctantly admitted that he was again a well man. If something interested him he scampered off without a trace of a limp. Suddenly remembering that he had made a tactical error he would return, hobbling pitifully and holding his foot high off the floor. At times, to our intense amusement, he forgot which leg was hurt and limped on the wrong one.

This was not the only experience Jitters had with a trap that winter. On the brook by our duck coop a mink had tried to get under the wire. I set a small trap, baited with fish, far back in a covered stone runway, the only entrance being from the half-frozen stream. No cat, I firmly believed, would approach through the icy water. But we reckoned without the Lord. During one of his excursions he smelled the fish, jumped into the brook, and stretched his paw up the stone corridor. Fortunately he was caught only by the toes and was able to twist himself out of the water onto the rocks; otherwise he would have drowned.

I discovered him within a few hours. The instant he was released he ran for the house and up to our room, unhurt. There, in high dudgeon, he recounted his experience to Billie and me and had us on the carpet.

"After the unfortunate affair of the fox trap, only a few months ago, why you should have set more of those odious things on my estate is beyond my comprehension. You know that, like any other sportsman, when hunting I am not deterred by water. I hope this has finally taught you a lesson."

We apologized humbly and assured him that in the future no trap of any kind, anywhere, or at any time, would be set upon his property.

I have profound respect for Lord Jitters as an individual and devoutly wish I could live my own life according to a code as simple and clean cut as his. He is a great gentleman—one of the old school—a type which has almost disappeared from this modern world. The obligations to his family he takes very seriously. There is no sacrifice he would not make for the family name. But certain things he will not do. They are as clear in his mind as black and white. His code admits of no deviations or concessions beyond the bounds of politeness, and he is always scrupulously polite. Thus he is never projected into undesirable situations because of mental vacillations.

No cat will allow itself to be pushed around. Dogs will. A cat does what it wants, when it wants, or not at all. Freedom to choose for itself amounts to a fetish in the cat mind and extends to every phase of its life in the most minute details. No one can understand a cat unless he recognizes and respects this fundamental characteristic. Cat haters call this selfishness; I maintain it is independence, engendered by complete self-confidence. What human would not wish to be in the same position? We don't dare do exactly as we please for fear of social or business complications. A cat has no such fear. More than any other domestic animal it is master of its own destiny. Independence and adaptability have enabled the cat family to survive for sixty million years while other animal groups have fallen by the wayside. Even though Lord Jitters was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he could go from riches to rags and still adequately provide for himself. He would do so, too, rather than deviate one iota from his code. Reversely, an alley cat will become a gentleman of leisure with the greatest of ease if opportunity offers. A wild kitten at Pondwood Farm demonstrated to us how quickly the transition can take place.

One day I heard meows near the open garage. Lord Jitters and Poke-Poke were in the house, so I knew it could not be them. Our colored man, Walter, who loves all animals, was exceedingly vague when I questioned him.

"Yes, Doctah, there's a cat out there. He lives in de garden. Guess he eats vegetables."

Walter knows perfectly well that cats don't eat vegetables. A little wild kitten had made its home among the cabbages, and he had been feeding it surreptitiously because he couldn't let any animal go hungry. The following Thursday, when the servants were out, Billie glimpsed a gray shadow disappearing under the garage. She called me, brought a dish of fish, and in five minutes a tiger kitten hesitatingly ventured out, enticed by the delectable odor but more by her caressing cat talk. He was only a tiny thing, as light as a feather, his eyes wild with fright. We brought him into the house, fed him milk and fish, and watched the little animal grow in confidence with every hour. In two days "Little Cat," as we called him, was as completely at home in his new menage and demanded as much attention as Lord Jitters or Poke-Poke. But, alas, the others would not accept him as a house guest, so, in order to spare their feelings and ours, we gave him away.

"Jealous as a cat!" It's a common phrase. Jealous as a dog would be more accurate. Let me so much as touch one of our dogs and the others are piling into my lap, jockeying for position and their share of attention. Seldom will cats behave in such a manner. They would consider it shockingly undignified. As a rule, a dog accepts another of its kind quickly. A cat does not. It bitterly resents the intrusion of any animal in its domain and remains hostile for months. This, I believe, is less pure jealousy than because cats are fundamentally individualists and creatures of habit. If their established routine is disrupted it is regarded as a personal affront and a major tragedy. "Custom" is a sacred word in cat vocabulary.

From my defense of cats one may gain the impression that I think them superior to dogs. This is not true. Cats cannot compare with dogs in intelligence. Their status is totally different. But I do maintain that those humans who dismiss cats as characterless animals, without loyalty or affection, are denying themselves the pleasure of knowing fascinating personalities.

VII

Rebirth

In the late winter of 1939 I stood before the fire at Pondwood Farm reading a letter. It was from the Gaekwar of Baroda inviting us to come to India for a tiger shoot. (The real reason was because he wanted me to help him plan a museum of natural history for Baroda.) Just then Billie burst in, breathless with excitement. She came from inspecting the remodeled house of one of our friends.

"It is so lovely and it's given me a hundred ideas. I want to do our house over. Now we are sure of what we want. Besides, when you retire we're going to live here and we might as well prepare."

"But I haven't the slightest idea of retiring," I lied, for I had been thinking about it vaguely. She looked very wise.

"Oh, not now! But you will before long. I know."

Instead of arguing the matter I read her the letter from the Gaekwar. Of course she wanted to go. Who wouldn't? To be the guest of an Indian prince would be like living in the days of the Arabian nights.

"Well, we can't do both, that's certain. If we go to India we'll spend a lot of money, but we'll have a glorious time. To rebuild the house will be fun too. We will be living in it when you retire."

She was back at that again. I was keen for India. She favored the house. So we discussed it pro and con. The house won. Before the week end passed she and Walter McGill, a local contractor-architect, held a three-hour conference. Billie was in her element. I really think that during the planning, rebuilding, and decorating she had as much happiness as the trip to India would have given her. I sat on the side lines acting merely as an adviser.

In early April, even before the frost was out of the ground, operations were under way. By the end of June we moved in. I never would have believed there could be such a transformation in our little farmhouse. An addition to the northwest gives us a large living room. Through a plate-glass window we can see every part of the pond; opposite, a big fireplace balances the window. The former living room became a pine-paneled sports room with glass-fronted cases for guns and fishing rods. The kitchen boasts all the modern gadgets for making work easy. I particularly like the red-topped counters; also the electric stove. The Connecticut Light and Power Company was persuaded to extend the line to our house and we electrified everything, as well as installing an oil burner. Upstairs our bed-sitting-room, with a fireplace, is a duplicate of the living room in size. Two small bedrooms, thrown together, partly separated by an arch, give me a spacious study. Our former bedroom became the guest quarters, opening upon a deck porch where one can take a sun bath observed only by the birds and squirrels. Billie did a fine job and I was devoutly thankful she had turned thumbs down on India.

It is primarily a livable house filled with light, color, and freedom, where people, dogs, and cats may roam at will. True the animals, even though they are well behaved, do raise hob with the rugs and covers. Cat fur and dog hair stick like glue and little muddy feet leave tracks. I continually hear an agonized wail from Billie.

"Oh, Queenie, do you *have* to come in here? You're all wet."

Queen looks up with an expression of surprise and shakes herself just to demonstrate that it is her house as much as ours. No, we could not exclude the animals and be happy. They are as much a part of our family life indoors as out, and preserving the furnishings never would compensate for what they give us in affection and companionship. So every room is shared with them.

Having lived in the Orient for so many years, color is essential to my peace of mind. No matter how beautiful a house, if it lacks color I am vaguely uncomfortable. Billie shares that feeling. Of course it is well known that certain colors are stimulating, others soothing, and still others depressing. Brown, for instance, has a tendency to induce dejection and moroseness. But red is often used in color therapy and has cured more than one case of suicidal despondency. Blue, although a cold color, acts as a psychological sedative on persons who are inclined to be overstimulated. Certain shades of yellow produce a feeling of warmth and sunlight. Green is a healthy and invigorating color because it is subconsciously associated with nature and growing things.

Billie and I are both cheerful people, so the walls of our living room are a sunlight yellow, the fireplace sofas the same tone; a jade-green Chinese rug covers the floor, and the big chairs flanking the picture window are a soft red. With sun flooding the room, it would be a sure cure for the most chronic mental depressive. Red leather predominates in the pine-paneled gun room where bird and animal paintings brighten the walls. Glass cases filled with a dozen shotguns and rifles occupy both ends. Fishing creels, nets, and hats hang from deer antlers on the wall. Racks for the rods in use are above the sofa.

The dining room became a successful experiment. Our New York apartment was entirely Chinese, even to red woodwork and gold ceilings, but most of its furnishings, which I had accumulated over many years and brought from Peking, went into storage when we moved to the country. One day Billie had a brilliant idea.

"Why not try having a Chinese dining room? It is somewhat shut off and can be a unit all by itself, just like the gun room. Perhaps it will clash, but let's see anyway."

We tried it and it worked. An embroidered Imperial throne screen stands in front of one wall; the other three sides are covered with Ming Dynasty panels from floor to ceiling and a Ming chest occupies one corner. A huge Buddha sits atop the chest, benignly regarding the food we eat through half-closed eyes. The dining table and chairs are of carved black-and-gold lacquer, replicas of the furniture used by the Empress Dowager in her private breakfast room.

Upstairs in my study three walls of the alcove are half occupied by bookshelves. From the desk I can reach all the working volumes without moving. Above the books photographs of my explorer colleagues, Peary, Bartlett, Byrd, Stefansson, Wilkins, Ellsworth, Granger, Sir Francis Younghusband, Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, and others, autographed with personal messages, look down at me with friendliness and, I think, a touch of envy, because some of them have departed on their last Great Expedition.

Billie's and my room is a combination bed-sitting-room. Bright furnishings harmonize with the green walls. It is, I think, the nicest place in the house. The fireplace is a joy. On Thursdays and Sundays, when the servants are out, we bring up food on a tray, broil a chicken or lamb chops over the coals, and eat in front of the fire. Obviously we do not have a period house. To my mind most period houses are uncomfortable. We built what we ourselves wanted and what suits our distinctly casual way of life. Both of us insisted that a picture window overlook the pond. The room is thirty feet long and we wanted a fifteen-foot plate-glass window with no obstructions. The architect was dubious. He murmured things about "not enough wall space," "too much light," "overbalance the house," "entirely unconventional," "look awfully strange."

"Wall space, wall space, who wants wall space when you have a view like that? Let the great outdoors be our wall space," I said rather brutally. Billie, of course, was more diplomatic. Eventually she convinced our friend that even if it was not conventional it could be done and if it turned out badly we'd swear he never built the house. So we got our picture window. To my inartistic mind it doesn't appear at all strange from the outside nor spoil the symmetry of the house. From the inside looking out it is entrancing.

Of course the room is about as private as a goldfish bowl, but our only Peeping Toms are the birds and chipmunks and we peep right back at them. Since we are continually prying into their private lives, why shouldn't they have a chance to do a bit of prying on their own account? So far as humans are concerned, they are few and far between. Those few are interesting. Like real country people, whenever a car passes, we dash to the window and wonder who is going where and why. There aren't many, because our dirt road doesn't lead anywhere except to the Doolittle Club. On Sunday a few tourists, out to view the scenery, stop to photograph the pond, the rock garden, or our sign which reads: "Please drive slowly. Look out for wild ducks, tame cats, and dumb dogs in the road." Tom Voter, an artist at the Museum, decorated it with paintings of Lord Jitters and Poke-Poke and a pair of ducks stepping out for a stroll hand in hand.

In the bow of the window Billie installed a deep-cushioned green seat which matches the rug and is flanked by two red easy chairs with a Chinese smoking table between, sacred to my pipes and tobacco. I gave the chairs to Billie for an anniversary present because I particularly wanted them myself. She got wind of my intention and countered by presenting me with the electric kitchen stove which her heart desired.

The window dominates the room. Everybody instinctively gravitates toward it, even on a cold winter's day when the blazing fire and two big sofas invite them to the opposite side. Billie and I almost live in the window. We can see far up the gorgeous avenue of trees which marks the brown ribbon of road, and something interesting is always happening on

the pond. Suddenly, reaching for the field glasses, Billie says: "There's muskie. He's got his wife with him today and all the little muskies." We watch the muskrat family happily feeding on roots and bulbs, diving and playing like aquatic kittens. Our great blue heron lends dignity to the pond. Now and then an osprey hovers far up in the sky and unexpectedly drops like a plummet to snatch a bass from the water. We don't begrudge him the fish, for the sight of his thrilling power dive is payment enough. The ducks are a constant source of interest, and without moving from our chairs we can enjoy the loves and hates and domestic affairs of their duck world; also the spotted sandpipers running about the shore, who seem permanently troubled with hiccups and a nervous affliction of their rear ends. Often deer come to the water, pause to drink, wade out confidently, and swim across; or they may slosh along the edge, feeding on the succulent vegetation. We pass the field glasses alternately from one to the other, watching every move of the graceful animals. Indoors, yet outdoors, we occupy box seats in nature's theater with the pond as the stage.

The rebirth of Pondwood was not the result of a preconceived idea, or a definite plan, either inside or out. We simply let nature take its course. Each improvement was a logical development of our needs. This called for that and that for something else. Thus the place grew and changed year by year until now its lawns run into the goldenrod, blueberry bushes, and birch trees as naturally as the clearing of a camp site. The view from our windows is neither grand nor impressive. There are no far hills or vast expanse of horizon. One looks out upon the pond encircled by a stately forest rising in undulating waves to nearby green-clothed summits. It is an intimate view, and as peaceful as the courtyard of a Chinese temple. Majestic peaks and wide sweeps of broken mountains are vaguely disturbing. They emphasize the smallness and unimportance of the human animal compared with the forces of nature. Man does not like to feel unimportant; an ego deflated by the vastness of his surroundings is not conducive to mental composure. Pondwood has none of that. Its charm lies in the restfulness and calm that have become such scarce commodities in this modern world; it recharges one's spiritual batteries instead of draining them of vital energy.

At Thanksgiving we held a housewarming. George arrived from Princeton with a classmate, Carl Toby, and two lovely girls from Finch School, Marcelite Boles and Priscilla Payne. Everything conspired to make the week end perfect. The days were dry, bright, and windless; black ice covered the pond. Our guests vainly shot at a covey of grouse in the swamp, took long walks through the woods, and lolled on the floor in front of a blazing fire.

On Thanksgiving night a brilliant moon flooded the pond. Stuffed with turkey, they donned ski clothes, strapped on skates, and clumped down to the shore. Billie and I followed with a phonograph and dance records. Beside a fire on the ice we played waltzes, foxtrots, and tangoes, while the youngsters glided about emitting delighted squeals.

About midnight I built a fire in the rock garden and set pots of coffee and chocolate on the grate. Billie provided sandwiches, marshmallows, and apples. It was two-thirty in the morning before we went to bed. About five o'clock I was awakened by so-called whisperings and subdued laughter.

"What on earth," I asked drowsily, "is going on?"

Billie sat up, wide awake, her eyes shining.

"I'll bet they're hungry again." She giggled. "You never can fill them up. Let's join them. I'm hungry too."

So we put on robes and padded downstairs. Stretched on the floor at impossible angles in front of the fire were our guests gobbling bacon and scrambled eggs. They greeted us with cheers. Needless to say, we had a spot of food ourselves. When they left for college Billie and I agreed that Pondwood Farm couldn't have been more perfectly "housewarmed."

After the house was completed the rather nebulous thoughts of retiring transferred themselves from the back to the front of my mind. It reached the point where we were discussing it almost every day. I told Billie, with considerable amusement, of the only other time I had seriously thought of retiring. It was on the opposite side of the world, and the plan and the place were fantastically different from what we were thinking of. The Central Asiatic Expedition was camped high on the slopes of Baga Bogdo, in the Altai Mountains of Mongolia. Behind us towered a snowcapped peak. From the rock outcrop to the west grassy, flower-dotted hills rolled in gentle waves down to a vast meadow, flat as a billiard table. Walter Granger and I were sitting in the door of the mess tent smoking our pipes. We could see herds of gazelle grazing on the plain and the high ridges above us were the homes of mountain sheep, ibex, chukar partridge, and snow cocks.

"Walter," I said, "this, and Peking, is where we ought to end our days. We both love China. We could buy the Peking

house, study our collections, and write during the winter. In the summer, we could come up here. It wouldn't be difficult to make enough money to live on comfortably. We could buy and sell race and polo ponies and run expeditions for various museums. Thus we wouldn't be giving up scientific work but we could do exactly as we pleased. What do you think of it?"

"Sounds awfully good to me," Walter replied. "When do we retire?"

"Just as soon as this expedition is ended and we get things cleared up in New York."

That was in 1925. Walter and I continued to discuss the matter and made tentative plans, but politics ended that dream. The Chinese perennial civil wars became increasingly less civil, and by 1932 it was high time to leave. So I gave up my house and sailed for the United States. I never again thought of retiring until Billie and I bought Pondwood Farm.

That I lacked the courage to take the plunge from a lifelong familiar existence into one that was unknown and problematical seemed to be the major difficulty. For thirty-five years I had lived amid constant change and excitement with the seven seas and all the continents as a playground. Even the more static existence, as Director of the American Museum of Natural History, kept me in touch with personalities and events of international importance. What would happen to me, psychologically, if I dropped all that and retired to a life in the country? Would I stagnate, be unhappy, wish I were back again in the world picture? Billie thought not. I wasn't so sure.

Moreover, we explorers are improvident people. The insatiable desire to know what lies over the next hill, the call of the lone trail, so absorbs our minds that we seldom plan financially for the future. When field work ends we can write a lot of funny letters, which few people understand, after our names, and our safe-deposit boxes bulge with medals, but you can't eat letters or medals. I had been no different from the others, but I did have avocations which might be turned to account.

The problem centered largely about me, for Billie knew exactly what she wanted. She could be happy in making Pondwood Farm our permanent home—with reservations. To visit New York when we felt like seeing bright lights; to keep in touch with friends and city activities, and to travel at times, completed her picture. She had no intention of going native. Neither had I.

We discussed the matter for days and got exactly nowhere. I have discovered that sometimes it is wise to cease talking, or even thinking, of such a problem. Let circumstances and one's subconscious mind make the decision. So it came about that in November 1941 I offered my resignation to the Board of Trustees of the Museum and became Honorary Director. The joy of being free again with no harassing official duties surpassed anticipation. Moreover, to create a new life for myself was an inspiring challenge. All the enthusiasm, curiosity, and thrilling uncertainty of exploring an unknown country returned. Mentally and physically I was a man reborn.

Immediately we discovered that retiring from professional life did not mean retirement from life unless we decided to have it so. We need not become mere spectators and non-participants. Both of us were as busy as bird dogs. Almost every day exciting things were presented which I could not have considered as Director of the Museum. Also there came a complete and interesting change in our personal contacts. People of New York's social world, financiers, clubmen, scientists, and educators, gave place to publishers and writers, editors, musicians, radio artists, and painters who, in New York City, center about the Dutch Treat Club. This sudden switch in our social activities did entail a certain loss. Billie and I regretted losing touch with some delightful friends who no longer came within our new orbit. But it was inevitable. Paradoxically, the bigger the city the narrower the path one travels. To step off the highway, naturally circumscribed by absorbing mutual interests, becomes a major effort. Sporadic attempts at maintaining old contacts outside one's immediate sphere bog down in conflicting engagements and eventually die a natural death.

Because friends laughed when we said I had retired, we looked up the definition in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary to be sure our use of the word was correct. "1, to withdraw from action or danger; to retreat. 2, to withdraw for the sake of privacy, seclusion, protection, or the like."

To withdraw for the sake of privacy! That's exactly what I did. So etymologically we had the authority of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. But from my experience of the last few years I could add a supplementary definition. I would say: "3, to withdraw from official duties; to be free to select the most interesting things out of all those offered in this amazing world; to be able to pursue one's avocation."

To be free to select the most interesting things out of all those offered in this amazing world! I've really got something there. After all, the ultimate goal of most humans, the state which they strive to attain, is freedom to choose what they want to do. Getting rid of official duties accomplished that for me.

To be able to pursue one's avocation! God help the man who has no avocation. I believe it is even more important than accumulating a bank account to provide for the autumn of one's life. With no avocation, a man may find himself well fed and mentally starved. I have known a few such improvident individuals, and they were pitiful examples of the human species—unhappy, lonely, bored, and boring. Living only for their profession or business, when that ended they had nothing left; their existence became a vacuum. On the other hand, a dozen of my friends turned, upon retirement, to their avocations with all the enthusiasm of a hungry man for a good dinner. Every one of them is happy and thoroughly enjoys the opportunity to indulge in what the duties of a professional career denied him.

Life for me has been a series of distinctly separate episodes and violent contrasts. Each one, apparently, had no relation to the immediate past, yet in reality was a logical outgrowth of what went before. I had written eight books and dozens of magazine articles but never thought of myself as a writer. Every explorer must tell what he has done in order to maintain public interest and support of his expeditions. Writing was a necessary corollary to exploration but only an avocation. Radio, too, was an avocation which materially assisted my work. I sometimes wondered, vaguely, if I could make a living by writing. I never thought I wrote well, but believed that if I had time to devote to it exclusively I might do better. All my writing had been done under pressure—just snatching an hour here and there. I often carried the last page of a magazine article in my pocket and wrote a sentence or two while my shoes were being shined, while riding in a taxi, or waiting for a train. My books had been produced between expeditions, on ships, trains, and airplanes; often when I was too tired to care whether the stuff was good or bad—just to get what I had done down on paper. If an editor thought the field accomplishment was important enough to carry the deficiencies in expression that was the best I could hope for.

I often thought how I would enjoy leisurely writing—when I felt like it, and only then. That happy day arrived when I retired. I now go to my study or log-cabin studio, pregnant with ideas waiting to be born into words. Sometimes the accouchement does not happen on schedule. Thoughts are elusive and defy me to express them on paper. So be it. I do not resort to a Caesarean operation. There are always trout or bass to be caught, and a rabbit to shoot or fox traps to tend in winter. I know full well that sometime that day, or the next, I will be eager to return to my desk.

Frequently an idea comes at the most inopportune moment. Perhaps I have been mulling over a magazine article or a chapter in a new book. The facts are all there in my subconscious mind but they won't jell. Then, suddenly, I see it clearly. Sentences materialize, the picture takes shape. If I don't write it down instantly the inspiration is lost. One day Billie was in town. It was hot and I had been fishing. A magazine editor had asked me to do an article for him but I couldn't get started. So I took a cold bath and began to shave. For no reason whatever the whole article assumed concrete form. Face still lathered, I ran to my study to get the opening remarks on paper. The words just rushed—they came faster than my pencil could put them down. For four mortal hours I sat there, until the article was finished. My skin was stiff from the dried shaving soap, but I was afraid to interrupt the flow of thought. At the end I had a glow of satisfaction. Whether or not the editor would like my production seemed unimportant at the time. It was the best I could do and, in its way, had been as exciting as killing a thirty-pound salmon.

While writing a book on human evolution called *Meet Your Ancestors*, one chapter, the story of Peking man, defeated me. It is full of the romance of a great discovery, but in spite of all I could do it remained as dead as the dodo. So, fishing rod in hand, I hied to Sandy Brook. The trout were rising avidly to a hatch of insects. I had just netted a fine fish and was drying my fly when I happened to see a stone shaped like a fist ax of Neanderthal man. While examining it, the ideas I had been trying to capture arranged themselves mentally like parts of a jigsaw puzzle falling into place.

Trout or no trout, I dared not delay. I always carry a pencil in my pocket, but alas there was no paper. Looking wildly around, I spotted an enormous white birch tree and waded out of the stream. Stripping off a length of bark, I sat down with my back against a pine and began to write. For two hours I scribbled furiously, until the birch was denuded of bark as high as I could reach and the chapter finished. My back ached, my legs were cramped and stiff, but joy filled my heart. Packing my beautiful thoughts carefully in the creel, I wrapped the lone trout in ferns and set off happily up the hill. Billie met me in the gun room with an expectant look, for she likes trout.

"Have you," she asked, "by any chance got some trout for dinner?"

I grinned a bit sheepishly. "One trout, to be exact. You can have him. I'll dine on Peking man and like it."

So much for my avocation of writing, which has proved enormously satisfying. My other avocation, radio, fascinates me. Moreover, I like and admire the people associated with radio. They are intelligent, well-educated, brilliant in their own field, and have admitted me into an interesting sphere of which I knew little.

This realm of Creative Arts in which our life has centered is idealistic, delightfully unconventional, happy-go-lucky, and mentally stimulating. Clarence Budington Kelland has expressed the creed so completely in the *Dutch Treat Year Book for 1944*, that with Bud's permission I am quoting most of it here.

"Another year has lurched around on flat wheels and here we still are, a little grayer but still spry. More false teeth champ down on non-existent meat. There are more grandsons, and a few great-grandsons. Our sons are absent from home on important business, and our main preoccupation is awaiting their safe return. Yet, verging on senility as we are, lonely as we may be for those who are absent, we are happier than most. Because we have compensations. Our lives, for the most part, have been lived in that imponderable world where the common garden vegetable is not the cabbage, but belongs to that queer genus ineptly called the Creative Arts. We have dealt in a commodity that cannot be garnered into barns, nor marketed upon the produce exchange. The chief reward of our laboring has been the thing that we have produced, and not the price we received for it. We have written books, we have whittled out statues, we have daubed canvas with paint, we have striven to capture songs and cage them in the letters of the alphabet or the notes of the scale. It has been a more entertaining life than our fellows have known who deal in fabricated material things and take their pay in commissions or bonuses. And because it has been more entertaining we have more gay things to remember. We have had our gay, footless, improvident friends who loved a caper more than a dollar. We have committed lovely imprudences that we should delight to commit again if the opportunity came to us. We remember jokes instead of successful investments, and our admiration is bestowed upon the pranksters of our youth and the pranks their humor devised, rather than to the Captains of Industry who have made our nation Great. We would rather belong to the Dutch Treat Club than to the National Association of Manufacturers, and what some of us have produced will outlive the sturdiest automobile. We have not all been great in our chosen art, but some of us have climbed to the sublime heights of mediocrity. I think we have all been sincere. Few of us have swapped our talent willfully for a mess of pottage. Critics without understanding have looked down their narrow noses at some of our paintings, our popular songs, our best-selling novels. But we who made them know that the paintings and the songs and the romances were the best product of which we were capable, and that, seeking perfection, we arrived at the elevation that was justly our desert. A few of us failed completely, but we tried. It is no ill thing to say of any man that he amused many. Few nights have fallen upon us when we could not say truthfully, 'Today I painted the best I could. Today I carved with all my skill. Today I wrote with all the ability that resided in me.'"

A month after my retirement, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, while working in the study late in the afternoon, a happy thought was born. I shouted to Billie: "How about taking a cruise to South America? Wouldn't that be fun? Now we can go anywhere at any time. Office hours are ended."

"Oh," she cried, "it would be heavenly! Hurry up and finish your work. I'll get the paper. We'll see what ships go where."

For the next hour we perused the advertisements of southern cruises. One, on the Grace Line, would be gone a month, touching at ports of Venezuela and Chile. We had friends in Caracas. It was perfect.

Of course Billie's first thought was for her wardrobe, and while she planned I ascended to the attic to find what of my clothes were left from the Orient. There were quantities of mess jackets, pongee suits, and white shoes.

"I'll call Helen at home," I said, "and ask her to make reservations first thing in the morning." (Helen Voter was my secretary.)

Helen listened patiently to my accustomed enthusiasm.

"But are you going in spite of the war?"

"What do you mean? The show in Europe hasn't touched South America yet. There are a dozen cruises advertised."

"Haven't you heard? The Japs attacked Pearl Harbor this morning. It's been on the radio since two o'clock."

Well, we hadn't heard. All that fateful Sunday, while we were blissfully reveling in our new-found freedom, the Japanese had blasted the Pacific fleet. Billie rushed to the radio. The air waves vibrated with reports of the tragedy. By the flick of a dial our joy was changed to direst forebodings. Finally Billie said with a wry smile:

"We've just made the quickest and least expensive trip to South America on record. They say anticipation is greater than realization. For the price of a Sunday paper we've had an hour of anticipation. So that's that."

We did not take the war casually. I offered my services for duty in the field. A desk job in Washington was out; I never could have stuck it. Even though many of the top generals were old friends the answer was always the same.

"Sorry, you are too old. This is a young man's war. It's going to be tough."

Although I did not believe it at the time, they were right. Never in the history of modern warfare has so much been demanded, physically, from the general to the GI. Suddenly I realized that I had been more than twenty years behind my age. The years had slipped by quietly, unobtrusively, while I was looking the other way and too busy to note their passage.

Well, even if they would not let me go into the field there were other ways in which we could do our bit and we set about it. George enlisted immediately in New York's famed Seventh Regiment. Dozens of his friends from St. Paul's and Princeton were with him. The monotonous life of drill with wooden guns in an infantry regiment changed to an anti-aircraft unit, where few of the officers knew more than the privates, irked him beyond the power of words. "Dad," he wrote, "if I don't get out of this I'll go mad." So with five other boys he applied for the Army Air Corps. Eventually their transfer was authorized and George was sent for preliminary training as a fighter pilot to Corsicana, Texas. Rated as one of the best cadets of his class (proud father speaking; he'll hate me for this!), he went on to Randolph Field for his wings. Then to Sherman, Texas, where he met Mary Nancy McElhannon, to whom he is now married.

VIII

Spring Comes to Pondwood

Since I was continually called on during the winter by government bureaus for consultation on oriental matters and other activities connected with the war, it was necessary for me to be in the city. Therefore we did not move permanently to the country until the middle of April 1942. In spite of the war, I looked forward as much to the coming of spring at Pondwood as I did when a boy in Wisconsin. Then I wandered restlessly about our village home in the evening, filled with vague excitement and blood fever, pressing my face into the new grass, chewing the lilac buds, and straining my ears for the honk of wild geese flying to the river. The damp, sodden smell of the marshes and the *oka-ma-lee* of the redwing blackbirds perching on dead cattails were the most delightful odor and the sweetest music in the world. By a single revolution of the Wheel of Life it had all returned. There was one difference. In those days every week was a year; now every year is a week.

While the ground was snow-covered, chickadees, hairy and downy woodpeckers, nuthatches, snowbirds, jays, and yellow evening grosbeaks had come regularly to the feeding boxes opposite our big living-room window. Sometimes a flock of dark red pine siskins would flutter out of the clouds, like a puff of wind-blown autumn leaves, to remain for only a day or two. Most of these winter friends were still with us when we began permanent residence in April. But other birds had arrived. Robins and song sparrows were telling the world how happy they were to be home, and bluebirds sang from the very tips of the tallest trees. Billie fastened a bird box to an old apple tree in the orchard with a little sign reading: "Apartment to let to bluebird family. Children expected." Her invitation was accepted within a fortnight. The birds paid their rent by singing every morning outside our bedroom window.

But the true harbinger of spring is our great blue heron. He has been coming for a dozen years. Although he summers at Benedict Pond, two miles away, he visits us almost every day. For some strange reason he brings his wife only twice a year. We feel that he ought to share the fish and frogs of our marsh with the Little Woman, but apparently he does not consider that necessary. They are for him alone. At Benedict we always see the pair together, but only the two. We have come to believe they are a permanently childless couple. In 1942 he arrived too early. Our pond was frozen except at the inlet. We sat in the window watching with binoculars as he paraded along the edge of the ice. Obviously he could not quite make up his mind to step off into the cold water. He would dip one foot in and jerk it back like a bathing girl gathering courage for her first plunge. Finally he decided he was being rather silly and leaped off the ice. We could see him shiver.

The sun opened the pond too slowly for our impatient spirits so, while I rowed, Billie stood in the bow of the boat, like "Washington Crossing the Delaware," smashing the soft ice with an oar. Thus we hastened nature's process by nearly a week. On April 22 the first spring peepers began their welcome song in the marsh, and a few days later leopard frogs joined the chorus. In May the shores of the pond were alive with toads making their annual pilgrimage to the water for egg laying. Little brown heads by the thousands poked above the surface, each wife carrying her husband picka-back. As the long strings of eggs emerged he fertilized them industriously. Once the business of propagation was ended, the toads disappeared into the woods and fields. We were happy to see them come, for a big crop of toads meant fewer mosquitoes to plague Billie in the summer evenings. I say Billie because neither mosquitoes nor any other insect will bite me unless it is close to starvation. This immunity annoys my wife exceedingly. While she slaps and squirms I sit untouched. At such times she is moved to make most uncomplimentary remarks about the epidermis of the man she married. The word "pachyderm" occurs frequently. I only grin smugly and smoke my pipe. Occasionally, however, in May or June, even I will be driven off a trout stream or the pond by the black gnats and the "nosee-ums," which are our greatest pest. Then Billie chortles with unholy joy and says, "Now you know how I feel!"

I become enthusiastic over the insect songs which accompany the arrival of spring and summer. Billie evinces a more controlled joy, since to her they mean bites and "fly dope." I can identify most of the noises and explain how they are produced, for in China I used to keep insects in tiny bamboo cages and watch them make their music.

"If we can catch a katydid," I said one day, "you will see a real violinist."

In due time we caught a katydid. He was a very obliging katydid and fiddled industriously while we watched. His bow

was a little file on the underside of one forewing which he drew over the upper surface of the other.

"Kreisler couldn't do better," Billie said, which was great praise for Kreisler.

"Flies, mosquitoes, bees, and some beetles sing by vibrating the wings with sufficient speed and regularity to produce a definite note," I informed her.

"Tell me something I don't know," she remarked. "I'm not so dumb as you think."

Even with such little encouragement I felt obliged to educate her in a scientific understanding of insect sounds. After all, a naturalist's wife is supposed to know something of natural history.

"How about the cicada?" I asked hopefully. "Do you know how he 'shrills'?"

"No, I don't. I suppose he just does it with his mouth when he feels like shrilling to his mate."

"Not at all," I replied. "He has a complex sound-producing organ. The shrilling of the male cicada, Mrs. Andrews, is made by rapid vibrations of a pair of membranes, or drums, situated at the base of the abdomen. The drums vibrate by the action of two powerful muscles and the timbre can be modified by so-called mirrors or sounding boards."

"Do tell," said Billie. Nevertheless, I could see she was impressed.

"If," I asked, "you were strolling in the woods and heard a subdued tapping noise, what would you think it was?"

"Probably a woodpecker. But if it was a whistle I'd know for sure. I've never been tapped at that I can remember."

"Subdued! Very subdued!" I reiterated patiently. "It would be a beetle hitting his head against dead wood—or maybe a soldier termite. It's a sex call."

"Not the kind I understand," said my wife brazenly.

I had hard sledding with entomology where she was concerned. She warned me that her chief interest was to keep "bugs" away from her—not to pry into their private lives. After trying to teach her the names of the principal orders of insects, I reluctantly came to the conclusion that she did not *want* to learn. Coleoptera, she willfully pronounced "coreopsis" in spite of the fact that I informed her repeatedly it was the name of a flower. Lepidoptera she translated into "lapis lazuli" because she likes the color of the stone. Finally I gave up, except for crickets. She thought they would impart a homey atmosphere to the gun room, so we caught four and installed them in the woodbox by the fireplace. Billie fed them on lettuce and bits of moist bread. In return they fiddled industriously, just as katydids do. In order to be true to my cloth I made one last attempt to educate her entomologically.

"The significance of insect sounds," I intoned, "is not always easy to infer. In many species they are probably sex calls, but others seem to communicate some kind of intelligence, such as recognition, danger, et cetera, to members of the colony. Certain entomologists, however, believe that insect sounds have no biological significance. Personally, I do not believe them."

"Neither do I," said Billie. "I think those entomologists are just plain stupid."

So we let it go at that.

A fascinating spring event is the coming of the timberdoodles. What, you may well ask, is a timberdoodle? Timberdoodle is one name for a woodcock because it lives in the timber and flies like a doodle. But what is a woodcock? A woodcock is a fat little brown bird weighing about half a pound. It is a very peculiar bird. It has a bill three inches long which it pushes deeply into the mud to extract earthworms and the like. It does not see what it eats. The terminal third of its bill is soft, flexible, and filled with sensitive nerves. When these come in contact with a palatable morsel they telegraph a suggestion to the bird's brain that it draw the worm into its mouth and swallow it. A woodcock will consume its own weight in earthworms every twenty-four hours. Woodcock are considered to be the most delicious of all birds for the table. Epicures smack their lips and drool at the mere thought of roast woodcock.

In addition to other oddities a woodcock can see back and up better than forward. If its bug eyes were in the normal position, its vision would be restricted to the ground immediately in front of its nose while probing for worms. Thus its natural enemies could stalk the little fellow at ease and soon woodcock would cease to exist. So Nature did something about it. She provided that its eyes move up and back until they occupy the top third of its head. The bird wears an expression of perpetual surprise. William J. Schaldach characterizes the woodcock as "a grade-A screwball . . . a long-billed enigma . . . eccentric as an old miser . . . as unreliable as April weather . . . where he lives or stops is a question of the mysterious reactions of the wheels that go around in Jonathan's head." To this profile I say, "Here, here!" But looks are not everything, and perhaps his unconventional brain is what helps him continue to exist in this world of peril.

Woodcock raise their addle-pated families mostly in the north, but a few pair seem to like the vicinity of Pondwood Farm and set up housekeeping not far from our front door. When the frost makes it difficult to get their bills into the ground they leave their northern homes and journey to winter quarters in the southern states. But they don't pack bag and baggage, buy a through ticket, and make a well-regulated, straight-in-a-line trip with mother and the children. Quite the contrary. They believe in taking it easy with frequent stops at way stations, and the way stations may be extraordinary places. Twice in the most arid spots of the Gobi Desert, where one would be as little surprised to see a bird of paradise as a woodcock, I have flushed them from behind rocks. Of course Jonathan had been overtaken by daylight in the long flight from his summer home in Siberia to the sunny South. Because the desert swarms with hawks and eagles his not-so-dumb little brain said, "Hole up and be a fly-by-night." One thing is sure, before he started southward he stocked up his insides with a copious supply of earthworms, for he knew he'd find none in the Gobi sands. We have flushed timberdoodles in our rock garden at Pondwood; sometimes on the lawn. Anywhere and everywhere when the flight is on. Unpredictable, here today and gone tomorrow, a bird of mystery and caprice. That's what makes him such a fascinating thing to hunt.

One of the major results of clearing our meadow was to produce a "singing field" for the lovesick timberdoodles on their northward flight. Like human wooers, the moon affects their ardor. Lacking the moon, a starbright night will do, but the amount of light for his mating performance is a matter of serious import. He insists that his gymnastics be appreciated to the full. We listen for the nasal p-e-e-n-t which announces that the woodcock are making wedding plans. Utterly absorbed in their emotion, I suspect that human Peeping Toms are even welcomed.

On the lawn one night, just at our front door, a pair gave us a spectacular exhibition. Billie and I watched with a flashlight. The little brown maiden sat demurely while her prospective husband, erect and pompous, strutted about like a fat little alderman arrayed in striped trousers and morning coat. Tail spread, wings drooped, and chin pulled in, he displayed his charms to her apparently unseeing eyes. Nevertheless, we were sure she never missed a trick. Suddenly, with a dramatic "peent," he launched himself into the air on a long spiral flight. We tried to follow him with the flash beam but he went much beyond its range. Then from far up in the sky an indescribably sweet, melodious song drifted down to her and us. A moment later the tiny lover shot into the field of light, sideslipped, recovered, and volplaned in a perfect two-point landing at the feet of the little brown bird he had selected to be his mate out of all the woodcock world. Long after we had gone to bed, and again before dawn, through the open windows, we heard the music of the timberdoodle's song.

Spring in the rock garden is a never-ending source of joy to both of us. Even with patches of snow still dotting the meadow we can find the delicate tips of yellow and white crocus pushing up through the soft earth. The first blossoms are the signal for a celebration. Then come the blue grape hyacinths, yellow daffodils, tulips, and, as the sun warms the earth, violets, Johnny-jump-ups, pansies, and iris. Billie works unceasingly at weeding. I volunteered to help one day, but after having pulled up several of her special plants under the impression that they were undesirable aliens, I was indignantly relegated to the side lines. So while she weeded I lay on my stomach in the new grass and observed the multitudinous insect life just beyond my nose. A play-by-play account of what transpired in the small world of creeping things that swarmed over the few square feet of earth within my lazy vision entertained her moderately.

A colony of ants worked industriously at moving bits of wood from one place to another. Why, I could not discover. Ants have always interested me because, when I first came to the Museum as a boy just out of college, Professor William Morton Wheeler took a fatherly interest in my career. He was one of America's most distinguished biologists and a particular student of ants. He told me much about them and later I collected specimens for him in many parts of the world. As a result of my industry I have several ants, bearing my name, running about on the islands of the East Indies at this very moment. I took occasion to tell Billie of this distinction, hoping she would be impressed. "So what?" was all she said. But when I recited some of the things an ant can do she put down her trowel, lighted a cigarette, and gave me

attention.

"Did you know," I asked, "that a chap who was interested in ants saw a dead grasshopper being dragged along by an ant? He was curious, so he weighed them both. He found the ant was hauling sixty times its own weight. That would be like a one-hundred-and-fifty-pound man pulling a load of nine thousand pounds!"

"Well, I never did know that," said Billie. "Tell me more."

"All right. An Australian ant, while suspending itself by its feet, supported in its jaws a pair of gloves more than eleven hundred times its own weight. To equal this a hundred-and-fifty-pound man would have to hold in his teeth a weight of eighty-two and a half *tons* if he were hanging by his toes."

"Of course," said Billie, "I wouldn't believe your figures except I am sure you have learned them by heart, just for dinner conversation. Probably they are entirely correct."

"You can bet they are. Moreover, I'll tell you another. In some parts of India and Algeria biting ants are used in surgery where we would employ adhesive plaster or stitches. The edges of a wound are pressed together and each ant applied by means of forceps. The jaws of the ant are widely opened and, as it is brought near the wound, it seizes both edges, holding them together. Then the "surgeon" snips off the bodies and the heads remain firmly clamped until the wound has healed.

"I'll go even further. When I was in the Philippines years ago an American soldier had been captured by Moros. They buried him up to his neck in an anthill, cut off his tongue, propped open his jaws, and laid a trail of honey to his mouth. When we found him he was only a skeleton. Would you like more about the natural history of ants?"

Billie shuddered. "No, I wouldn't. Quit looking at ants and think about flowers for a change."

I rolled over to where a bush of flowering almond was beginning to put out new leaves. A tiny spider sat on the topmost twig. It was preparing for an adventure. Tilting up its abdomen, it spun a thread and waited patiently until the silken rope was long enough to bear the weight of its body. Then it let go. Wafted into the air by a vagrant breeze, it floated ten feet to the next bush. Where it would ride from there on its magic carpet I could only guess. It might travel a hundred feet, a hundred yards, or as many miles. Darwin records that "ballooning" spiders landed on the ship *Beagle* when she was sixty miles at sea.

"You could," I said to Billie, "really create a fashion sensation if you got some stockings made of spider silk instead of nylon."

That made her take notice. "Well, why can't I?"

"You can't because a poor naturalist like me couldn't afford to buy them for you, that's why. Only a few pairs have ever been woven and it was a special stunt. It would require fifty-seven thousand spiders to produce a pound of silk."

"Why," Billie asked, "doesn't someone start a spider farm? I've heard that spider silk is the best thing for the cross hairs in telescopes."

"Spiders are too difficult to raise in big numbers. You'd have to catch a lot of insects to feed them and they are cannibals. That makes it bad."

Billie was really interested. She abandoned weeding and we hunted about until we discovered a spider industriously spinning a web on a rosebush near the stone wall.

"How," she asked, "does that funny thing make silk? It looks as though it were coming out of its little hind end."

"That's exactly what it is doing," I explained. "Every spider has fingerlike appendages near the end of the abdomen on the underside. Each one has a tiny spigot through which the liquid silk issues from internal glands and hardens in the air. Wherever a spider goes, he plays out a silken line behind him, attaching it at intervals to something on the surface. You wouldn't believe that spiders are scared of falling down steep places, would you?"

"They can fall down all the steep places they like," said my wife, "so long as the steep places aren't me."

Obviously her interest in spiders was waning. Drastic action was required. We discovered an orb weaver that had constructed a lovely whirl-shaped web on a crimson rambler. I lit my pipe and we sat down to watch.

"If," said Billie, "we are here for the rest of the afternoon, I need a cocktail."

I ran to the house and returned with an "old folks," as Walter calls it. Having finished his work, the spider descended from the outer rim of his web and sat quietly in the center. Before long a fly became entangled. Instantly the spider galvanized into action. Up the ladder it ran, quickly wrapped the struggling victim in a sheet of silk, and killed it by injecting poison secreted in glands connected with the claws in front of its mouth. It was a spectacular exhibition of planning, skill, and technique.

In spite of her feminine aversion to insects and creeping things, Billie was enjoying herself. We hunted about until we found the burrow of a wolf spider with "the big bad wolf" at home. He ran down into the cellar of his house while we inspected the walls he had cleverly hung with silk curtains to entrap insects. Others had lined a space under a stone with filmy draperies for the same fell purpose.

"On one of the islands near New Guinea," I told Billie, "I saw natives using a dip net made of large spiderwebs to catch small fish. They bent a piece of cane into an oval shape and twisted it around and around among large spiderwebs until three or four layers were stretched across the frame. Although flat when made, the silk was so elastic that it became bag-shaped in the water. Moreover, it was absolutely invisible. The natives caught birds, butterflies, and bats with the same net.

"In England the armament inspection department at one time employed a man who was skillful enough to separate spider threads with a tiny knife. His colony of gray-backed spiders lived on dahlias. Whenever filaments were needed for telescopes or bomb sights, he selected a likely looking spider and kept it without food for two days so that all impurities would be eliminated from the silk. Then the creature was allowed to spin for fifteen minutes and the thread wound on small metal frames. After that it got food." The spider lesson ended as the chill of evening began to creep up from the pond. Billie agreed that it had been an exciting afternoon.

That spring of 1942 we were concerned because the cherry trees of the entire region were enveloped by tent caterpillars. "Burn them," said our neighbors, and proceeded to do it on their own places by holding torches of oil-soaked rags under the nests. It killed many of the leaves and branches too. The trees stood like brown ghosts when the burning was finished. It didn't make sense to me; the cure seemed worse than the disease. So I consulted the late Dr. Frank E. Lutz, Curator of Entomology in the Museum. The information he gave me seems worth passing along to others, for we tried it successfully.

"The tent caterpillar," said Dr. Lutz, "is a native American insect—not a foreigner like the Japanese beetle. It has been here for millions of years—long before garden clubs thought of managing things out of doors. Nature herself has arranged that both the tent caterpillar and vegetation can live together. There is a "balance of nature" between the caterpillar and its insect enemies; thus years of abundance are followed by years of scarcity. This season happens to be a peak; probably they won't be a serious pest again for sometime.

"Tent caterpillar females lay their eggs almost exclusively on wild cherry trees. But even at the worst, the insects do not seriously injure the trees. Three weeks after complete defoliation the cherry trees are in full leaf again. In late spring the female moth places a band of eggs around a twig and smears it with a frothy substance that dries into a shiny, dark-brown protective cover. In a few weeks each egg will contain a caterpillar, destined to remain dormant until the following spring. Warm sun stirs it to emerge, feed on the new leaves, and spin a nest. Eventually it weaves a cocoon in which it changes to pupal form and then into the winged moth.

"That," said Dr. Lutz, "is the story of the lucky tent caterpillar. But by no means all are lucky. Thousands of insects live by eating other insects, and the tent caterpillar is preyed upon by a beetle of the genus *Calosoma*. Other parasitic insects lay their eggs in the caterpillars' bodies and kill them. Also, they may die from starvation.

"Suppose," he said, "there were an organized campaign to burn tent caterpillars. Thousands of parasites which Nature uses in her control would be destroyed. The interdependence of insect life is so complex that we had best let Nature do

the job alone and not upset the balance she has created."

Thus spoke an authority, so we didn't burn our caterpillars. As a result, our trees are flourishing, while some of our neighbors look sorrowfully upon shriveled remnants of their once-lovely cherry trees. I was so moved by our successful experiment that I published a short account of it in a magazine. The result was a flood of letters denouncing my article. One woman wrote, "Any damned fool who says 'don't burn tent caterpillars' would say, 'don't slap Jersey mosquitoes when they sting.' Bah to you, Dr. Andrews!"

Bah right back to you, lady! Burn your caterpillars and see where it gets you.

The tent caterpillars were hardly off our minds before we suffered an invasion of seventeen-year locusts. They swarmed in the maples, crawled over the stone walls, and dropped like rain from the branches; the shrilling was almost deafening. Even though I knew they were cicadas, not true locusts, and were virtually harmless, I had a vivid memory of what happened in North China. That summer the locusts swept down upon Peiping like a devastating horde, devouring every leaf and blade of grass, leaving only stark bare ground behind the advancing army. The Chinese tried desperately to protect their rice fields and vegetable gardens but it was hopeless. They did, however, salvage something out of the ruin—trust a Chinese for that! I saw thousands of men, women, and children gathering the insects in baskets. That night at dinner I said to Lo, my Number One Boy:

"Why were the people catching all those locusts?"

"Oh, Master, they belong very good to eat. Bug eat 'um garden; we eat 'um bug. We cook in sugar. They just like candy. You like eat some? Cook have plenty in kitchen."

"Bring on your bugs. I'll try anything once," I replied.

The locusts arrived. I tasted one rather gingerly. It was surprisingly good, crisp and sweet, and, as Lo had promised, much like candy.

The point of the story is that the Chinese bugs were true locusts which belong to the grasshopper group and are equipped with chewing mouth parts. Our seventeen-year locusts aren't locusts at all but represent the plant louse group and have no chewing parts. Therefore they can do little damage to crops, gardens, or trees even though they come in terrifying numbers.

The cicadas lay their eggs on trees. The young crawl down the trunk of the tree or drop off and burrow into the ground below frost level. There they remain for seventeen years, finally emerging to live from one to three weeks above ground.

After we had finally settled at Pondwood Farm our life slipped into a natural pattern with no effort or planning. I retire to my log studio immediately after breakfast and write until lunchtime at one o'clock. I enjoy those hours enormously. Even though deep in the woods, beyond the reach of telephone or household traffic, I am seldom alone. With the door and windows open, the cabin becomes a part of the forest life.

One day, while sitting at my desk in the far corner of the room, I heard a faint stirring in the leaves and the click of hoofs. The noise sounded louder, then it transferred itself to the little porch. A moment later the silhouette of a magnificent buck deer, with antlers in the velvet, was framed in the doorway. He paused, pushed his forequarters into the room, and stared curiously at a Mongolian mountain sheep head on the wall; then his gaze shifted to a pair of ibex horns. Twice he looked squarely at me but my shirt was dark and the corner in shadow. He was about to take another step when a breeze through the window wafted the man scent to his nostrils. With a "whoof" of terror he turned, caught his antlers in the doorjamb, twisted loose, and dashed off through the forest.

Deer are not my only visitors. Chipmunks, squirrels, and delicate little white-footed mice follow the trail of grain I lay from the porch into the cabin. After a day or two they come regularly for their meals and sometimes even hop on to my desk, regarding me curiously with bright black eyes. My attempts at conversation are answered by friendly, high-pitched squeaks and "gurrs."

But one "white-foot" did a good deal more than squeak. He actually sang to me. Singing mice are rare, but they exist all over the world, and you may even have one in your own kitchen if you take the trouble to make friends with the little fellow. My mouse visited me half-a-dozen times before he vocalized. I discovered that he liked the window sill just above my desk, and that peanuts were his favorite food. He would scamper through the doorway, run up the bark-

covered log bookcase, and sit down to eat with the utmost confidence. One afternoon, having finished dinner and washed his face, he regarded me speculatively for a few minutes; then he stood on his hind feet, balanced against the window sill, poked his nose in the air, and began a series of musical chirps and twitters. The sound was very birdlike in quality with variations in notes and tones but weak in volume. It was just as definitely a song as that of a bird but did not seem to have any particular theme. I was tremendously excited, for this was my second singing mouse. The first one was brought to me by my Number One Boy in Peiping, China. He walked into my office one morning carrying a little bamboo cage containing a common house mouse.

"Master, you wantchee buy mouse?"

"Why on earth should I buy a mouse?" I asked. "There are too many of them about the place now."

"Oh, Master, this belong very special mouse—he sing. Very rare. He cost five dolla."

"All right," I said. "Leave the mouse. If he sings, I'll give you five dollars. If not, you take him back."

The mouse did sing, exactly like my friend on the window sill. I kept him for a week and he performed frequently, usually in the evening. Then one night the office door was left open and a stray cat discovered my little singing companion. All I found in the morning was a broken bamboo cage and a few drops of blood on the floor. During all my years in China I never saw another.

Some time ago Mrs. William LeRoy Cabell of New York, whose apartment contained a collection of three hundred tropical birds, discovered that she had three singing mice in her home. The report runs that "Dr. Cabell saw the mice: a little one with a shrill, melodious soprano; a medium-sized mouse (shades of the three bears) with a medium-sized voice, and a big fat one with a deep 'churrup.'"

Dr. Lee R. Dice, a biologist of the University of Michigan, studied singing mice and published his results in the *Journal of Mammalogy*, 1932. His bibliography lists titles of forty-three papers in English, French, Spanish, and German. Dr. Dice concludes that singing mice have been recorded in many parts of the world; that both males and females have this rare habit, and that the songs are of different types.

My white-footed mouse in the studio came regularly for his food during a fortnight but sang only twice. Then one afternoon he did not appear. I watched hopefully every day but I never saw him again.

I had one not-so-welcome caller. A porcupine waddled through the door. I hated to reward his faith with treachery, but he was an exceedingly dangerous creature to have about the woods. The reversely directed barbs work the quills deeper and deeper into an animal's body as the muscles move and often cause death. Had Lord Jitters or Queen encountered the beast, not being familiar with his ilk, the results would have been disastrous. I once shot a wildcat that had just attacked a porcupine. The poor thing's face, jaws, and neck were like a pincushion stuck full of broken quills. Unquestionably it would have died in agony from starvation had I not killed it.

Having done my daily literary stint I can enjoy interviewing trout or bass with a clear conscience. When I announce at luncheon that I expect to fish in the afternoon, Billie sings: "Roy's work is from nine to one, but Billie's work is never done." Actually she isn't so put upon as she would have me believe. When our friends ask, "What does Billie do in the country?" I enumerate her activities with pleasure for I know she enjoys them all. She often says: "In New York I seem to have so much time on my hands. At Pondwood there are never enough hours to do what I want to do." As a result, we spend fewer and fewer days in the city.

She is responsible for the house and servants as she always has been. In addition she took over our finances and pays all the bills. In the past Helen, my secretary, attended to such poisonous details. Since neither of us can add, subtract, or multiply without the aid of fingers, some of our financial perplexities are ludicrous. Now we are better off, theoretically, for Billie has recently acquired a calculator. She never can be quite certain that she has operated the gadget correctly, however, and has to check the figures by fingers. Eventually she expects to learn all its combinations and become a mathematical wizard. Nevertheless, we muddle along. Billie assumed charge of an acre of vegetables as well as her flower gardens. With our man she works out details of when and where to plant the crops and keeps a watchful eye on the harvesting. She oversees the canning of vegetables, putting them down in the deep-freeze boxes, making jelly, and preserving fruit. She is, moreover, a born mechanic and electrician. Give her a tool kit, plus a lot of wires and electrical gadgets, and she is happy. As a plumber she falls down a bit. Something tells me she does not care deeply for plumbing.

On the other hand, I am not mechanical nor electrical, nor do I wish to learn. After all, why should I, when my wife is such an expert? It affords me the opportunity to keep my thoughts always on higher things.

Billie has an eccentricity of mine to cope with which I might commend to H. T. Webster who draws the cartoon "How to Torture Your Wife." Just before dinner is to be announced I have a tendency to absent myself to some distant part of the place or put in a long-distance telephone call. Why, I do not know, but my father always did the same. It must be an inherited instinct. Our dogs, except Queen, seem to have acquired the habit from me. They all may be asleep on the porch when I go to prepare their food and shut them in the kennel for the night. In two minutes every one will have disappeared. Billie has trained me over a period of years, so now I try to curb the disappearing act. It requires will power.

Like all wives, Billie complains bitterly that I take no interest in the house. That is not true, but I refrain from arguing the matter. At night, if a blind slams or she hears a noise downstairs, or thinks she smells smoke, Billie is out of bed like a shot. She parades up and down stairs from cellar to attic until she locates the disturbance. Seldom do I accompany her on such excursions. One person can explore as well as two. If something demands my attention I know full well she will have me at it pronto. In fact, I suspect she calls for help at times simply to disturb my slumbers. For some strange feminine reason it annoys her that I can sleep while she prowls.

"You'd let the ceiling fall on your head," she says, "and do nothing about it."

"But," I retort, "I know the ceiling won't fall on my head because you'd have had it fixed long before the falling stage. The home is a woman's castle. To win the bread is man's obligation."

"Oh, *you!*" is all she says to that, but it holds a world of scorn.

IX

The Great Pig Derby

When we came to Pondwood, Florina, a personable colored girl, graced the kitchen. Moreover, she improved her mind. She read the best books from our library, studied assiduously, and spoke with a Harvard accent. Her *a's* were so broad that at times they made me wince. Under emotional stress she had a tendency to slip, but on the whole the impression was devastating.

While Florina cooked, her thoughts were on higher things. Admittedly she was on the prowl for a husband. Yet, as she frankly informed us, not just an ordinary man. The one of her choice, the one to whom she could give her all, must have financial means sufficient to support her in the style to which she aspired. I often discussed the matter with her, for I recognized a soul struggling upward.

"Doctor," she would ask, "why should I get married just to go on working? I can have all the men I need without that. I don't want just a man. I want a man *and* a bank account."

What should I advise? It was a poser. Since she was a worldly person, one who had never experienced the deeper passion, I could only say "more power to you."

We took her back and forth with us on week ends, but she was restless in the country. During the two months we spent at the farm in the summer she became a veritable hermit. Her only companion was Poke-Poke, the cat.

Norfolk has a colored society of considerable proportions. They have picnics, dances, and dinners on Thursdays and Sundays. Florina gave them the once-over, found no candidate who could fill her requirements, and then retired into herself.

During the period of her self-imposed seclusion Florina spent every evening before the radio listening to quiz programs. In the morning she would present Billie with her score and a statement of how much money she would have made had she been one of the contestants. After two years Florina reviewed the situation and realized she had made no progress toward her desired end. One evening while we were having coffee she asked very formally to speak to us on a personal matter.

"Madam, I like you very much. Doctor, I admire and respect your erudition." I choked but recovered my composure. "Nevertheless, I realize that life in the country is not for me. The social horizon is too limited. I do not meet the class with whom I am accustomed to associate. Regretfully I must tender my resignation. Of course I shall be glad to remain until you have filled my position."

Then she almost broke down. With a sob she wailed, "What will I do without Poke-Poke?" It was a harrowing moment. I made a dash upstairs with a handkerchief at my mouth, leaving Billie to handle the situation.

This was in May 1942. Having received a radar message that its services were required, my Lucky Star directed Walter and Edith Douglas, a colored couple from Virginia, to Pondwood Farm. They dropped in one day and stayed. It was just like that.

Edith presides over the kitchen and Walter presides over me. He can do virtually anything from serving a dinner to felling a tree. But his principal asset, from my standpoint, is his consuming passion for shooting and fishing. He will go with me anywhere at any time if a gun or a fishing rod is involved. Billie considers this a mixed blessing. When she goes to Winsted shopping Walter and I sometimes sneak off to Sandy Brook or Benedict Pond the moment her car is out of sight. She puts on a great show of indignation when she discovers we have gone fishing instead of performing our appointed tasks. Secretly I think she is relieved, because of a newly developed complex that I am not to be trusted out alone. In vain do I call her attention to the fact that I have spent most of my life in the wilderness. It makes no impression. She remembers that I once got lost in our own woods. She still believes me incapable of taking care of myself. I think it originated when I broke my leg.

However, the prohibition now extends to motorcars. I will admit that when I am driving my thoughts do wander. If I see

a nice straight road or a car in front of me I am prone to follow, no matter where it leads. Moreover, someone is always bumping into me or doing some stupid thing which I am sure is not my fault but seems to happen to me alone. I refer Billie to my long years of driving in the Gobi Desert. "Yes," she says, "the desert is just the place for you. Out in the wide-open spaces, and the wider the spaces the better." So now I am allowed to drive to the post box at the foot of our hill, and, on very rare occasions, to Winsted or Norfolk.

My old friend, General Ted Roosevelt, was similarly afflicted. His wife, Eleanor, permitted him to drive only within a radius of ten miles about Oyster Bay. "But, Eleanor," I said, "if you let him go that far why not farther?"

"Because, Roy, in case he got stranded we would not have to go so far to bring him and the car home."

I am constantly amused by Walter's stories. One day we were going fishing.

"Doctah," he said, "I'se gettin' fat."

"How much do you weigh, Walter?"

"Two hundred and twelve," he replied.

"But that isn't much. You are over six feet and you've got a big frame. Two hundred and twelve is about right, I should say."

"I never did think of that. Now take my mother. She was a big woman. She had a big frame. She weighed two hundred and forty-five. But if you had a-stewed the old lady up you wouldn't-a got a pound o' lard out o' her!"

I roared. Walter wasn't trying to be funny. It was just his way of expressing an obvious fact.

Both Walter and Edith are very religious. His profanity consists of "Great day in the mornin'." One evening I lost a very large bass in Benedict Pond as we were about to net the fish. I'd need asbestos paper to record my remarks. Walter just sat with his head in his hands repeating, "Great day in the mornin', great day in the mornin'."

At home, I said to Edith, who has a keen sense of humor, "If you could have heard what Walter said when we lost that fish you'd be sorry you married him."

"Yes, Doctah," she replied seriously, but with a gleam in her eyes, "I know Walter can say very bad words. I've heard him. The other night the light was out and he was down on his knees saying his prayers. When he got up he hit his shin against the table, and, Doctah, he sure did *ruin that prayer!*"

Walter's strength is "as the strength of ten."

"Doctah," he said, "when I was young I carried eight ninety-six-pound bags of ce-ment thirty feet on a bet. That's seven hundred and sixty-eight pounds. They piled 'em up, three on each shoulder and one under each arm. But I only won fifty cents!" It didn't tax my credulity, for I saw him handle a three-hundred-pound log with the greatest ease. Upending it, he worked his shoulder to the exact balancing point, leveled off, gave a heave, and shot the tree trunk into the wagon. I gasped. He only laughed. "Shucks, that was nothin', Doctah. I ain't what I used to be."

An ax, to Walter, is as delicate an instrument in balance and feel as a fly rod, a gun, or a golf club to a professional. The handles he makes himself from a hickory tree with a drawshave, file, sandpaper, and a piece of glass. After setting the head at the exact angle, he weights it to the perfect balance with wedges of lead or iron. The edge is always razor sharp. His ax is as sacred as the Koran. If I so much as touch it Walter yells like a banshee. Well, I do the same if anyone stretches a hand toward my fly rods. When Walter "falls" a tree his ease and grace are like a physical poem. Someday I shall have him do it before a slow-motion camera. His great shoulders swing in perfect rhythm, first one side then the other, without a pause, each stroke carving out chips as clean and perfect as though cut by a cabinetmaker. Half through the trunk he stops, breathing as easily as though he hadn't touched the ax.

"Just where you want the tree, Doctah?"

"Right here, Walter. I'll put a stake. See if you can hit it."

"I'll hit it, don't you never mind. Already it's done done. Bet you a quarter I don't miss it twelve inches."

I take his bet, although I know it's financial suicide. Walter surveys the situation critically. Not only a quarter but his reputation is involved, and that's serious. He sights from behind the tree, shifts position slightly, and swings his ax. Clop, clop; the tree trembles. Walter steps back, takes one last look, and gives the *coup de grâce*. Down comes the giant.

"I done it, Doctah! I done done it! Bet you another quarter I hit that stake *ex-actly*."

"Nothing doing, Walter; I can't afford it."

So we examine the stake and find it driven half into the ground, right under the trunk of the tree. It sounds fantastic. But let a city dweller watch an expert axman and he will bare his head in recognition of skill as great as that of any world-famous tennis player, golfer, or baseball star.

Of course Walter is a wonderful shot. With such perfect co-ordination of hand and eye it could not be otherwise. I saw him kill a flying ruffed grouse with a .22-caliber rifle—and that's shooting in any sportsman's language. But of fishing he knew nothing beyond bait. At first he scoffed at my dry flies.

"No fish ain't goin' be fool enough to grab one o' them things when he can git a fat worm. You jes' can't make me believe you can ketch no fish thataway."

So, while he fished with worms for bullheads on our pond in the evening, I floated about in the canoe dropping a dry fly wherever I saw the rise of a rainbow trout. I took fish after fish before his eyes. Then, just to convince him, I switched to a casting rod and plug. After five or six bass had come to the lure it was obvious that Walter was slipping. I said nothing, but one day he remarked casually, "Doctah, if you'll show me how to throw one o' them things I'd kinda like to try. 'Course I done expect to ketch nothin'."

I did show him and when he took his first bass on a casting rod he was radiant. "'Tain't only ketchin' de fish. It's kinda figurin' out whether or not you'se goin' to get one every time you throw out this funny contraption. I jes' don't know why they grabs it, but they do, and that's 'nough fo' me. If a little ole fish wanta make fool o' hisself, I ain't de man to stop him."

Now Walter casts as pretty a plug as any fisherman would wish to see and wonders why he ever thought bait fishing was fun.

I enjoy shooting and fishing with Walter enormously. He is not only an amusing companion, but he is mentally stimulating. His simple philosophy of life, learned in the school of hard experience, continually gives me food for thought. His mind, fundamentally honest and uncluttered by details of book learning, sees a fact in its primitive nakedness. It is this or that with no "ifs" or "ands."

Walter and I get more fish and birds than any of our sportsman neighbors because each of us knows exactly what the other will do under given circumstances. Moreover, Walter has great respect for a gun and is not "trigger happy." Never will he shoot unless he knows where I am, and that engenders not only confidence but comfort when one is in thick cover.

One morning, while poking about in the swamp to see what had become of three of our ducks, we found raccoon tracks. Walter was as excited as a hound on a hot scent.

"Doctah, did you ever eat a coon?"

"No, I never did. I got one but Florina wouldn't cook it. She said she'd 'never cook no animal what goes in de graveyard.'"

"Oh that! Some people down South they thinks coons digs up dead people in de graveyards. That ain't so. A coon is de cleanest feedin' animal I ever see. He washes all his food 'fore he eats it. Why, a coon, he is so much cleaner feedin' than a pig or a chicken it jus' ain't funny. You gives me a coon, an' really I'se got sumpin. Edith, she can cook a coon fit to make yo' mouf watah. You miss half yo' life when it comes down to right good eatin'. You jes wait, Doctah. We'll catch one o' them critters and I'm goin' to give yo' a dish fitten fo' anybody on dis earth."

So we caught a coon. Edith cooked it according to the following recipe:

"Cut off most of the fat and parboil coon until tender. Put a large-sized onion in water when boiling. Average time, about two hours. Remove coon to baking pan and sift flour, salt, and pepper over him. Bake about one hour in oven of moderate heat—350 to 400 degrees, until done, and deliciously brown. Serve with sweet potatoes or anything that goes with lamb."

That says it, for it tastes more like baby lamb than anything else. Walter hadn't exaggerated. If one doesn't like a properly cooked coon he just doesn't like meat.

Frederick Barbour is a real gourmet, so we initiated him into the coon fraternity. Because Frederick felt such a regal dish should have a more distinctive name than coon, he coined the designation "swale shoat." If any of you can get yourself a swale shoat don't miss it, I implore you.

I must admit that Walter is not one to depreciate his own abilities. Plainly, he brags like the devil, so I welcome anything that will take him down a peg or two. A fox had been having a field day in the birch grove at the top of our meadow. We found the remains of three grouse and several rabbits, victims of his depredations. But catch or shoot him we could not. In spite of the fact that it is against the law to use scent on a trap, I decided that since it was on our own property I could break the law in the interest of game conservation. So I procured a bottle of scent from a farmer neighbor whose conscience is somewhat atrophied. It was compounded, he informed me, from the glands of lady foxes. Having cooked in the sun for days, it was just ripe and guaranteed to bring any gentleman fox from as much as two miles away. He would follow it, said the farmer, like an airplane pilot on a radio beam.

Walter and I prepared with care. First we boiled the trap in black alder shoots to remove any human smell. We boiled our gloves. We put trap and all the fixings into a piece of boiled canvas and proceeded to the top of the hill. Having set the trap, we were ready for the grand opening of the scent bottle. Just uncork it, said the farmer, and bury it close beside the "set." We proceeded according to directions. I sniffed and Walter sniffed. Neither of us smelled a thing. Said Walter, "Maybe he done done us in the eye, Doctah. You paid him one dollar for this stinkum but it don't stink. That's a lot of money for a little bottle of stinkum. I done paid a dollah for a bottle of perfume for Edith and I got my money's worth. I could smell Edith anywhere in de room even if it was dark."

"Walter," I said, "why don't you dig it up and take a sniff? We don't want anybody to make a fool of us."

"I'll do jes that little thing. I don't believe they's nothing in that there bottle but muddy water."

Walter carefully excavated the bottle and put it to his nose. He went right over backward. "Good God amighty! Great day in de mornin'! Great day in de mornin'! Oh, Doctah, what I done done? I spilled it on me. I stinks. Good God, how I stinks!"

There was no doubt about it. Walter stunk. We had our dollar's worth of fox-gland perfume, and how! While Walter was up-chucking in a nearby bush I went away from there quickly. Finally he emerged, wiping tears from his eyes. He tried to join me.

"Walter, don't you come near me!" I yelled ruthlessly. "You go on ahead. I can't stand you."

So Walter cut off through the woods back to the house like a pariah dog. As he entered the yard Edith emerged on the back porch. Walter made the great mistake of trying to come into the kitchen. With one horrified look Edith put a dish towel to her nose and rushed inside.

"Walter, what *has* you done done? You smells worse'n any polecat I ever smelled. You go 'way from here."

I explained to Edith what had happened. She laughed until I thought she would have hysterics. Meanwhile, poor Walter stood despondently by the corner of the garage listening to what was going on in the kitchen. He felt awfully sorry for himself.

"What I goin' do, Doctah? I can't stand this much longer. I'se goin' be sick again."

"Walter," I said, "you go in the garage and take your clothes off. I'll get a bucket of hot water and soap. You scrub all over. Throw your clothes outside. I'll bring some clean ones."

When Edith had recovered sufficiently to be reasonably normal, she produced a clean outfit for her husband. Holding my nose, I consigned the clothes to the incinerator and set them alight. Walter, newly arrayed, ventured diffidently into the kitchen. Edith bedeviled him by saying he still smelled. So I produced some of Billie's Swiss pine scent and sprinkled him thoroughly, much to his disgust.

Walter got even with Edith a few days later. At times Edith is absent-minded. She brought up six bottles of beer from the basement and, with her thoughts on cooking or something, carefully placed them in the oven instead of the refrigerator. Then she turned on the heat. An explosion resulted which flooded the kitchen with hot beer and Walter with joy.

Walter had another experience which gave Edith acute enjoyment, for she likes to tease him. He had trapped a skunk, a very fine black skunk wearing fur worth at least three dollars—possibly three-fifty. Whether to skin it or throw it into the bushes was the question. The three dollars won. After an appropriate period of hanging in a pine tree, Walter "reckoned as how" he could stand it. Oddly enough, although the odor in a large dose is nauseating, a slight essence of skunk is not unpleasant; the same applies to musk. To dogs it is enticing.

Immediately after preparing the skunk Walter went shopping. Hardly had he walked a block before the canine world of Winsted became aware of his presence. Half-a-dozen dogs followed him into a grocery store. Walter was rather pleased. But at the gasoline station, where he became the center of a fawning audience, he wondered uneasily why he was suddenly so attractive to dogs. At the ten-cent store he hoped to buy Edith some thread, but the dogs crowded in with him, yapping at his heels, each trying to get closer to the delectable odor. That was too much. Dashing out of the shop, he ran down the street, jumped into the car, and slammed the door.

"You all go 'way and leave me be!" he shouted. "I ain't done nothin' to yo' and I ain't got nothin' fo' yo'. Great day in the mornin'! What's got into yo' all?"

Still puzzled, Walter drove home.

"Edith," he said, "I ain't got yore thread. All the dogs o' Winsted followed me wherever I went. They druv me out of town."

Edith sniffed. "Skunk," she said. "Skunk!"

Walter loves all animals and birds and, of course, is good with them. When he came we decided to get some chickens. I bought a dozen hens and an enormous rooster, Napoleon. He was almost as big as a turkey and a conscientious protector of his harem. The slightest disturbance brought him on the double-quick, ready to do battle for his womenfolk. One morning Walter came in wearing a rueful expression.

"You know, Doctah, what that old Napoleon done done? I was leanin' over gettin' a settin' hen off her nest and somebody kicked me right in de pants. It hurt, and I thought it was Edith, and I was mad. But it wasn't her, it was that ol' Napoleon. He's got spurs a foot long, seems like. One of 'em made a hole in my laig you could put a hickory nut in."

Of course Napoleon stood at the top of the social system of the hen house. When I say social system I mean just that, for make no mistake it is as well defined and as exclusive as that of Newport or Long Island. Modern scientific recognition of the existence of a social order in small flocks of birds dates from the work of a German, Schyelderup-Ebbe, in 1922. Since then dozens of papers on the subject have been published in psychological journals. The reactions are so much like those of humans that I find them intensely amusing. The social order does not owe its existence merely to strength. Bluff or circumstance frequently enters into establishing the caste. If two hens, strangers to each other, meet, the first one to be frightened becomes subordinate. If both are frightened, the one that recovers first assumes dominance. A newcomer to the barnyard automatically goes to the bottom of the social ladder. She can only hope to climb by asserting her superiority over some other hen or waiting for the appearance of a still newer bird.

The hen at the top of the social system is able to peck all the other hens without being pecked back. The reigning dowager, however, does not exercise her right frequently; merely a long, hard look down her bill at an offender is quite sufficient to send her scuttling away. Perhaps that is the real origin of the term "looking down her nose." But the hens lower in the social scale are often insufferably rude and cruel to those of subordinate rank. Revolts rarely occur among hens and successful revolts that result in a change of status are still more rare.

The social system of the barnyard plays an important part in the well-being of the hens. Those low in the scale must give

way to the society leaders above them. If a reigning dowager wants an uninterrupted spell at the feeding trough, she need only give a few icy stares to the crowding underlings and they retire to await her pleasure. After she has finished they may feed or not feed as they like; it is sublimely immaterial to her. Therefore, the low-scale hens get less food than the top birds and lay fewer eggs. Moreover, the hens of inferior rank are unable to keep themselves as neat and clean as those at the top. They cannot patronize the fashionable dust baths and feather-dressing establishments, for the social leaders reserve the best for their exclusive use.

Woe betide a sick hen! She gets no sympathy from her one-time bosom friends. Be she ever so important, once she falls ill those on the lower level struggle to usurp her place. When she recovers health and vigor she tries to climb back, if she can, to her former exalted state. But it is a hard row to hoe and seldom does she make the grade a second time. Given a good break, a hen may maintain her dominance in the pecking order throughout life. Nevertheless, it requires constant vigilance and the blessing of good health. Hens seldom forget faces of either friends or people. Once their caste system has been established and they are listed in the "Social Register" they remember birds of their particular set throughout life.

Don't think for a moment that the social order exists only among the feminine inmates of the hen house. The roosters are just as snooty. If several cocks share a flock of hens, the most amusing things are sure to happen. One rooster will immediately establish himself as the ruler of the harem. He may gain the ascendancy by strength and frequent battles, fighting his way to the top; or, like Napoleon, sheer size and bluff put him there. Once established, he can select the most attractive hens for his pleasure, sublimely ignoring the other cocks. They have to take the ones he doesn't want. He struts about, crowing defiance, inviting the lady of his momentary choice. But she may not accept his invitation. Sometimes it isn't so simple even in the barnyard. He has to cope with feminine perversity. Perhaps she doesn't like him. No discernible reason, even to the observers who pry into the private life of hens, but she just doesn't. He discovers, to his intense surprise, that no hen will give him the glad eye. His amorous activities are restricted to pure-and-simple rape. The gals run from him, not coyly, but determinedly. They even fly to the top of the roost and remain there until he transfers his unwelcome attentions to some other unfortunate female. In one flock 76 per cent of the boss rooster's matings were forced. Only a few low-scale hussies gave themselves willingly.

On the other hand, a number-two or number-three rooster may have that divine something that makes him irresistible. He is besieged by invitations from the unpredictable girls. Why they want him, and only him, our observers do not state. They don't know. But whatever the cause, he has "it." Still, he can't enjoy himself without a watchful eye on the boss rooster. Whenever he takes his pleasure, he is almost certainly in for a fight.

In one barnyard a fine feathered gentleman who had long ruled the harem lost an eye in battle. Down he dropped to the bottom of the social scale. His fall from grace cut his pride to the very dregs. Retiring to the uppermost rung of the roost, he remained in solitary despair. He ate little and lost thirteen ounces in weight. Moreover, he became what the observers called "psychologically castrated," i.e., completely suppressed sexually. He never crowed; he was the picture of a beaten man.

But friendly psychologists were on the job. They transferred him to an entirely new group of hens who knew nothing of his downfall. Then they composed themselves to watch. It required several days to effect a comeback. Little by little he became his former lusty self, told the world by confident crows what a big, strong guy he was, and flashed his good eye warningly at any erring member of his flock.

Psychologists have done the most amazing things to hens by the injection of the male hormone, testosterone propionate. They selected one lady at the very bottom of the hen social scale. The poor thing was a pitiable object. She shuddered if a ranking bird even glanced in her direction. Off she fluttered, hoping against hope she had done nothing to warrant royal displeasure. But a few injections of testosterone changed her innermost nature. Believe it or not, she staged a successful social revolt and swiftly moved to the topmost rung. She, who had trembled at a look, now dispensed her favors with not too great largesse. But it did not end there. Far from it. Her comb enlarged, she almost quit egg laying, she began to crow like a rooster, and even tried to mount the snooty old dowagers from whom she had fled in fright.

Withal she was having a wonderful time for herself, but the observers had a problem to solve and she was the guinea pig. Would she return to her former status if they took her off testosterone? They'd see. So the male hormones were stopped. Sad to relate, her comb decreased in size, she began the mundane business of producing eggs, and no longer made improper advances to her lady friends. But she did salvage something out of the experiment. She still retained her

position at the top of the social ladder.^[1]

I explained the social system of the barnyard to Walter and it intrigued him mightily. So when I bought a dozen more hens we got two stools, lighted our pipes, and sat down to watch events. One by one the new arrivals were slipped through the gate. None gave a good performance. After a few hard stares from the older inmates they retired ignominiously to corners of the yard. One Rhode Island Red we kept until the last. She was a beautiful hen, sleek and well fed. There was a certain air about her that made us feel she would not be pushed around. Walter talked to her as he would to a pair of dice in a crap game.

"Now, ole lady, we is bettin' on yo'. Don't yo' let them hens beat yo' down. Yo' is just as good as any o' them no-account chickens. Is yo' ready or is yo' not? If yo' is, in yo' go and do yore stuff. Yore name is 'Ole Red' and don't yo' fergit it."

He opened the gate and Old Red stepped in as though she owned the place. A young Plymouth Rock advanced. Red gave her a hard look, ruffled her neck feathers, and darted her bill like a striking snake. The Plymouth Rock fled. Another took her place, and another. All were routed. Old Red continued the triumphal advance about the yard while Walter and I squealed in delight.

"Doctah, jes yo' *watch* that chicken. I done tole yo'. I done tole yo'."

At last she encountered the boss hen, a White Leghorn, face to face. That was her Waterloo, and Old Red succumbed to the icy indifference with which the dowager met her defiance. Nevertheless, she had advanced to the top ranks of hen aristocracy in half an hour.

Walter could hardly wait to visit the coop in the morning. I was having breakfast when he came in.

"Doctah, Old Red done done it. She's eatin' out of the feedin' tray with that high-falutin' White Leghorn. She's my hen. They ain't nothin' goin' to happen to that chicken so long as I is on this place."

Old Red fulfilled all our predictions for a brilliant future. In four years she has never set. Regularly she produces her daily egg except for a month's vacation during the moulting season. I cannot resist giving one example of her co-operation.

I had promised one of our friends a dozen fresh-laid eggs. A few hours before leaving for New York there were only eleven. I made a last trip to the hen house. Old Red was on her nest. Slipping my hand under her, I pleaded, "Give, old lady, give." She cocked her head, blinked one eye, shivered, and there in my hand was an egg. Believe it or not, it is gospel truth.

The rooster, Napoleon, had a sad end. He produced a son, "Churchill," who in course of time grew to the size and strength of his father. Inevitably there came a clash for supremacy in the harem. The initial battle was a titanic struggle lasting half an hour. Youth and vigor won, and Napoleon retired, a beaten bird. Churchill followed his advantage on succeeding days and at last the old man acknowledged complete defeat. For a week he sulked in a corner but then began to vent his rancor on the hens. One was killed and another crippled. Finally Walter put him in a coop by himself. That broke his heart. One morning we found him beside the drinking basin, propped against the wire, dead. The old warrior had died standing erect. Walter and I removed our hats in silent tribute to a gallant spirit.

Because of the meat shortage we felt it obligatory to raise our own food. Lambs were our first venture. They seemed rather amusing in the beginning and I was fearful lest Billie become so fond of them that their ultimate destination for the table would be in doubt. I needn't have worried. They grew in size but not in brains. There is little to love about a lamb in my estimation. Of all stupid, dumb, and mentally unattractive animals I have ever encountered, lambs top all records. They won't eat grass over which they have trampled. So if one hasn't several fenced-in pastures the creatures must be staked out and continually moved. I have always felt that I am normally good at making friends with animals, but the lambs defeated me completely. At the end of four months they dashed about in wild-eyed fear when I came to restake them. Running in circles, they wound their ropes about my legs and in two minutes I was sitting on the ground, hopelessly entangled, with the wretched brutes struggling in my lap. So far as I am concerned Mary can have her little lamb even though its fleece is white as snow—which I doubt!

Pigs, of course, were on the list. Pork was well-nigh unobtainable. Frederick Barbour, who can always find an amusing slant to any problem, called me on the telephone.

"Roy, let's have a Pig Derby. Here's the plan. You and Freddie Wildman, and Bud Smith and I will all buy pigs from the same litter. We'll have a war bond as a prize for the man who raises the biggest pig. On a stated day we'll foregather, weigh the pigs, and award the prize."

It was a brilliant idea. Walter was sure he'd win, for he had raised pigs all his life in Virginia. The piglets were duly selected and the race began. Our little porker was christened "Vibola." But Vibola wouldn't eat. Walter was distressed.

"What's the trouble?" I asked. "She's not sick?"

"No, Doctah, not sick, only lonesome. You see she's always lived with Charles and seems like she jes can't get on without him. Mr. Barbour, he's got Charles. I kinda eased over thataway yesterday and asked how Charles was doin'. He didn't say much, but I could see he was upset. He said Charles was sleepin' but he sure looked lak a sick pig to me."

I suddenly remembered my only parlor trick. When I was nine years old I had been taught by a farmer to grunt like a pig. I practiced early and late. Mother thought it was a nervous throat affliction and was terribly worried.

"You can stop it if you try," she'd say. "Just keep your mind on it." Of course then I only grunted the louder.

"Walter, you get a bucket of feed and we'll go to the pen. I can talk pig talk. Maybe Vibola will eat."

"What you sayin', Doctah? Pig talk! Where you learn it? You tryin' to make a fool outa Walter?"

Nevertheless, he got the food. Vibola manifested no interest. After a little warming up of my throat muscles, I emitted a series of dulcet grunts. Instantly Vibola got to her feet and answered eagerly. For five minutes we carried on a conversation in pig language. Then she stuck her nose in the trough and began to eat.

Walter was amazed. New respect shone from his eyes.

"Doctah, never in my whole life did I ever see the like. Doctah, yo' shore is good!"

For the next three days, at feeding time, Vibola and I carried on our private conversations. Soon she was eating regularly and, under Walter's tender ministrations, grew like a weed. When he finally dispatched her she dressed five hundred and twenty pounds. He won the derby and the war bond far ahead of all other competitors.

Vibola's demise was accompanied by interesting funeral arrangements. Walter sunk a big iron garbage can slantwise in the ground and filled it with water. A heap of wood and half-a-dozen rocks were readied. Because Vibola was so huge that she could barely get to her feet, Walter sent her to pig heaven in the pen. With block and tackle and the assistance of one of his friends he drew her out. Meanwhile the rocks, white-hot from the fire, were transferred to the can. In a few minutes the water was boiling merrily. In went Vibola head first up to her middle. The block and tackle pulled her out and the men scraped her skin until not a hair remained. Then her rear half received similar treatment. When at last she was dressed, hung by her heels from an apple tree, and neatly spread open to cool, Walter called me.

"Well, Doctah, there she is. There's Vibola, as pretty a hog as ever I see. I'se done done it."

"Yes, Walter, I hand it to you. You sure have done done it. It was a big job to tackle alone. Let's smoke a pipe and talk it over."

But Walter's work was far from finished. He was determined to prepare her himself, from snout to knuckles, for our consumption. He cut out the chops, cured the hams and bacon in smoked hickory salt, and made sausage from the odds and ends. One night when he was alone he opened all the doors and windows of the kitchen and "tried out" Vibola's fat. She yielded seventy pounds of lard. At that time one couldn't buy an ounce of lard in the market for love or money. Thus the Great Pig Derby ended in pounds of pork for the Andrews family.

I must issue a solemn warning to prospective country dwellers. Our experience with chickens, lambs, and pigs demonstrated conclusively that subsistence farming on a small scale was not for us; that we would lose money instead of saving any. The alluring prospect held out to city innocents that on a few acres of land they can cut living expenses to a minimum and tell the butcher and grocer to go jump in the lake is a myth. They will find they can buy the same food in the market for less than it costs to raise it and not be chained to the animal inhabitants of the farm.

Billie and I had always believed this to be true and so did not get caught in the trap. During the war it was a patriotic

obligation to raise our own food, if possible. We did it and were independent of some of the shortages, but it cost plenty. Even under normal conditions, when feed for the animals is not excessively high, we would still lose money. For us, a vegetable garden and fifteen hens just about pay for themselves and give us fresh products. Cows, sheep, pigs, et cetera, are out—we can't afford the luxury. This, I may say, is not only our experience; a dozen of our friends have discovered it to their sorrow.

Before I leave the subject of food in the country I must spread a little propaganda for the deep-freeze boxes. We had a small one before the war but it held only one hundred and fifty pounds and was soon filled to overflowing. To buy another was impossible; production had stopped with Pearl Harbor. Billie mentioned our desire to her friend Benny the Butcher, to whom she confides all her domestic problems.

"I might help you," said Benny. "The ice-cream dealers are turning back all their freezers to the manufacturers because they can't get any ice cream. I know of one in Torrington. I'll see what I can do."

The next morning Benny telephoned.

"It's practically new; a six-holer. But there are a lot of people after it. You better come down right away."

Billie broke all speed records to Torrington. Benny greeted her at the door of the shop.

"There's the box. Goes to twenty below zero. Works like a charm."

Billie produced a thermometer from her bag, turned on the juice, and in due time Benny was proved correct.

"I'll take it," she said. "Benny, get me a truck. I'm not going to leave without it."

Forgetting the fact that he was a butcher and had customers crying for his meat, Benny rushed out the door to return with an adequate conveyance. Like an eagle guarding its young Billie chaperoned the vehicle from Torrington to Pondwood Farm. On the way she corralled an icebox engineer. He had pressing business but she smiled at him, spoke honeyed words, and he forgot other affairs to journey with her to superintend its proper installation. The luncheon hour had long since passed but I took her a sandwich to the cellar while she learned about the proper care and feeding of deep freezers.

All of us have reaped the results of her labor. If we have a surplus of anything edible it goes into the boxes. Fish, game, meat, vegetables, fruit can all be preserved for future use. Nothing need be wasted. Yes, the deep freeze is the answer to the farmer's prayer.

Another must for the country dweller on a sizable place, in these days of labor shortages, is a hand tractor. The fact that we have one reflects no credit on me. Just before the war an enterprising dealer sent Billie a folder describing a very superior tractor. Nothing intrigues her more than a prospectus of a new mechanical gadget, unless it's a flower or seed catalogue. She endeavored to interest me in the tractor, but her enthusiasm left me cold. Not to be deterred, she wrote for a demonstration. It was a most successful demonstration from the tractor's standpoint. The operator made it perform miracles. He cut grass; he demolished weeds and bushes; he plowed, cultivated, and harrowed; in fact he did almost everything except plant the garden and harvest the crop. Still I could not see the tractor for Pondwood Farm because it cost five hundred and fifty dollars.

Billie was unconvinced by my arguments, but apparently she submitted to my superior judgment and I forgot about tractors, whereby I showed little understanding of my wife. One afternoon she was late in arriving home. I was smoking a pipe with a friend when she burst in wearing the cat-and-canary expression of extreme satisfaction.

"Where," I asked, "have you been? You look extraordinarily pleased with yourself."

"Oh," she replied, "I've been buying a tractor. It's a beautiful one and it cost only three hundred and fifty dollars."

"That's just dandy. If it is not probing too deeply into your personal affairs may I ask what you used for money?"

"I used my own money. I guess I can buy a tractor if I want to. Besides, it's an investment."

"What do you mean—investment?"

"Well, it is. In a little while I'll have enough to pay for it and buy me two or three hats besides. I'm going to rent the

tractor."

"Oh, you are! To whom are you going to rent it?"

"You. I'm going to rent it to you. Of course anybody else, too, if they've got the price. I'll put a chain and a lock on it and if you want to use it to cut the grass or the weeds you'll have to rent it from me at so much an hour. I haven't decided yet what I'll charge."

To make a long story short, Billie did rent her tractor to me and before long I realized it was cheaper to buy the one she originally wanted, which was a better machine. So she made a deal to turn in her tractor if I'd buy the other and everyone was happy—except me. She had made a sizable fortune, besides getting the tractor her heart desired. Moreover, by that time war was on and I had to pay a lot more than five-fifty. But I was philosophical about it. One learns by experience, and I was beginning to realize that her foresight was much better than my hindsight. Now the tractor has become a *sine qua non* at Pondwood. Walter uses it for almost everything except to cut his hair.

"Mating Behavior and the Social Hierarchy in Small Flocks of White Leghorns." A. M. Guhl, N. E. Collias, W. C. Cillee. *Physical Zoology*, Vol. XVIII, 1945, pp. 365-89.

Prisoners in Pondwood

The winter of 1942-43 was eventful in our rather quiet lives. I broke a leg, wrote a book, we were isolated for six days by a devastating ice storm, and the temperature dropped to forty degrees below zero. My leg-breaking seemed to start the chain of events. It could hardly have been less dramatic and I felt rather silly. It happened on Friday, December 11, while Walter and I were setting a line of traps for mink and foxes. Just as I was about to step on the ice of Benedict Pond, my foot slipped sideways on a slight incline. There was a snap, and my leg went numb.

"Walter," I said, "my leg is broken."

"What yo' talk, Doctah? Yo' can't break no leg thataway."

"Didn't you hear the crack?" I asked.

"Course I hear a crack, but it was that branch right beside yo'."

"Well, it wasn't. That was my leg. It wobbles."

Walter helped me to my feet, but it was no go, so I crawled up the hill feeling a bit hollow in the pit of my stomach. He collected our impedimenta, which consisted of two guns, eight traps, one pail of chicken manure, and a defunct hen; then he hoisted me into the car and we drove home.

Billie had just completed a course of first aid with a Red Cross unit and was prepared to practice on me. Resting my leg on a pillow, she murmured something about "applying traction."

"You can apply traction on your own leg but not on mine," I retorted. "I'm sure no bones are out of place. The only traction I need is a good stiff drink."

She was visibly disappointed, but after examination admitted I was right. In Norfolk, Dr. Frank Ursone discovered that both bones were broken just above the ankle. Neatly bound with pink plaster binding, I settled down to a period of being waited upon by Billie, Edith, and Walter. Lying on a sofa in front of the fire, I howled lustily for things not really necessary just to see the household jump. Actually navigation on crutches was perfectly easy. When going downstairs I simply slid on my fanny; the up trip was negotiated by the same method in reverse. It was a thoroughly happy life but after a few days of pampering Billie issued an edict.

"For weeks you have been talking about writing your autobiography. Never was there a better time to start than *right now*. If you think you are going to sit here and do nothing for five weeks you are jolly well mistaken."

My weak protests were of no avail. Still, it might work to my advantage. If I were "producing," attention could be demanded that otherwise might not be forthcoming. Thus *Under a Lucky Star* had its beginning.

The first heavy snow of winter marooned us two days after the leg-breaking incident. Through the window in the living room we watched the big, soft flakes drift gently over the pond, obliterate the road, and turn the pine trees into bowers of white. The snow induced a delightful feeling of isolation. All obligations to go anywhere were temporarily ended. Outside, the mercury hovered about zero; inside, fragrant hemlock logs blazed in the fireplace. Of course there is no pleasure in being warm unless the weather is cold; or in being dry unless it is raining; or in being cool unless it is hot. Contrasts make for comfort. So with a sense of complete well-being I settled down to relive my past and put some of the events on paper.

Christmas that year was a very happy one for us. George was in Texas with the Army Air Forces so he could not be at Pondwood, but two warm friends, Marion and Kurt Schelling, arrived from New York laden with exciting-looking boxes. They decorated the tree, and on Christmas Eve, after dinner, Walter and Edith came in while the packages were being opened. We reserved our stockings, strung on the mantel for next morning. Billie had provided each animal with a little stocking filled with dog biscuits, bits of liver, and catnip mice. Lord Jitters and Poke-Poke rated red bows. The Lord delighted in his decoration, since it had been sprayed with perfume, but Pokie immediately pushed his off at an

angle and was as sulky as a small boy dressed in Sunday clothes. Billie gave me a trout rod which I had seen in Abercrombie & Fitch's. I just mentioned, casually, that it was a dream rod, weight three ounces, eight feet long, made by Payne. Of course I could never hope to own it since it was much too expensive and I didn't really need another rod! So she had ordered it the next day.

Cold, crisp weather and a brilliant sun made Christmas in the country all that traditionally it is supposed to be. On Monday, December 28, it warmed up and began to rain in a steady, purposeful downpour. With the temperature just twenty-nine degrees above zero every drop of water froze the instant it touched a solid object. At ten o'clock Tuesday evening I hobbled out on the porch. The lawn was a sheet of gleaming crystal under the light and the maple trees drooped from their weight of ice. We went upstairs feeling that tragedy for our beloved farm was in the air.

A few hours later dull booms from the surrounding forest punctuated the night like muffled cannon; then the sharper crash of nearby trees. Listening to music from a New York hotel helped us forget our apprehension for a time, but suddenly the radio stopped and the lights went off. The power line must be down. We tried to call our nearest neighbor but the telephone was dead. The room became cold and colder still, for without electricity the oil furnace could not operate; or the water pump, either. The faucets gave only despairing gasps.

All night we lay in the darkness, listening to the drum of rain and the awful crashes that spelled the doom of hundreds of noble trees; each one was like hearing a friend die before the firing squad. A candle flickered from below. Walter and Edith were huddled together at the bottom of the stairs.

"Doctah, we's scared. Mebby one those big trees fall on de house. What we gonna do?"

Somehow the hours wore on and the gray light of dawn crept solemnly over a world of desolation. Reluctantly we looked out of the window. The trunks of naked trees, branches piled about their feet, stood stark against the leaden sky like giants sentenced to be burned at the stake. Two beautiful pines guarding the path to the swimming pool had snapped off sheer midway up their trunks; every birch bowed its head to earth, the tips trapped in the frozen crust. Only a tangled mass of ice-bound branches showed where the road had been. And still the rain fell relentlessly, a sullen, monotonous tattoo that beat incessantly against our ears in the funeral dirge of other trees. The temperature in our bedroom dropped to thirty-nine degrees. Already a damp chill blanketed the house. While we shivered into our clothes Walter called cheerfully from below:

"Yo' come on down now, Doctah. I'se got a big fire in de livin' room. Edith, she's made some coffee on the chunk stove in de kitchen. We'll have breakfast for yo' in two shakes."

I slithered down the stairs and hobbled to my couch. What a difference that fire made—the single note of cheer in a dead world!

Walter's buoyant spirit would not be downed. There was work to do.

"Just as soon as I git the fire lit in de gun room I'se goin' down de hill," he said.

Starting with confidence, he returned in an hour, a saddened man.

"Doctah, I done my best but I couldn't git nowhere. De road is worst. They ain't nobody can travel that road. So I give up. I tried to cut off through de woods. I clum over branches and trees till I'se plum beat out. De crust is terrible. 'Tain't no use. We'se just got to set here till they clears us out."

Of course there was no means of knowing how widespread the storm had been or the appalling damage it had caused. Two or three days at most, we thought, would see us released. It was borne in upon me then how easily Nature can disrupt one's creature comforts, be she so minded, when one's life is based on the inventions of modern civilization. By the destruction of that single thread of power line connecting our house with the source of electric supply we were deprived of heat, light, water, telephone, and radio. We must fall back upon so-called primitive methods of subsistence—cook over an open fire and on the chunk stove in the kitchen; depend upon a meager store of candles for light, and draw water from the well with a rope and bucket. There was no worry about food, for the deep-freeze boxes were full of meat, vegetables, game, and fish.

After Billie and I had adjusted our minds and eyes to the devastation beyond the window, we settled down to derive what interest we might from Nature's sentence of confinement to quarters. Complete isolation is no novelty to me. For

months on end I have lived in the wilderness or on the desert divorced from all touch with civilization, dependent upon myself alone for the fundamentals of existence. I have always enjoyed the feeling. There is a sense of privacy in creating one's own little world where others cannot possibly intrude even by the printed or written word. Every man, woman, or child has obligations to someone else and to society from the moment he becomes of thinking age. But when one is completely isolated, physically, obligations cease to exist in one's mind. The enjoyment comes, of course, from an inborn selfishness; a natural desire to live, for a time, an absolutely individual existence. Still my separation from the world has always been self-imposed. To adjust one's mental perspective to forced isolation is quite another thing.

Billie didn't like it much in spite of the fact that I was quite happy. She is an amazingly philosophical person and accepts the inevitable with grace once she is satisfied that it is inevitable. The physical inconveniences bothered her not at all. To camp out for a few days in our own house would be fun. But I, with a broken leg, was continually on her mind. Suppose something should happen that I needed a doctor? What to do? Suppose the house should catch fire? No one could possibly get here.

Then I did a thoughtless thing that threw her into a complete swivet. Having progressed so satisfactorily on my crutches about the house, I decided to go upstairs like a gentleman instead of a hitch-hiking crab. All went well until almost at the top. Then I over-balanced and fell directly backward. Only the banister on the way down saved me from a broken neck or a fractured skull. Billie almost fainted when she heard the crash. Edith and Walter rushed in from the kitchen trembling with fright. I, being completely uninjured and furious at my own stupidity, simply lay there and swore.

After three days, when nothing happened down the so-called road, we realized that the ice storm must have been as devastating in other places as it was with us. Our First Selectman Willys Smith would never leave us isolated if it were possible to get through. Everyone in the community knew that I was crippled because the newspapers had had a field day with headlines to the effect that: "After thirty-five years of exploration, Andrews breaks leg at home."

The heat situation began to worry us a bit. Ordinarily we use the fireplaces simply for cheer. Warming the house with wood alone had made the stock in the cellar disappear like mist before the sun. So fires in the gun room and our bedroom were stopped and we continued only those in the kitchen and living room. Walter slipped and slid with his ax among the ice-covered branches on the lawn, trying to get something to eke out our meager store. But it was wet and green and gave out little heat.

Meanwhile Billie and I were very busy. In the morning I was ensconced on the sofa in front of the fire and wrote steadily until late in the evening. Billie typed the sheets as they came from my pencil. After dark, with candles at my head, I looked very much like a corpse laid out for burial.

Under a Lucky Star progressed rapidly. Billie found it interesting because, as my life story unfolded, she learned many details that were unknown to her, even though we had been married seven years. Some of them required a bit of adroit explanation. Now and then her typewriter stopped abruptly. After an interval of silence she would remark: "Well, I never knew *that* before."

Almost all of it was drawn from memory. When I began to review my life from the beginning in orderly sequence, I was surprised how clearly some events stood out. They seemed to have been mental photographs, exactly as on a film, that had been filed away in my subconscious mind, and I could recall the most minute and unimportant details. It was like turning the pages of an album of snapshots.

The title of the book, was Billie's suggestion. We had discussed half-a-dozen titles but none seemed to fit. One day she remarked:

"You have always said you were born under a lucky star. As I read this manuscript I'm sure you must have been. Why not call it that?"

So we did. Writing the book was a godsend in our imprisonment for it kept our minds occupied every waking hour. Generally we were so tired at night that when we ascended to the frigid bedroom sleep came immediately. Billie wore a red-flannel creation called an "alert suit" that had been given her as a joke. It surely did come in handy, for she was continually "alerted" during the night when some new crisis developed either above or below stairs.

On the sixth day Walter rushed in with the announcement that there was chopping down the road. From the door we could hear it distinctly and the crash of branches. It was like the sounds of a rescue party to miners cut off in a shaft by a

cave-in, or sailors in a sunken submarine.

"Let's everybody yell," I said. "Then they'll know we are alive at least."

Answering shouts came from below. In a short time eight or ten men appeared at the driveway. For six hours they had been at work clearing the three quarters of a mile of road from the bottom of the hill to our house. We welcomed them like visitors from another planet. Edith hurried to make coffee. In the gun room Willys Smith related the news of the last six days. The storm damage, he said, had been confined to the region above one thousand feet altitude (our house is 1,450); below that level the rain didn't freeze. Never in the memory of the oldest resident had its like been known. Hundreds of thousands of trees in the forest were mere shattered hulks; years would pass before Nature could efface the scars. An electric task force was right behind the roadmen, and an hour after our deliverance the furnace began to hum and the telephone jangled. What welcome sounds they were!

Practically on the heels of the work crew came our neighbors from Norfolk, Frederick and Helen Barbour, Stuart Crocker, Abel I. Smith, and Reg Rowland, to see how we had fared. While they were sipping cocktails, the fireplace suddenly roared like a blast furnace and great masses of blazing soot drifted to the lawn. The chimney was on fire. We let it burn, since ice covered the roof, but had it occurred while we were marooned, the effect on our household would have been climactic.

Personally, I had enjoyed the imprisonment, but for poor Billie it was a mental and nervous beating. At the end she remarked sadly:

"I'm sorry, but I'm just not a pioneer woman. I want to go to New York and forget ice and snow and electricity that won't electrify. I want to go to a theater every evening and to a night club and see a lot of bright lights."

So to New York we went for a week's stay at the Weylin Hotel which has become our second home; and a delightful home it is. To Tom Russell, the managing director, we owe a great debt of gratitude for his kindness during many years.

Being a cripple in New York was an enlightening experience. In these postwar days of disillusionment with tales of strikes, political graft, profiteering, and murder flaring in every headline, one needs a revival of faith in the essential decency of the American people. One can get it by hobbling about on crutches for a few days. He will find, as I did, that whatever our other faults, poor sportsmanship and lack of warmhearted kindness are not among them. My first surprise came when we arrived in New York. It was pouring rain. Ordinarily getting a taxi on such a day becomes a free-for-all fight with no holds barred. He who has most agility, unblushing brass, or the broadest shoulders, wins the battle. But as the first cab drew up the way was cleared for me almost as though I had been royalty. It was always the same. If I stood on a corner signaling for a taxi I never had to wait my turn. The driver invariably left his seat to help me into and out of the cab and across the sidewalk. Only once did an individual try to push ahead.

"Hey, you guy," yelled the driver, "who do you think you are? Can't you see this man is on crutches? You get the hell out of there."

The man stuttered apologies and oozed off into the crowd.

My crutches were as effective as a police escort. At first Billie was fearful of allowing me on the street alone but she soon learned that every pedestrian became a self-appointed guardian.

When we arrived at Grand Central Station to return home a policeman instantly stepped to my side.

"What train do you want to get?" he asked. Billie told him.

He escorted us through a side door to an elevator and right to the gate, clearing a path through the waiting passengers.

"Better open up and let this man through," he told the trainman. "He might get hurt when they start to push."

I could cite instances *ad infinitum* of unexpected and heartwarming kindness.

My broken leg made me miss only one of the broadcasts on Columbia's "American School of the Air" because of the two weeks' vacation of the series during the Christmas holidays. From October until the middle of April Billie and I journeyed every Monday to New York and returned Wednesday evening. It had been simple enough in other years, but the weather that winter made it really difficult. Who knows or cares about the weather in New York? One travels in

underground tunnels like a human mole from house to office and lives in an aura of artificial light. But sun and rain, ice storms and snow assume vast importance to the country dweller. Moreover, two inches of snow in New York means ten inches in our Berkshire hills. We were always faced with the problem of how to reach home once we were in the city.

Often on Wednesday morning Reg or Alice Lewis telephoned from Norfolk to us at the Weylin Hotel.

"It is snowing like everything up here and blowing hard. The plows are out but the men say if this continues the roads will be blocked. I don't think you can get home. Your room is ready for you at our house."

Reg would meet us at the station in the blackness of a winter's night and drive us to the warmth and cheer of their lovely home. In the morning Billie would don Alice's boots, slacks, and sweater, while I arrayed myself in Reg's clothes. Walter would meet us at the foot of our hill with snowshoes and we would plod three quarters of a mile up the blocked road through knee-deep drifts. By the following Monday the plows would have the road open—unless a storm materialized Sunday night. In that event we would again dress ourselves in the borrowed raiment, Reg meet us at the state road, we would lunch with him and Alice, and take the afternoon train to New York. This happened so frequently that the Lewis's house became known to us as the "Weylin Hotel Annex."

Just to make the winter memorable, our eighth wedding anniversary, February 21, was ushered in by a real old-fashioned blizzard. The word is often misused, for a blizzard isn't merely a heavy snowstorm. The dictionary says: "Blizzard: a furious windstorm accompanied by fine driving snow and intense cold."

That was what we had. Blinding snow, before a fifty-mile gale, leaped over Nap Hill, turned the trees to shivering ghosts, and swept across the pond to beat furiously against our house. There was something distinctly living and personal about the storm. Like a raging demon, it tried to uproot the building, take it in its mouth, and shake it to bits. It tore at the shutters, howled around the corner of the gun room, and shrieked in a rising crescendo of wrath at the windows which defied its entrance. Balked at every turn, it decided to block us in. Snow heaped on the porch against the doors and packed into a solid mass which one could cut like cheese. The big living-room window became only a panel of white frost; at high noon our rooms were almost dark.

By seven o'clock the voice of the storm died to a despairing wail. Fortunately, the power lines were still intact and we maintained communication with the outside world; also we had heat and light. I say fortunately with real feeling, for the mercury almost dropped out of the tube that night. The thermostat was set at sixty degrees, but in the morning I had a hazy recollection that the subdued purr of the oil furnace had permeated my dreams all night. Billie, too, had the same remembrance.

"It must have turned colder," she said. "I'll look at the thermometer." Putting one bare foot on the floor, she drew it back with a shiver and snuggled under the covers.

"It's as cold as Greenland's icy mountains. You get up first."

Throwing on my Chinese fur-lined robe, I skipped to the corner of the room where the outdoor indoor thermometer lives.

I looked and looked again.

"Something is wrong. I can't see the mercury. Yes, there it is. It registers forty below. I don't believe it."

But it was true, nevertheless. Walter checked with the thermometer on the back porch.

"Doctah, it say forty below zero *exactly*. I'se seen hot weather and I'se seen cole weather, but I ain't never seen forty degrees below zero befo'. What sort of a place is this Connecticut?"

This time only three days elapsed before we were liberated. Eventually the men hacked and dug their way through the wind-packed drifts and freed our road. The entry in my diary for that week reads:

"It has been a hell of a winter."

Billie says, "Amen."

The following spring was as soft and warm as the winter had been cold. Its happiest event for us was a visit from George. He had been unduly disturbed over my leg-breaking episode and wanted to see for himself that his energetic father was not hobbling about like a lame duck. So he flew up from Texas in his training plane. I met him at the Waldorf in New York where we lunched. To my secret delight the headwaiter completely ignored me when we asked for a table. His eyes were fixed on the silver wings decorating George's tunic. "Yes, Lieutenant. No, Lieutenant." So far as he was concerned I didn't exist.

George's happiness in again having a glimpse of Pondwood was pathetic. Our first walk was to the pine grove on the hill overlooking Brummagem Brook. The spot has always been his "Temple of Worship." A photograph of it flew with him over many parts of Naziland.

Later George was transferred to Norfolk, Virginia, to fly the Thunderbolt P-47, which had been his ambition as a pilot. Then it was the fastest and most effective fighter plane in our Air Corps. When I mentioned to Eddie Rickenbacker what George was flying he said: "Tell him from me to treat that plane like a rattlesnake. No matter how much he loves it, never get careless. Otherwise, it will bite him and probably he won't live to have a second bite."

One day George flew up to Bradley Field at Windsor Locks, Connecticut, only forty miles from Pondwood Farm. Oddly enough we left home in our car at eleven o'clock in the morning, at exactly the time he took off from Norfolk, Virginia. Ten minutes after we reached the visitors' room of the field George's plane was posted to arrive. Although from the ground the buildings and landing strip seemed to stand out like a sore thumb, only striped with different colors, George said the camouflage was so perfect that, even with the radio beam to guide him in, he had difficulty in locating the runway. When Billie remarked about how fast he had come, he said, "I was just loafing along at three hundred miles an hour. If I'd gone up high and opened up, I'd have been waiting for you."

George could stay only two hours, so we ate our box luncheon in a pine grove and then went back to Bradley. I wanted to sit in the cockpit of his plane and feel like an aviator, but George said: "Can't let you, Dad. There's a lot of 'brass' on the field and I don't dare take a chance."

Billie had baked him a box of his favorite chocolate cookies, but even in the huge plane there was no place to put them. After he had donned his Mae West and the parachute was strapped to his shoulders, he was squeezed in like a packed sardine. "I might stuff a few in my pants leg," he said and proceeded to line his suit with cookies. When the signal from the control tower came for him to take off, he rolled down the runway, circled the field, and wagged his wings in farewell to us. We watched his plane become smaller and smaller in the eastern sky, until it vanished like a flying bird. Both Billie and I had lumps in our throats. We had been happy that he was not in a fighting theater, until we learned that more cadets and pilots were killed at home in training than by Nazi bullets. Only a week later George had the sad duty of taking what remained of his roommate back to his parents and fiancée in Chicago. The sympathy and tact which he showed brought grateful letters to us from the boy's father and the girl he was to have married within a fortnight. George himself wrote: "If anything happens to me, I hope you and Billie can take it as they did, and I know you will. All of them were wonderful."

Out of seven pilots from his class designated for training, George was the only one who lived to fight in Germany. Probably because he remembered Eddie Rickenbacker's message, but I like to think that he has inherited my Lucky Star and I believe he has.

The Hunter's Moon

Support is important to most normal, healthy individuals. Ergo, it is important to us, for we are healthy and reasonably normal. Vacation at Pondwood, and for some of our friends, begins on the opening day of the shooting season in late October. September is a period of preparation. None of our household can enjoy the month of play unless the particular tasks for which each is responsible are finished. So I write feverishly in my study; Billie cans vegetables and fruit with Edith and attends to the hundred details which puts the house away for the winter; Walter cleans the garden, cuts dead trees, and fills the cellar with wood.

Five days of the week we labor unceasingly, but Saturdays and Sundays are devoted to the dogs to get them in condition and to locate resident birds. Usually there is a puppy in the kennel who must have her first experience with woodcock or grouse. This autumn it was Peggy, whose grandfather is Mississippi Zev, winner of the National Field Trials. Ayreslea Rowland, Reg's daughter, raised the litter virtually by hand, and as Ayreslea is my favorite young lady, I am as proud of her as of the puppy. Peggy came to us when she was only a tiny ball of white fuzzy hair. Under Billie's care she grew amazingly and promises to be a "brag dog," fast, stanch, and with a nose that picks scent globules out of the air like cherries off a tree. On the twenty-ninth of September she pointed her first woodcock. Head high, tail up, one forefoot off the ground, she made a picture that would have gained a prideful bark from her illustrious grandfather. I hugged Peggy, for only a dog lover can know the thrill of seeing a pup he has raised do herself proud.

Reg Lewis had an experience with a new setter this autumn which outdid us all. On the first day he stopped at a small cover beside the road and left the car door open. In a little swamp the dog found a woodcock, which Reg killed. The bird fell in the road. The pup retrieved it and looked around wildly for Reg. Not seeing him, he did what came naturally, hopped into the car, deposited the woodcock on the floor, sat down on the seat, and happily awaited Reg's return.

Billie started shooting from scratch. She knew the difference between the butt and the muzzle of the gun when I married her, but that was about all. I had a twenty-gauge made for her, purchased a trap and some clay birds, and explained the mechanism of the weapon.

"Now," I said, "shoot at that can on the stone wall. Don't aim, point quickly, and press the trigger." She did, and filled the can full of holes.

"Fine. You are ready for flying birds because a shotgun is meant only for moving objects."

From directly behind the trap I kept her firing at straight-away targets until she was breaking them pretty regularly. Then she graduated to various angles. I soon discovered that her natural sense of timing, balance, and co-ordination of hand and eye, the essence of bird shooting, were excellent. In two or three weeks she was doing very well indeed. I suspected she might become a good shot, for she is a wonderful dancer, and strangely enough the two activities are not so far apart as one might imagine.

In England, and again at Paul Hammond's place on Long Island, I had seen an artificial shoot that intrigued me mightily. Traps were concealed in the bushes, with wires extending to a path. The shooter moved forward, and as a man behind him sprung the traps, the clay targets flew through the trees exactly like living birds. The park we had cleared opposite the house was an ideal spot for such a shoot. I purchased half-a-dozen traps and simulated the shots one usually got in a day with woodcock or grouse. The "walk" kept growing, however, as some of our friends reported new and interesting angles. Now it numbers fifteen traps and, I think, duplicates almost every type of shot one will get during a day in the coverts. Eltinge Warner, publisher of *Field and Stream*, said it was the best artificial shoot he had ever seen. Constant practice on the woodcock walk and experience in the field have made Billie a better shot than the ordinary man. And she loves it too.

We hardly touch a gun all summer until September, for fly fishing occupies our minds. But when the leaves begin to turn and autumn smells are in the air, Walter oils the traps and Billie and I prepare to swing our reflexes into gear. Woodcock and grouse won't wait to say good-bye. If you don't shoot in a flash, you can't serve them on the table. Every Sunday morning the woodcock walk occupies the center of the stage. Shooting friends drop in with their house guests.

Perhaps Colonel Freddie Wildman telephones:

"Harriet and I have some people up for the week end. How about a go at the walk?"

"Fine. About eleven. Frederick Barbour and Helen and Eddie and Mary Bench are coming over. We'll have luncheon in the rock garden if you'll cook. Broiler chickens out of our own coop."

Queen and Star point the traps as stanchly as though they were live birds and bring back the unbroken targets to lay them at the gunner's feet. That is hard to take for a poor shot; they definitely rub it in. While we men shoot, our wives sit in the golden sunshine talking of whatever women talk about when they are alone. Their husbands are earnestly analyzing every shot.

"Freddie, I think you were a bit above that bird. I was looking over your gun barrels. Why don't you try it again?"

"Maybe you're right, Roy. Walter, give me another."

This time the target dissolves in a puff of black powder. Just over the stone wall he gets a beautiful double, which is far from easy. The colonel beams: "I'm getting on, Roy. I'm getting on." So it goes for an hour or two, and we have a lot of fun.

When we return to the women they unconsciously view us a little like children who have been playing a new game. Listening patiently to our enthusiastic account of the shooting, they applaud our hits and deplore our misses. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I seem always to detect a slightly superior air, as though they had settled all the problems of the United Nations while we were breaking clay birds that never did us harm.

At the luncheon ceremonies in the rock garden Freddie assumes charge by divine right, for he is a real gourmet. From long residence in France, cooking, to him, is an art as great as that of producing a symphony or painting a masterpiece. Besides his gun, he brings a kind of vanity case filled with an amazing assortment of tins and bottles. Most of these herbs and condiments are as foreign to me as are the phials on a druggist's shelf. But not to him. A touch of this, a soupçon of that, and Freddie produces a sauce that would bring a gleam of envy to a French chef's eyes.

Ever since we rebuilt the house Pondwood has been a halfway stop between Norfolk and Colebrook for our friends. They come and go at will. If we are not at home, they fish in the pond, shoot the walk, and mix their drinks in the gun room. It is a delightfully casual way of life and we like it, particularly during the shooting season.

The evening before the first day Billie and I are as excited as though we were the star actors in the opening of a new play on Broadway. Guns and shells are in the car, coats, sweaters, and hip boots laid out, and flashlights ready. We go upstairs early. I read a detective story aloud to calm our minds. In the middle of a chapter I see Billie's eyes are closed and I talk a lot of jargon without changing tone. She doesn't protest, so I know she is asleep, but as I turn off the light she murmurs: "I hope I shoot well tomorrow."

Long before daylight the alarm clock rings. Billie snuggles her head deeper into the pillow.

"Why should anyone get up at this ungodly hour?" she murmurs. "You shoot your old ducks. I'm not going."

"All right, darling," I say, knowing full well she wouldn't miss it for the world. "You go back to sleep. I'll go alone."

So I start to dress. That does the trick. In a few minutes she says crossly, "I just don't understand why ducks can't be shot at a human hour. But I'm awake now. Go put the coffee on."

I start the coffee. When I return she is pulling on hip boots and sweater. Her eyes are shining as she runs to the window.

"I can see a smitch of daylight already. Why didn't you set the alarm earlier?"

There is a delightful feeling of sneaking out, like burglars in the night, when we travel to the garage along the flashlight's beam. The motor roars as violently as an airplane in the stillness. Everything looks strange in the headlights as we drive over the familiar road, park the car below the blind, and pick our way down the steep hill to the wooden platform, surrounded by leaves and rushes. It is almost dark but we peer through our gun barrels against the sky to be sure no twig or leaf has lodged inside, put a box of shells between us, and settle ourselves on little chairs to await the coming of day. The blackness of night changes imperceptibly to gray; we can see a tree that wasn't visible before; then a bush. The shore

is a silver streak, barely showing against the forest blackness. I smoke my pipe and Billie's cigarette is a tiny point of fire.

"I can just see the decoys," she whispers. "Gee, I wish those were live ducks. Couldn't I pot 'em! I would, too, you know."

"No, you wouldn't. We're law-abiding citizens—at least *pretty* law-abiding—and the law says we must wait till sunrise."

"Oh, you and your old law! If a duck comes in I'm going to shoot. If I get arrested you can bail me out."

"Well, I won't bail you out. I'll come and feed you peanuts through the bars but bail you out I will not. I'd just love to have you sit in jail. It would do you good."

Suddenly a whistle of wings sounds over the marsh. Billie stamps out her cigarette and I park my pipe on the boards. We hear a swish of set pinions and a splash almost in our laps it seems; then "whoose" as another flock just skims the blind, circles, and drops into the water, talking softly among themselves.

"Blacks," I whisper. "There must be twenty out there now."

"I see bright streaks over in the east. If that isn't sunup I don't know what is. Let's shoot. They'll go away and we won't get any," she answers.

"No, it isn't sunup, and anyway it's too dark. If they rise against the shore line we'd never see them."

So we sit for hours, it seems, tense as steel springs, peering through peepholes in the blind, while the ducks gabble and dive and gossip like old ladies at a tea party. Suddenly, "Bang, bang, bang, bang," rolls down from the upper end of the pond. We jump to our feet just as the ducks leave the surface in a roar of wings. Billie picks birds to the right; I shoot at those in front. Points of fire stab the dawn and a thunderous roar is tumbled back upon our heads by the hills across the marsh. Four ducks are down and a fifth volplanes to the water in a slanting dive just at the edge of the bushes. Cramming shells in my gun, I fire again before it reaches cover.

"If a bird sits up, shoot him." Her gun bangs. All the cripples are accounted for.

A moment later heavy stillness settles over the marsh, broken only by the distant quack of a wandering duck. Billie's face is radiant.

"Wasn't that fun? Oh, wasn't that fun! I got a double. Did you see it? First one on ducks for me."

Then she rubs her shoulder ruefully.

"Those heavy loads do pound a person. I could feel my back teeth rattle. This twelve-gauge is a lot different from my twenty."

The fusillade has sent flocks and singles circling wildly. A thin, dark line shows faintly against the sky. Ducks coming from the north. I give the hail call, a long-drawn-out q-u-a-c-k followed by four short notes. Eight blacks hear it, the leader drops away, turns sharply, and the flock heads straight for our decoys. But they need more talk. The greeting call, slow and clear, assures them all is well; then the soft, satisfied chuckles of the feeding invitation. That does it. The flock swings back, diving toward us like black bullets. We crouch motionless, heads down, hardly daring to breathe.

"Get ready. They're coming like hell. Give 'em a big lead."

The birds are almost overhead, sharp silhouettes against the sky, when we leap to our feet. Squawking wildly, they back-paddle with feet and wings and try to turn straight up. Both of us shoot too quickly and miss with the first barrel, but each gets a bird with the second. Mine hurtles into the trees behind the blind; hers strikes the water, bounces like a rubber ball, and lies motionless except for two red legs waving feebly in the air.

There is one supreme moment that morning, a picture that only a sportsman-artist could put on canvas. Passing clouds dropped a shower of rain just as the sun climbed above the trees on the eastern hills. Stretched across the sky from shore to shore was a double rainbow. Suddenly, right under the arch, came a battalion of ducks winging toward the distant

marshes. At my hail call one segment broke away, dropped like tiny black parachutes, and swung in to the decoys. The roar of our guns died away, leaving a solemn stillness, but the scene will remain photographed in our memories as long as either of us shall live.

The fun goes on for half an hour; then the big flocks leave for Doolittle Lake and Wood Creek. We pick up a few more single blacks and two wood ducks almost too beautiful to shoot.

By eight o'clock the first act of the opening day is ended. It has been a wonderful beginning. At home Walter comes to the car as we enter the drive. His eyes widen when he sees the pile of ducks.

"Oh, you done done it. How many did Madam get? Did she shoot good?"

Edith serves us breakfast on a tray beside the window in the living room while Billie and I stretch luxuriously in the big red chairs. Good shots and bad misses are rehearsed while we eat bacon and eggs and smoke cigarettes with our coffee. No need to hurry. We like to savor our sport, drawing the ultimate drop of pleasure from every hour.

The second act of the day's drama begins about half-past nine when we start for the woodcock coverts. Poor little Star, shut in the kennels, sobs like a child, pleading to go. But two dogs in the thickets are too many—one is hard enough to find—and the first morning's hunt is always Queen's.

Half a mile from Pondwood we reach the edge of an alder swamp—not a nice open swamp. It is so thick one can hardly see ten feet. Queen almost chokes from half-grown barks and shakes like an aspen leaf. Her great moment has come. This is what she was dreaming of when sharp little whimpers disturbed her sleep during the long winter nights. I wave my hand. "Go, Old Lady." She is off like a bullet. Of course she wears a bell; otherwise she'd be lost in a moment.

We work slowly through the smother, pushing alder saplings aside. I hear a cry from Billie.

"Oh, that branch hit me right in the face. Oh, it hurts so. *Damn* the woodcock."

She wipes tears from her eyes, gets her gun up, and pushes on. Off to the left Queen's bell jingles steadily. Suddenly it lapses into a broken "tinkle," pause, "tinkle," pause, "tinkle, tinkle." Silence. Billie and I strain our ears to locate the sound, for we know Queen has found a bird. We go forward carefully, kneeling to peer under the screening branches. I catch a glimpse of white.

"There she is. She's pointing, right behind that bush."

Moving in, we see Queen, stiff as a ramrod, her lips trembling. She rolls one eye toward us and, with the utmost care, shifts position slightly. I take a line from her nose.

"The bird is right over there. You work around to that little open space. I'll go in on the dog. Ready?"

I move in and the woodcock flutters up like a bat in daylight. "Bang," goes Billie's gun.

"You got him. Good girl. Damned fine shot."

Queen brings the bird, lays it at our feet, and gives a happy little bark. Then she is off again. I whistle her back and motion to the left. She takes a few steps but returns looking at me imploringly.

"Not that way. There's another bird over here. *Please* let me go." Of course I do, for her nose knows. In five minutes she is on another timberdoodle. It flies straight up, hits a twig with one wing, and falls back almost on Queen's head. Instinctively she makes a grab, but the bird escapes and hurls itself in a twisting flight through a maze of branches. By a lucky shot I drop it in an open glade at the foot of a big tree. I can see it perfectly, but for some strange reason Queen can't find the bird. She depends upon smell entirely and apparently not a trace of scent is in the air. Head low, she covers every foot of ground, twice passing within six inches of the woodcock. Finally, by accident, she pokes her nose into the soft ball of feathers. Utterly surprised, she brings it to my feet with a puzzled and shamefaced look in her brown eyes.

"Don't you care, Old Lady. They do that sometimes. I think it's the way they fall. Scent is a mysterious thing. Someday scientists will learn something about it. Then I'll explain it to you."

From the tone of my voice and some of the words Queen knows that I am not displeased because of her failure. She

rushes off happily to find another bird.

Deep in the alder swamp Queen "makes game," treading as if on eggs. Suddenly, like the explosion of a bomb, a grouse bursts out of the cover in front of me. "Bang, bang!" Not a feather! It is going at terrific speed from the instant it leaves the ground, but my reflexes, geared to slow-flying woodcock, are behind the feathered bullet. For some unaccountable reason, which only a grouse would know, the bird swings to the left, and, when Billie shoots, it hits the ground with a thud. She says nothing, but in her eyes is the "light that never was on land or sea." What I say is the burble of a prideful husband who has taught his wife to shoot.

At the end of the morning we go home to an inviting luncheon, then an hour's sleep, for we've been up since dawn, and pushing through the thickets is exhausting work. Most of our friends are making a day of it. They eat sandwiches at noon in the field and arrive home exhausted. That doesn't appeal to us. We shoot or fish for pleasure. When shooting or fishing becomes work it is no longer pleasure. Therefore we stop. I think our view is logical. Neither of us feels that the number of birds we garner is important.

Billie and I both enjoy woodcock shooting most of all, but to vary the first day's experience we concentrate on grouse in the afternoon. That is a very different story. Without fear of contradiction from any sportsman I will state that the ruffed grouse is the most difficult of all American game birds to shoot. His canny brain is never confined to a pattern. What he did today is no criterion as to what he will do tomorrow. Moreover, it is not a hit-or-miss proposition like a woodcock. He figures it out carefully in advance. A dozen tricks to confound the sportsman are always up his little brown sleeve. Perhaps he will lie perfectly to the dog on point. Then, like a bursting bomb, he roars out right into your face. You stand in a daze.

"My God! What happened?" Next time he won't wait. The instant he knows the dog has scented him, off he buzzes through the woods. Unlike a woodcock, he doesn't go into first, second, and then high gear. When he leaves the earth his accelerator is pressed to the floor boards and he is giving all the gas his motor will take. The trunk of a tree is his greatest protection, and the grouse hunter learns, to his surprise, how many trees there are in the forest. Before he leaps into the air the bird knows exactly what tree to place between you and him. He does it instantly. Sometimes he will lie within ten inches of your feet. After you pass, out he goes directly behind you, figuratively thumbing his nose as he blithely sails into the shelter of a hemlock grove.

On that opening afternoon Queen pointed in a park-like glade at the foot of a pine tree. From the way she acted I knew it was a grouse. Crouched close to the trunk, the bird watched us with its beady black eyes.

"Billie," I shouted, "get around that tree! Hurry!"

The instant the grouse saw where she was headed, it ran to the other side of the pine and roared away. Later Queen made game in high grass, about fifty feet from a tangled mass of birch and alder. The grouse was caught in an impossible position. If it stayed put we would have a shot right in the open. Its only chance was to run for the brush. But the wise Old Lady used her head and experience. We were close behind her, so, instead of creeping forward slowly, she rushed the bird. I dropped it just before it disappeared behind a birch tree.

Queen brought back the grouse and laid it at my feet with a happy little bark. Looking up, she said in her dog language: "We foxed him, didn't we? He thought I'd stop and point. But I didn't. I knew what he was trying to do."

That's what makes you love a dog—and grouse.

We were lucky in the afternoon and got our limit before five o'clock. At home Billie reveled in a hot bath while I gave Queen a rubdown. Later, I came into our room. Billie lay on the bed, one arm extended. Queen's black-and-white head was half covered by Billie's blond curls. Both were sound asleep. The end of a perfect day!

In the evening we have what golfers call the nineteenth hole. Our friends and their guests drift in for the annual buffet supper. The house is decorated with autumn leaves, red berries, and pine branches. Fires blaze in every grate, and Edith and Walter are as excited as though it were their own party. Food is on the dining-room table and drinks in the gun room. Sometimes twenty-five or thirty people arrive. We men are all in shooting clothes. Every hour, every shot, how each dog worked, is told and retold. Were the woodcock lying in the swamps or on the hillsides? Were they resident birds? Will the frost bring down a flight? What reports from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick? We talk and talk and never tire. Heaven help anyone who is not keen on shooting; he'd be bored stiff. But only sportsmen and their wives are there, so

we need not be polite.

The party of 1944 was a particularly happy one because George and his bride, Mary Nancy McElhannon, were there. It was a great compliment to Billie and me that they elected to spend their honeymoon at Pondwood. George had a fortnight's leave. "We'll stay a week in New York," he wrote, "and then come on to the farm."

We laughed when we read the letter. "Bet you a dollar," Billie said, "they won't spend more than three days in New York. You know George. Even a bride can't keep him away from Pondwood when he is this close."

She was exactly right. Just three days after their arrival in New York the telephone rang.

"Dad," said a happy voice, "we're coming up tomorrow. Both of us want to be at the farm."

It was the morning of opening day party. When Frederick Barbour learned that the bride and groom were arriving he sent magnums of champagne, everyone brought gifts, and Mary Nancy got a glimpse of the kind of life that would be hers if she liked it.

Billie and I tried to keep out of their way as much as possible, but they would have none of it. George gave me some very happy hours while we shot grouse and woodcock over Queen and Star. He had changed greatly during the war years. No longer was he the happy-go-lucky boy of Princeton days. With the lives of thirty or forty men and millions of dollars' worth of planes dependent on his judgment, he was fifteen years older than I had been at his age. I regretted this sudden forced maturity, but it was inevitable. Thousands of other boys had had the same experience.

George had been assigned to an airfield in the wilderness of Michigan and there Mary Nancy spent her first northern winter. With the mercury always hovering about zero, in a tiny cottage where the plumbing didn't "plumb" and not a closet in the place, she learned that "war is hell." But the Lone Star State had produced a thoroughbred with a sense of humor that can save any situation.

Because George speaks French like a native he had been kept in the United States, instructing Free French pilots in flying the Thunderbolt. But after four months of married life he was alerted for overseas. Billie and I went to Virginia to bid him farewell. Then began the long wait when we were afraid to open a telegram or answer the telephone, for fear it might be the one message we dreaded to receive. In support of Patton's army rampaging through Germany George flew forty-five combat missions and miraculously survived uninjured. His letters, guarded as they had to be, were a thrilling story of fighting in the air. Someday I hope he will let me publish them, for he writes much better than I do.

After the bride and groom departed that autumn of 1944, Billie and I shot grouse until the season ended. Then another kind of sport began—rabbit hunting and ice fishing. Once I went ice fishing in the approved way—but only once. For six mortal hours we thrashed our arms and stamped our feet. At times we thawed out by a fire, thrashed more arms, stamped more feet, and froze again. Soggy, icy sandwiches were our noonday portion; raw liquor flowed down our throats but was powerless to warm the marrow of our bones. We caught a few pickerel and I told myself again and again that I was having a grand time—that ice fishing in a bitter wind was certainly the sport of sports. But it didn't take. "Way down in my stummick," as the Chinese say, I knew I hated it. Any other kind of fishing, yes. Ice fishing, no! Never since that day had I fished through the ice, but our picture window changed all that. One afternoon, when the pond was frozen hard, I sat idly looking through my field glasses across the glare ice. Like a flash the great idea was born. I flew to the telephone and called Reg Rowland.

"Reg," I pleaded, "lend me your tip-ups. And minnows!"

With great excitement I cut the holes next morning and rigged my gear. Within an hour as beautiful a field of tip-ups had bloomed on the pond as any fisherman ever gazed upon. Like a garden of red tulips they were, each flag neatly bowed toward the green water below, waiting for the tug which would send its colors proudly floating in the wind. Then back to the house, where I poked the fire into a cheerful blaze, lighted my pipe, and, with binoculars at my eyes, sat down to wait in the easy chair before the window. Five tense minutes passed. Six minutes. Bing! Up went a flag. Through the glasses I could see the line run off the spool, stop as the fish turned the minnow in his mouth, and then strip to the end. It took all my will power to keep from rushing out. But no! I would wait until three flags at least were aloft, for then it would be time to skim the holes. Another flag flaunted against the background of the ice. Yelping as the third flag went up, I threw on my fur-lined coat, pulled my coonskin cap well down over my ears, and dashed for the pond.

The nearest tip-up yielded a two-pound pickerel and, as his gleaming body flashed out of the dark water, I gloated over my prize. The second was a dud, for the line was out to the end of the spool but the hook was bare. I carefully rebaited it. The third tip-up presented a big perch, fat and hard.

After skimming all the holes I returned to the blazing fire. By that time Billie called me to luncheon. Reluctantly I left the fascination of the window. She, however, knowing that a husband who has been ice fishing would need something to warm the inner man, had provided a superlative meal. A roast pheasant, hung the required five days, bread sauce, and spiced grape jelly, wild rice, and a mixed green salad, with a bit of cheese and a bottle of sauterne. Ah, I thought, what a difference! When last I fished through the ice I had lunched upon a half-frozen sandwich and drunk raw whisky without a chaser.

All afternoon I sat before the window, drowsing now and then. Four times I left the fire for the ice, and four times I came back with fish. As the sun sank in a red glow behind the pine trees, I rolled up the lines on the spools, placed them on the radiator to dry, and surveyed the results lying in the kitchen sink. There were thirteen green beauties and two perch for the first day's work. I called Billie and proudly waved my hand.

"That," I said, "is the triumph of mind over the elements."

As she looked at me I detected a new light in her eyes. It was pride—I *think*. Yes, I am sure it was.

Pondwood Queen

I have known some men and some women who definitely belong in kennels, not in houses; conversely, a few dogs who belong in houses, not in kennels. Queen is one. She leads an unorthodox life for a bird dog and most sportsmen would consider it rank heresy. I'll not quarrel with them except to say that every rule has exceptions. First, Queen is a very superior dog; second, she was Billie's anniversary present, and you can't expect a girl to keep her anniversary present in a kennel. So Queen is as much a member of the family as I am. Certainly her personality is just as definite as mine.

Billie and I continually try to translate Queen's world into terms of our own understanding; to put ourselves in her place, to see and know things as she sees and knows them. One day Billie came home to find me on my hands and knees crawling about on the floor with Queen in interested attendance.

"What in the name of common sense are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm trying to see the room as Queen sees it. It's awfully strange. The walls converge, the ceiling drops toward the floor, and everything is foreshortened. Stand over by the piano and let me get a squint at you. Gee, you look funny; you're all sort of spread out and pushed down topsides."

That didn't make a hit. "Well, I'm not spread out and I'm not pushed down. You get up off the floor. If that's the way Queen sees me, you probably look a lot worse to her than I do."

I got up. "Do you realize that Queen doesn't see this green rug as green, or these red chairs as red? They are only different shades of gray to her."

"Of course I know it. She's color blind. And you needn't tell me that bulls don't see red. I know that too. I've heard you recite that little story a hundred times."

"Well, it's true. So what?"

Billie was looking out of the window. "Oh, nothing. But I'm sorry Queen can't see these colors. Think of what she misses. Of course she can smell a lot that we can't smell—thank God!"

Everyone who really loves a dog feels the same desire to understand its world, but we cannot comprehend experiences we have never had. We can try, but if we begin by thinking of a dog merely as an immature human being we are immediately off on the wrong track. Queen isn't a child or immature; she is a different kind of individual. Her life is entirely controlled by sensations, while sensations to us are supposed to be subordinate to mental dominance. At times, of course, they aren't; that is why I say some people should live in kennels, not in houses. We are unable to conceive of a realm in which hearing and smell are of such vital importance that happiness, well-being, and safety depend upon the ears and olfactory organs.

I have a "silent" whistle which emits a sound so highly pitched that I can barely hear it, but the thin notes stop Queen in her tracks a hundred yards away. The vibrations have a frequency of thirty thousand a second; normal human ears hear only waves up to twenty thousand a second. Queen experiences such a violent nervous spasm from the scent of a woodcock or grouse that it stiffens every muscle of her body like an electric shock. Thousands of odors which to us are imperceptible tell exciting stories to her.

Of course speech is a barrier to our understanding of a dog, but it is not so completely insurmountable as one might suppose. Queen has her own language, much of which we comprehend. And she knows a good deal of English. I can imagine that she repeats a certain word over and over in her mind when she hears us use it frequently and it applies to something of importance to her. For instance, "woodcock." She thinks and dreams woodcock. If she hears that word she knows what it means. We wonder how much English she actually understands. Probably much more than we think. When we are talking, particularly about sport, Queen will often get up, listen attentively, and give a little bark of interest and agreement. A psychologist states that the ordinary house dog knows sixty-five words. He discovered it by laboratory experiments, I suppose. An unusually intelligent police dog, Fellow, who was studied at Columbia University,

understood four hundred words of English. That's a lot of words. I could get about any country in the world with four hundred words at my command and probably would boast that I knew the language well. Of course voice tones, signs, and facial expressions enter into the picture when we are talking with Queen but perhaps most of all intuition.

The intuition of a dog is beyond human understanding. To my mind it is an extra sense in the realm of thought transference, unlimited by language, space, or distance. A few days ago I read that Franklin Roosevelt's dog, Falla, who was in another room, went into violent hysterics when the President died. The late Dr. Alexis Carrel was a firm believer in human thought transference. Since I shared his conviction we often discussed the subject. The problem, of course, was how to reduce to scientifically demonstrable fact what we both were sure exists. I firmly believe that one day in the not-too-distant future the magic formula will be discovered, just as radio utilized the eternal air waves after humans comprehended certain physical laws. When we understand it for ourselves, perhaps we can interpret the mysterious intuition of animals. Queen's amazing knowledge of Billie and me, I am sure, is because her mental sending and receiving set is on the same wave length as ours.

As Director of the American Museum of Natural History I was responsible for, and intensely interested in, the Department of Animal Behavior. There is no more fascinating subject for research than to try to discover what goes on in an animal's brain. Although I am a great believer in the effort to separate the wheat from the chaff and reduce animal reactions to scientific fact so far as possible, I still believe that, at times, psychologists may go too far in dogmatic conclusions. Most experiments can be conducted only in a laboratory where animals are under control and apparatus is at hand. But any laboratory, no matter how carefully arranged, is an artificial environment for higher mammals, and their reactions to some problems might be quite different under natural conditions and unusual stimuli. Again, scientists are human. There is a tendency to play safe and interpret all data in the light of accepted criteria and overlook or discount the obvious when it does not fit a preconceived theory. I am sticking my neck out. I can see the raised eyebrows and sorrowful faces of some of my scientific colleagues.

"Poor Roy, he's slipping. Too much country. He'll be telling us next that animals can reason."

That's exactly what I do say, with reservations, even though I may be consigned to the uttermost depths of our scientific hell. Certainly most of the clever actions of our cats and dogs and other domestic animals can be traced to inheritance, instinct, curiosity, memory, reflexes, suggestion, association, habit, sensation, and so on. But to my mind not all. When one attempts to refer *every* action of all animals to established scientific criteria, excluding the possibility that they may actually reason at times, I am in revolt. A few psychologists will admit, grudgingly, that some animals do have reactions that seem suspiciously like reasoning—but only grudgingly. Living as we do in the closest association with four dogs and three Persian cats, both indoors and out, I see some actions which to my mind can only be interpreted as reasoning—a conception of cause and effect. Here is one example with Queen.

She never has been trained to stand for shot as are quail dogs. We seldom find grouse or woodcock in coveys so it is unnecessary. In other words, at the sound of the gun she invariably dashes off to retrieve the bird. I was hunting with her one day on Whiting's Hill. She pointed. I flushed the woodcock and killed it. Without moving her hind legs she shifted her forequarters a few inches to the left and remained transfixed. I moved in. A timberdoodle fluttered up and I knocked it down. Still Queen did not break. She took two steps to the right and pointed again. As the third bird fell, she dashed off joyously and brought it back. Five minutes later the other two woodcock were lying at my feet. That, to my feeble mind, was reasoning—a definite conception of cause and effect, with no ifs, ands, or buts. Queen's reflexes, association with the sound of the gun, instinct, and training were all against standing fast. But her nose told her three woodcock were there and she knew they would fly if she broke point. So she waited until the last bird had flushed before dashing off as usual.

I can cite another instance. A wood road winds along the edge of Brummagem Brook with tree-covered slopes rising steeply to the west. It is a favorite place for ruffed grouse. Queen knows it as well as I do. While I walk along the trail she works the hillside. I see her making game and start to climb. Far away a grouse flushes, but Queen keeps right on creeping slowly up the hill. I think she has scented the bird which has already flown and start back, being loath to spend energy on a fruitless chase. When Queen sees that I am not following her she comes to a stiff point. I reverse action and climb back. Queen rolls one eye in my direction and moves on. She keeps going unless I start down the hill again. Then she points. I return and she moves forward. This may happen three or four times, but at the end of the trek a grouse invariably gets up. Doubtless she saw the first bird rise, but from the strong scent she knew another was not far away. When I leave, she realizes her work will be fruitless: that if she points, I'll return. So she entices me on. This has

happened a dozen times. Not only has the Old Lady reasoned it out but she knows my psychology, which is not to work for nothing.

Last year Queen and I were shooting beside a strongly flowing brook in an alder swamp when I killed a woodcock flying over the water. The Old Lady rushed in to retrieve the bird but was swept off her feet and had considerable difficulty in regaining the bank. Once ashore, she raced along the stream to a place where it widened considerably and the current slacked off. Wading out, she waited patiently for the bird to float down, and brought it to me, beaming with satisfaction. What was that if not reasoning? A few days later I had a similar experience with Queen's daughter, Star. Although Star is a very highly trained dog and loves water, when the force of the current knocked her down she climbed out on the bank and sat there, with no idea of what to do. Her training had not included such an eventuality and she couldn't think out the problem.

Queen likes to hunt at any time, but she particularly loves to hunt with me alone. She is almost beside herself with joy when we get into the car together and she sees no one else is coming.

"It's just like old times," she tells me with gurgling barks. "Only us two. Won't we have fun!"

And we do. On those days she is especially careful to keep me in sight; to report back at frequent intervals, and to work the best covers. She remembers them all. Once she has found a bird in a certain spot it is photographed indelibly in her memory. She goes there as truly as the compass needle points to north.

One morning after we had killed three woodcock in Hell's Hollow which, by the way, is all the name implies, I was ready to go home. Sitting on a log smoking my pipe, absorbed in my own thoughts, I did not notice that the Old Lady was not at my feet. I whistled, but no Queen.

"Damn it all, she's on a bird. Now I've got to find her and I'm tired. It's one o'clock and I want lunch."

So I started moving about the spot in an ever-widening circle, calling and whistling. Finally I said to myself: "I'm going, Queen or no Queen. She knows the way home." Then I discovered I had left my pipe on the log. Returning, I almost stumbled over the dog in an alder thicket not ten feet from where I had been resting. One foreleg was off the ground, but when she saw me in position to shoot she carefully put it down. I could see every muscle of her tense body relax, and thought I heard a sigh of relief. Had I missed the bird I never would have forgiven myself. But the shooting gods were kind, and I knocked it down. Queen retrieved the woodcock and collapsed at my feet from utter exhaustion. She had held the point for forty-two minutes by the watch. This, of course, was training, not reasoning.

Even during the summer, when she cannot hunt, Queen is seldom bored. Unlike many humans I know, she creates interests for herself. Every setter wants to be of use; that is an outstanding characteristic of the breed. So when we started shooting clay pigeons on the woodcock walk she felt that was in her province.

She developed another sport which keeps her occupied in the off season. One day I had an order from Billie for frogs' legs; she likes them, and the pond harbors some old soakers. Queen watched me curiously for a few minutes. She soon realized that I wanted frogs. So, on her own initiative, she set about finding frogs. I saw her pointing and thought it must be a stray woodcock. No, she had a nice fat frog right under her nose. She discovered a dozen where I never would have looked for them. We developed a deadly teamwork. I smoke my pipe while she does the hunting. Always she edges around between the frog and the water. The frog faces her, and while its attention is diverted I sneak up behind and make a quick grab. We practically never miss.

Frogging became her chief summer sport. She also taught her daughter, Star, the joys of the chase. Now, when Billie and I sit in the living-room window, we can see two white rear ends and wagging tails somewhere along the edge of the pond at almost any hour of the day. At first she only pointed the frogs until they wearied of sitting still, but now when they jump she kills them with a paw. I must admit, however, that she does not bring them to the kitchen door.

Once I saw Queenie defeated by a bullfrog. He lived on the edge of the swimming pool and used to take flies and bugs from our fingers when we were bathing. His thanks were expressed in a throaty "grumph." He was such a friendly frog that we liked him very much. We always referred to him as Mister Frog. The pool needed repairs during the summer, and two masons were doing a cement job along the sides. Queen, overseeing operations, disturbed Mister Frog. When he jumped into the dry pool Queen ran down the steps and made a pass at our friend. To her intense surprise Mister Frog took the offensive. He leaped into her face, smacking her on the nose. I laughed, and that completed her discomfiture.

Squaring about, she made a second pass, only to receive another whack on her tender proboscis. Mister Frog followed his advantage. Bang, whack, bang, whack! The gallant old fellow leaped at any part of her anatomy within his reach. The masons and I cheered him on.

"Attaboy! Give her hell. Smack her again."

Mister Frog chased Queen all around the pool floor but, in spite of our encouragement, he was visibly tiring. Moreover, Queen had lost such face that she was in a rage. At last she turned on Mister Frog and, in spite of nose poundings, backed him into a corner. Then he began to mew pathetically like a hurt kitten, imploring my help. That was too much. I pushed Queen away and stretched out my hand. Mister Frog hopped in gratefully and I transferred him to my shoulder. He snuggled tightly against my neck, breathing heavily into my ear. After a rest I took him to the pond. With a "grumph" of gratitude he pushed off into the safety of deep water.

Queen has certain prerogatives upon which she rigidly insists. During meals she sits quietly in a corner of the dining room, but before the plates are removed she expects her tidbit. The importance lies not in how much she gets, but that her right to something is recognized.

One evening when I was alone I had a dinner of potato salad and ham in front of our bedroom fire. It tasted particularly good and I ate every scrap. When nothing was left for Queen she protested volubly and I spoke to her harshly. With a hurt look she retired to a corner and lay down with her head on her paws, visibly crushed. I so regretted my ill nature that I brought a delectable slice of ham from the kitchen. Even though I apologized profusely she refused to touch the food and spent the night in the corner. By morning I had been forgiven.

A besetting sin, one which she seems unable to conquer although she tries, is her love of sweets. When we go out and tell her to watch the house, which she does with punctilious care, we must put any candy box beyond her reach. One night we returned to find Queen prostrate on the floor, her head between her paws, obviously very much ashamed and apologizing for something she had done.

"Oh, oh," said Billie, "I forgot to put away the candy box."

Sure enough the empty box was on the floor and two pounds of expensive chocolates inside Queen.

I could continue indefinitely relating Queen's lovable qualities, her uncanny understanding of Billie and me, and the remarkable things she does. But it would be just another dog story. I have only one thing to say. No one can take a dog for granted and expect a big dividend on his casual investment. He will receive a hundredfold what he gives, but he, too, must give. You can't fool a dog. He knows when you really love him.

Glamor Girl with Wings

The duck world has glamor girls just like Hollywood. I know because we had one on our pond, and she did everything the traditional glamor girl is supposed to do. Countless boy friends were ever at her beck and call; she caused bitter domestic squabbles among respectable married couples; stayed out on the town all day, and refused to make a home or rear a family. She was a very bad duck indeed—but she had a lot of fun. We didn't deliberately intend to get ourselves a glamor girl. She came with other ducks because our five-acre pond suggested waterfowl. Billie wanted white Peking ducks, which could be fattened for the table. Of course I knew them from China, but my ideas were more aesthetic, although less practical.

"No Chinese 'walkie ducks' for us," I insisted. "'Flyaway ducks' are what we want. Given care, understanding, and corn, I will have wild ducks as tame as chickens. When we are sitting in the rock garden with distinguished guests and you call, 'Come, duckie, come, duckie,' out from the pond-lily blossoms will swim gorgeous ducks. They will parade upon the lawn and pick food from your fingers. It will lend a note of distinction and, shall we say—difference—to the place."

Billie was dubious but willing to be convinced. So, for a trial, I purchased a pair of wood ducks, the most beautiful of all American wild fowl. The birds were wing-clipped and by the time their pinions had rejuvenated I hoped to have accomplished my ambition. But pride had a nasty fall. When we released the wood ducks they gave us one glance and, with terrified squawks, streaked across the water for the swamp at the far end of the pond. Never did we glimpse them again except early in the morning or late evening. All my pleadings, cajolings, and quarts of corn were of no avail; they had decided to become hermits and to stay so.

Billie couldn't say "I told you so," for she hadn't, and she wouldn't have, anyway. Moreover, she acquiesced in the purchase of a pair of wild mallards. They were really satisfactory. The old greenheaded drake was beautiful to behold, and in a few weeks the pair had made themselves completely at home. When we called "Quack, quack," they would answer from the pond and come to the lawn to eat from our hands, just as I had predicted.

In due course the lady duck started housekeeping behind a rock at the foot of an apple tree covered with poison ivy. Whether or not she was a botanist and had selected the spot with due thought, I will not argue. Anyway, she was safe from human intruders, and after twenty-eight days nine little yellow puffballs were trailing her about the pond. Having grown up with us, they became as tame as chickens. When we were at the pool the whole flock would waddle solemnly across the bank and swarm over us searching in our pockets for corn. Strangely enough, all the old lady's offspring were drakes. So the following spring we purchased nine little females and let nature take its course. It did to such an extent that blushes mantled our cheeks whenever we looked at the pond. How the ducks sorted themselves and selected husbands and wives I cannot imagine. But by the first of May they went apartment hunting at various spots along the shore. The nests were lined with down plucked from the ladies' breasts. All except one. In a short time we realized she was a glamor girl with wings. In spite of herself she could not deny nature's rights. She had to build a nest, but it was a most sketchy affair—just a slight hollow in the ground surrounded by a few dry leaves. No down—not her! She didn't intend to ruin the smooth roundness of her breast by pulling out a lot of feathers. It set her more distinctly apart from the other bedraggled females, whose domestic affairs were more important than their appearance.

The glamor girl bothered to get only six eggs in the nest; the others were dropped along the shore, in the mud, anywhere to get rid of them. Her home site was on the very edge of the pond. Boy friends continually swam back and forth right at her front door. Apparently she hadn't the slightest interest in her prospective children. A duck's place might be on the nest but not for her. She was frankly bored with the whole proceeding and much more interested in having a good time with the gentlemen whose wives were doing their ducky duty.

When we stood watching it did not disturb her in the slightest. Cocking one eye, she would look up at us with a wearied expression, sigh deeply, and evidently say, "You know how it is. The hell with it." Then she'd hop off, without bothering to cover her eggs as did the other ducks, and send forth a raucous quack. At the first summons every drake on the pond flew to her side. Battles were continually waged for the favors which she offered indiscriminately. While two gentlemen were fighting, she'd quack delightedly and make love to the victor in the most outrageous fashion. We never could

discover the glamor girl's lawful husband, for she seldom appeared with less than six males in tow. The other ducks hated her. She was completely ostracized from respectable duck society. Once the glamor girl flew to the feeding place with a husband evidently not her own. The outraged wife attacked her savagely, pulling feathers from her back and neck. All the other ducks, with whose husbands she had been stepping out, quacked in delight. I am ashamed to admit that even the drakes, with an eye to domestic felicity, joined the chorus. Of course not one of the Glamor Girl's eggs hatched, for she spent so much time gallivanting about the pond that they soon got cold. Had any children appeared I am sure she would have consigned them to a duck orphanage.

The greatest number of eggs in a single nest was fourteen except one; that had twenty-six. The duck was one of those motherly souls and did her best to cover them but they bulged out all around her. Obviously she had not been responsible for all the eggs. One of her friends had sneaked in and used the same nest, thinking she could be rid of all domestic problems by that subtle bit of shenanigan.

After incubation started the ducks never left the nests without pulling neat little blankets of down over the eggs to conceal them and keep them warm. I learned a bit of duck lore that surprised me mightily. About a week before the eggs were due to hatch the mothers would roll their infertile productions out of the nest. By some occult power (I suspect it is temperature) they seemed to know that further warming of those particular eggs was wasted effort. They wanted to get their homes nice and tidy for the advent of the expected children. When I returned the eggs, the next morning they would again be removed, this time farther away. Thinking to fool the old ladies, I replaced them in the very center of the clusters, carefully rearranging the down puffs. But the birds would not be fooled. They summarily ended the matter by smashing the eggs. In not one did I find an embryo.

When we started to rebuild our house the ducks became constant visitors. The whole flock would string up the path from the pond, across the road, and through the gate. Then they held a caucus, solemnly discussing every phase of the building operations. At first I thought they had come for food, but scant attention was paid to corn, which they love. We finally realized it was mere curiosity. They wished to see what was going on and inspected every part of the new house, waddling up the stairs and even going into the cellar. The workmen were entranced. Sometimes the whole flock would fly about the building, just missing the carpenters high up on ladders, apparently protesting about certain operations which weren't being done to their satisfaction.

One morning at daylight a duck came up alone, quacking in the most dismal manner. It was her evident intention to wake us. I went out to shoo her away but she wouldn't be shooed. She was trying to tell us something. For an hour she wandered about the house complaining under the bedroom windows. After breakfast, when I visited the pond, she came halfway up the path to meet me. I soon discovered that her entire brood had disappeared. During the next few days the same thing happened with other ducks, and always the little brown babies that had been skittering over the surface like water bugs were gone.

Of course we thought first of foxes, but the babies were always taken to the raft in the center of the pond at night by their mothers and foxes couldn't reach them. I circled the shore with Queen but not a feather could we find. Foxes, horned owls, mink, skunks, or weasels would have left some trace, and anyway they never could take so many ducklings in such a short time. After two weeks only six were left out of eighty or ninety. The tragedy in our duck world was mysterious and appalling. We even suspected the silly old muskrat that lives on the pond as well as an otter that makes occasional visits, but they were ruled out. Muskrats don't eat ducks and the otter would have taken only two or three, if any.

Snapping turtles, of course, had been in our minds from the first but we never had seen one and the ducklings of the previous summer had not been molested. Nevertheless, I put out set lines baited with chunks of meat. On the third morning, to my surprise, I pulled in a snapping turtle weighing twenty pounds. Two days later a thirty-five pounder was hooked. The wretched turtles must have come overland from Benedict Pond, two miles away, early in the spring. Diligent fishing and turtle traps produced no more. They may have been responsible for some of the deaths, but the real cause we discovered later. Pickerel and largemouthed bass were the culprits.

I had stocked the pond with bass and they did remarkably well. Some of them were big fellows, weighing more than six pounds, with mouths four inches in diameter. One day I was at the canoe landing watching a mallard with five babies trailing along like an elongated tail. Suddenly the water boiled behind the happy family—and then there were four. The mother never knew what happened. She continued on her way, but before she reached the center of the pond the water swirled again—and then there were three! Probably the same bass had followed the brood like a submarine stalking a convoy of ships, picking off the rearmost one. Before the day passed all five ducklings had disappeared. Only when the

mother was left alone did she seem distressed. Perhaps ducks cannot count. Pickerel, too, are responsible for a terrible mortality in the duckling world. The wardens on the great breeding grounds of Canada estimate that more than a million baby ducks are eaten by pickerel every year.

One of our ducks broke its leg. Walter brought it to the house and together we manufactured a splint. Since it was imperative that the bird be kept off its injured leg, he put it in a gunny sack with a hole in the side through which it could stretch its neck to view the scenery if it became bored. One day when we were away Walter hung the bag on the garage door to give the duck a little sun. Queen was with us. As she jumped out of the car the scent of wild duck filled her nostrils. She made a beautiful point with her nose almost against the bag. Suddenly, out popped the duck's head like a jack-in-the-box, bopping Queenie on the snout. She turned a complete somersault. Because we roared with laughter, she retired to the house, her feelings deeply hurt. After the leg was nearly healed Billie and I took the duck to our bathroom to give it a little aquatic exercise. In the tub filled with water it splashed, stood on its tail, and quacked with delight. From that time on it followed us about like a dog, and we had difficulty in keeping it out of the house.

When autumn frosts sharpened the air we expected our ducks to depart. I had leg-banded them all, hoping to learn when and where they were taken if they fell to some sportsman's gun. They became very restless and shy but still lingered on. All day and all night they talked among themselves, feeling the strange urge to move southward but never quite able to decide to go. Migrating flocks sometimes dropped into the pond for an hour or two. When they left, our ducks joined the wanderers, but after a short flight we saw the black line of them begin to take form in the sky and could hear the rush of wings as they swung over the treetops and back to the pond. Thanksgiving Day brought a sudden freeze. Next morning a coating of ice reached from shore to shore, but in the very center the birds had kept a circle of open water. Quacking dismally, they seemed unable to adjust their duck minds to this strange visitation in their pond. They had no food, but we could not entice them to their regular feeding place at the canoe landing.

All night they complained bitterly to the cold moon. Next morning the temperature had dropped to zero and the ice was an inch thick. Their circle of open water had shrunk to half its size and only by frantic swimming could they keep enough space in which to move about. I walked to the edge of the opening and gave them corn but they were too distracted to eat. Blood spots from their tender little feet crimsoned the ice. We were not prepared to keep them with us all winter but it was obvious something had to be done about it or they would freeze to death. Evidently they did not intend to go South. We had been responsible for their birth and education and the problem was ours.

Billie and I decided they were right. But, first of all, how to catch them? We tried every way we knew, without success. The ducks were frightened and would not let us near them. They flew around and around the pond and then back to the patch of open water. Sometimes they alighted on the ice only to sit on their tails and skid thirty or forty feet, squawking in terror. Our neighbor, Lou Guerin, produced some long-handled fish nets. For an hour we carried on an ice carnival, scooping flying mallards out of the air as they swooped into the open water, slipping and sliding on our backs and laughing until we were weak. At last all the ducks were housed in a wire coop at the outlet of the pond, where they happily spent the winter.

I became wishful for a pair of Canada geese. During boyhood the honk of a wild goose always sent me into delightful spring fever and I wanted to hear it on our pond. So, after correspondence with a wild-fowl dealer, Charles and Ann arrived. But only when they were installed on the pond did we discover what absolute hell a pair of wild geese can raise. They are birds of strong personality and refuse to be taken lightly. Never have I known such possessiveness in any other creature. Cats and dogs simply aren't in the same class. Complete dominance of the pond, lawn, the animals, Billie, and me was their avowed objective. They considered themselves divinely appointed rulers of Pondwood Farm, and immediately set about taking over their kingdom. First, the ducks must be brought into line. So they destroyed all their nests and, like street bullies, drove the poor ducks away from the best feeding places. Then they ate the pond lilies I had planted with infinite care.

Sitting in the road for dust baths was a particular pleasure. Having settled themselves comfortably, if a motorcar attempted to pass, did they move? They did not. Charles rose in majesty, spread his wings, hissed, and challenged the car, while Ann backed him up like a good wife. When a perplexed driver tried to shoo them away, Charles grabbed him by the pants and did wing whackings on his shins. Our friends began to avoid Pondwood as though we were afflicted with a pestilence. I should have known this instinct of the goose tribe, because in Peking I had one as a gateman. He waddled about the compound, greeting his particular friends politely but attacking any stranger like a demon.

Charles and Ann took possession of the lawn, diving at Lord Jitters, Poke-Poke, and Queen if they ventured within their sacred territory. Moreover, they were not lawn-broken and it became a major operation for anyone to reach the rock garden without unpleasant results. One day a year-old setter, Gobi by name, arrived on his summer vacation from school in South Carolina. He was a big boisterous fellow, completely self-confident, and inclined to be something of a bully. Gobi saw Charles and Ann peacefully nibbling grass on the lawn. Then I discovered the origin of the word "goosing." With a roar Gobi rushed at the gander. To his intense surprise Charles did not retreat. Instead, he spread his wings, hissed like a rattlesnake, and threw a fast one at Gobi's nose. The pup yelped and turned tail. There he made a great mistake. Charles took deliberate aim and shot a perfect bull's-eye. Squalling in fright, Gobi sprinted for the orchard to drag his injured rear in the soft grass, whining dismally.

I cannot resist quoting the scientific description of what I have recounted so baldly from a paper entitled "Territory as a Result of Despotism and Social Organization in Geese."

"A typical peck was delivered by the dominant bird forcefully striking with its bill at the posterior part of the subordinate bird. The pecked bird quickly moved away after shaking its rump and tail from side to side which seemed to denote subordination and defeat . . ." To put it plainly, the bird was "goosed."

Geese have a long life span. It is difficult to state accurately how long any bird or animal lives, for verifiable facts are scarce. We do, however, know that tortoises head the list. One on St. Helena is probably the only living creature that saw Napoleon. Another on the island of Mauritius, off the coast of Madagascar, and home of the extinct dodo bird, is at least one hundred and sixty-five years old. Vultures and parrots cling to life longer than any other birds. In the Zoological Gardens of Giza, Egypt, a vulture lived ninety-five years. Parrots have been authentically recorded to be eighty years old. Geese and swans are possibly centenarians, but reliable data do not give them more than seventy years.

Geese mate only once and never have divorce. McAtee reports a pair of Canada geese married for forty-two years and another couple for twenty years. In both cases when one died the other passed away within a few months. Geese do not consummate their union with unseemly haste. Possibly they enter into some sort of trial marriage to make certain their temperaments are harmonious before rearing a family.

According to the dealer, Charles and Ann had been united in the bonds of matrimony for two years before they came to us, but they maintained a platonic existence on our pond. The joys of spring seemed not to affect them in the slightest, though the ducks made love shamelessly in front of their very eyes.

Billie and I had looked forward to seeing a flock of goslings trailing about the pond but obviously Charles and Ann had no intention of doing anything about it. So, after consultation with Dr. Frank Beach of the Department of Experimental Biology at the Museum, Frederick Barbour, Reg Rowland, and I corralled Charles one beautiful morning and gave him a shot of male hormones. In due course Charles surprised Ann immeasurably by his sudden ardor.

It was late in the season and we were becoming considerably bored by having the place ruled by geese, so we presented the pair to an unsuspecting neighbor. Wanting to be rid of them, I am afraid we stretched the truth a bit in painting a glowing picture of what charming companions they would be for his wife and children. But he found out. After Charles had frightened his little daughter into hysterics he cut off their heads and ate them both. We didn't shed a tear.

Making Movies

That I would ever become a movie actor never entered my mind. My face is not my fortune. But the most unexpected things are presented to us at Pondwood Farm. Every time the telephone rings or the mail arrives we have a feeling of anticipation that something interesting is about to happen. Something did on a September morning when Eltinge Warner called me from New York.

"What," he asked, "is doing with you?"

"Plenty," I replied. "Queen just found two woodcock in the alders fifty yards from the house."

"Good! That's what I wanted to talk to you about. Would you be interested in doing a moving picture of shooting woodcock for *Field and Stream* and Pathé News 'Sportoscope'?"

"Of course," I answered. "But you know that the chances are fifty to one against getting movies of timberdoodles. Did you ever see a good movie of woodcock?"

"No. That's the reason we want to try it. It's a gamble like playing a thousand-to-one shot; still, I think it is worth trying. We ought to finish it in four or five days at most."

That was the beginning. Now the picture is done. Possibly some of you have seen it, for it has been on the regular Pathé circuit all over the world. You can judge whether it is good or not. But what you can't know, if you have never shot or fished for the camera, is the work, time, and expense behind the making of a game movie. You see it in ten or twelve minutes, sitting comfortably in a theater or at a sportsman's dinner. But you don't see the aggravating waits for the sun to emerge from behind a cloud; the plowing through a tangle of birch or alders where the dog is on point in an impossible place to use the camera; the heartbreaking failures; the patience and the loss of patience; the cussing when tempers are worn thin. The camera doesn't record any of that, but it is there! Ask anyone who has ever done it. They will have a story to tell, unless they have the patience of Job.

Late one October evening the caravan arrived: Joe Walsh, veteran director of scores of game films, two photographers, and enough equipment to have supplied the invading army on D-Day. The next morning I took a look at the cameramen and was surprised at what I saw. The chief had on brown suede oxfords and his trousers were distressingly immaculate, with a knife-like crease.

"Have you," I asked, "ever seen a woodcock? Do you know in what kind of cover the little birdies live?" Well, he hadn't ever seen a woodcock, which isn't strange, and he thought they hopped about on lawns, or places like that. "Friend, you are about to receive a shock—a severe shock. Come with me." We walked a few yards from the house into an alder thicket beside our pond. "This is where the woodcock live and not on lawns."

"Not in there! How are you going to photograph in that stuff?"

"That," I remarked, "is where you'll photograph if you ever get a picture of a timberdoodle. I may also add that no good movies of woodcock have ever been taken and that's the reason."

"Oh my God!" was all he said.

We will skip the events of the first day with only a few passing remarks. I couldn't stand another like it. It would be too much for even the strongest heart. The cameraman was a fine photographer for studio setups. I have never seen more beautiful pictures than those he took in the house and about the place. But photographing in the thickets of a woodcock cover was as foreign to anything he had ever done as it would be for me to try to sing in the Metropolitan. He just could not understand what it was all about or adapt himself to it. He tried hard, but it was no go.

That first morning we went to a covert on an upland pasture. It was the prize spot from a photographer's standpoint. Star found a bird almost immediately. Her bell stopped and there she was, frozen stiff, just inside the margin of a clump of white birch. Elt and I were jubilant. "Billie," he said, "you do the shooting. Camera, get behind her. The bird will go

straight out into the open. Ready? Billie, go in on the dog."

Oh, it was beautiful—and tragic! The bird might have been trained. As Billie moved in, out it went, straight across a spot as clear as Broadway. Bang! the timberdoodle dropped not thirty feet away, dead in the air.

"Good girl," I yelled; "couldn't have been prettier. You got it, didn't you, Camera?"

A very dazed young man said, "Got what? I didn't see any bird. What was she shooting at?"

"A woodcock! Didn't you get *anything*?"

No, not a foot of film had been exposed. Not a foot, on a picture that we might never duplicate!

Billie was disconsolate, so I kissed her gently and said, "Never mind, dear, he'll get it next time," and believe it or not, he took twenty feet of the kiss! That was something he understood.

There was one more incident the first morning which should have been recorded for posterity. Not a hundred yards from the first bird Star found another. Never have I seen a more beautiful point. It could have been a portrait for the cover of a sportsman's magazine. Head and tail high, one forefoot raised, body quivering! She was on the edge of another thick clump of scrub birch, facing inward. Behind her was a high rock. Elt directed the attack.

"Roy, you and I will move in on either side of the dog. Billie, you get on that rock and shoot. Camera, behind her. The bird will surely go out in front. Now, Camera, for heavens' sake, get this."

We were set, and moved according to plan. But, alas, the woodcock didn't. Instead of flying forward through an open spot in the birches, it hurtled straight up into the air and turned back directly above Billie's head. She whirled like a flash and made the prettiest shot I have ever seen right over the camera. The bird was dead as a herring. We looked for the photographer. There he was on his face in the dirt, trying to dig a foxhole. "Good God," he gasped, "she almost shot me." Be it said in my favor that when I muttered "I devoutly wish she had," it was only to myself.

I shall draw a veil over the next ten days. It was a chapter of disappointments. Just one damned thing after another. The dogs pointing in an open spot as the sun went under a cloud; there they would stand, like living statues, while we waited impotently; kills made when the photographer wasn't in position; day after day of plowing through thickets and briars that cut our faces and hands. There were not many birds either, because of three weeks' drought. No big flight came through; only "puffs" that passed us by, going into the deep swamps and bogs. We could not follow them there with the cameras. Our field of operations was restricted to the dry pastures and hillsides where the scrub birch and alders stood in patches.

We did, however, get some beautiful accessory pictures. There is a lovely scene in our gun room; another when we were having breakfast in the big window of the living room, looking across the pond. Photographs in slow motion of practicing on the traps of our woodcock walk. Yes, those were fine; couldn't have been better. There the photographer was in his proper element. *But we didn't have a woodcock picture.* It was Hamlet, with Hamlet left out.

The days were slipping by. Every morning sharp frosts brought a new shower of red and yellow leaves to float in golden islands on the surface of our pond. Elt, Billie, and I were desperate. The picture had become something very personal to each of us. We had worked so hard, and spent so much time, that we couldn't bear the thought of failure. Already the possibility of shooting for sport before the season ended was in the discard.

The climax came one day when the photographer remarked: "I don't see why we've got to kill ourselves fighting these birches. Why don't you buy a few woodcock and do the whole thing in a studio?" That was the detonator that set off my personal charge of T.N.T. Next day we visited New York and the motion-picture studio. To an amazed executive I hinted delicately, in language learned during eight years on whaling ships, that we must have two new photographers. They must be fieldmen who knew the difference between a camera and a gun and could operate and understand both. Men who themselves like to shoot. They were promised for the next day. After Elt and I left the motion-picture office he was strangely silent. There was a kind of awe in his eyes. It is reliably reported that he remarked to a friend: "Gosh, Roy was awful mad."

When the cameramen arrived at Pondwood Farm a new birth of hope flooded our hearts. Harry Smith is a handsome six-footer. He had just returned from a pheasant shoot, on his own, in Michigan. His assistant, George Wellstead, is a little fellow, but tough as a boiled owl. He can take it with the best of them.

We got busy in an hour. Oh, what a relief! Even in the worst cover they were right behind us. Not a possible chance was missed. We would hear the camera whirring when even I couldn't see the vestige of hope for a picture. That is how game films are made. In four more days—days of grueling work but ultimate success—the picture was an accomplished fact. No longer was it a film of just "going woodcock shooting." We had the birds themselves, each one of us with several good clean kills recorded by the camera. The last night, as we sat in the gun room, we knew the job was well done. It had required three weeks of failure and disappointments but that made final success all the more satisfying. Looking at Harry and George, we drank a toast to *Timberdoodles*.

During the following year the picture had unexpected repercussions. John Rowland, son of our close friend Reg, was just out of battle in Germany where he won the Bronze Star for bravery. At the movies in a rest camp, suddenly there on the screen were Billie and me and a picture of his own house. Such a flood of homesickness swept over him that he had to leave. Another friend in the Marines, invalided from the Okinawa hell to Tientsin, China, recognized the birch grove behind their barn where he had shot woodcock all his life. A Colebrook boy, rescued from a plane crash in Burma, was greeted at his first movie by pictures of his own Connecticut village.

After *Timberdoodles*, Billie and I had sworn a solemn oath "never again." But it was much "like the cold gray dawn of the morning after." Never again will you take another drink! Still, when we saw its opening at the Palace Theater in New York, and letters from soldiers began to arrive, we were glad we had helped to make *Timberdoodles*. So I mentioned to Eltinge Warner that I knew a lake where smallmouthed bass were as plentiful as fleas on a dog; where you could take them all day and every day in sunshine or shadow. Before we knew it we were committed again and August arrived on the wings of the morn. So we enlisted the services of Abel I. Smith and Ernie Blanchard, who had a particular interest in this lake which, for special reasons, must remain unnamed. Suffice it to say that it is in Connecticut.

Our old friend Joe Walsh was to direct the picture. The cameramen were Bill Deeke and George Wellstead, so there was no worry about the photographic end of it. In fact, we had no worries at all except concerning the weather. Since March there had not been a single week which favored us with more than one or two days of sunshine. But the camera crew were shot with luck. They arrived on a Monday night. Wednesday dawned as a day of days, crystal-clear air, brilliant sun, and a cloudless sky. So it remained for seven days. The picture was finished on the following Wednesday. Three days of rain followed—not just a drizzle but a real downpour. The temperature dropped twenty degrees and dry-fly fishing for bass ended that week. So this is not a chronicle of misfortune but one of happiness and light.

Joe Walsh wanted to show different methods of taking bass—dry and wet fly, plug and bait. The photographers set up their camera on the shore behind a great bed of white pond lilies in full bloom. Billie and I did a bit of fly casting for long shots and then they got down to business. Abel, who is a devotee of bait casting, was the first victim.

"Now," Joe said, "make a cast right here in front of the camera. We want to get the technique in a closeup."

Abel swung his minnow. The camera started grinding.

"Would you mind," he said in a controlled voice, "if I caught a bass? One has just taken the bait."

So there it was in that incredible picture week. A fish on the first cast within thirty feet of the camera set up only to get scenic shots in the most beautiful part of a lovely lake!

Abel took three bass in the same place before noon, but he did not get jumpers, so they worked with him until his fish did the proper acrobatics. Eventually Billie and I got tired of fighting fish for fun and went home. After the first two days the photographers were completely spoiled. They got the idea that in this particular lake all they had to do was to set up the camera on the bank in a spot with a nice scenic background and then sit in the shade while we fished right in front of them. The bass thought differently, however. After two days of rising along the shore line they decided that enough was enough. They were through. But the cameramen couldn't believe it. So Billie and I, with our fly fishing, got the short end of the deal.

"You see that patch of lilies right there? Cast your fly just on the edge. We'll be all set. A jumper, please."

We cast and we cast with no results. The director had a pained expression on his face.

"Nothing seems to happen."

"Nothing will," I said. "You must follow us around the lake."

"But the boat won't be a stable base for photography," he moaned. "Please catch a bass that we can get from here."

"No, I can't. Damn it all, there isn't any wind. The lake is as calm as a millpond. It's a big boat. Set up your camera and follow us about. We'll take plenty of bass, but not here."

They sat disconsolate. Have you ever tried to convince a movie cameraman that he can take a picture without having the legs of his tripod implanted solidly on terra firma? Just try it. You'll be in for a surprise. He will look at you as though you were well-meaning but dumb. He will explain patiently that if he turns in film showing any movement whatever the studio will throw it out and dock his salary. So that's that. Just try to get him off from dry land! I ask you! Just try it!

Well, Billie and I cooked in the sun all that day. At the end we were tired and hot and mad. Not really, when we got home and cool and had a dip in the pool, but still I had drawn on my whaling vocabulary to a slight extent during the afternoon. That was Saturday. Billie had a headache from the glare and the heat—she wasn't allowed to use dark glasses or a hat in the picture.

"Tomorrow I am not going out," she moaned. "My skin is like parchment, my head aches, and I look and feel like a boiled lobster. Why should I ruin myself for a lot of old bass? It will take years and a fortune to get reconverted and I wanted to go to New York next week. I can't go. I look a fright. Oh, why did I ever learn to fish?"

There wasn't a thing I could say. Had I been out there all day without a hat and no dark glasses I'd have been dead. So we went to sleep that Saturday night, determined to give *Field and Stream*, Pathé, bass, and everyone concerned a miss the next day. We'd spend hours in our pool in the woods, dipping in and out, sipping cold drinks, and never even mention the word fish.

But it was not to be. At eight-fifteen in the morning Joe Walsh's cheerful voice came over the phone. "It's a wonderful day. Not a breath of wind. Let's finish the picture."

I looked at Billie. She was obviously wavering. Shakes of her head could mean anything. So I hesitated and was lost.

"Joe, will you go to the north end and put the camera in the boat and follow us around and not fiddle about on shore?" I got it off all in one breath.

There was a long moment of hesitation. I could feel he was going through a crisis. At last came the word. "Yes, we'll do all that."

I looked at Billie. She nodded emphatically.

"All right; we'll come. Be there in half an hour."

The day was everything Joe said it was. Still, bright sun, hot as Tophet. He was true to his word. Up to the end of the lake we went, camera firmly braced in the stern of the boat. George rowed, Bill Deeke ran the machine, Joe stretched out flat as a pancake for balance.

It was a great day. Billie and I moved along the edge of the lily pads, casting into the open spots. Bass rose; we hooked them, we fought them. They jumped, stood on their heads, ran on their tails. The camera moved in closer and closer when we yelled "fish." They got everything. The crowning achievement came when, after an exciting battle between Billie and a three-pound bass, Joe said, "Well, I'm afraid I can't find any fault. The light was right, the position excellent, the fish did his stuff as though he were trained. It was just naturally perfect."

We took twenty-three bass for the camera that day, on dry flies, wet flies, and plugs. At four-thirty, when the light faded a bit, Joe said, "We've got everything. I don't know what else could possibly happen in a bass picture."

Thus ended *Battling Bass*. It may never occur again before a movie camera. Our headaches were forgotten, Billie reconverted herself, and all that remained was to enjoy the film. Pathé said, "Pictures excellent." From a movie executive that is something!

At last the war was over. One day Billie and I were at the swimming pool in the forest. I lay on a deck chair, luxuriating

in the sun which found its way through the maple leaves and formed a mosaic of shifting brilliance on the surface. Billie dabbled her feet in the water.

"Isn't it wonderful," she said reflectively, "to have peace again. We don't have to worry about George any more. He and Mary Nancy are in London. You are all right, and so am I. Walter and Edith are content. Lord Jitters and Poke-Poke are happy. Queen is about to become a mother. I wonder what exciting thing will happen next."

Just at that moment Walter appeared. "Doctah, what you think? Queen was in the kennel. She done had her pups an hour ago. I made her all comfortable and then I went away. The door was open. An', Doctah, she done took every last one o' them pups and plunked 'em right square in the middle o' the bed in yore room. She's settin' there now waitin' for you all to come."

Transcriber's Notes:

hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original

Page 40, the Wetherfield settlers ==> the Wethersfield settlers

Page 42, the creak of swaying loads ==> the creak of swaying loads

Page 101, It weights just one ==> It weighs just one

Page 136, the most interestings things ==> the most interesting things

Page 217, household can enjoy ==> household can enjoy

[The end of *An Explorer Comes Home* by Roy Chapman Andrews]