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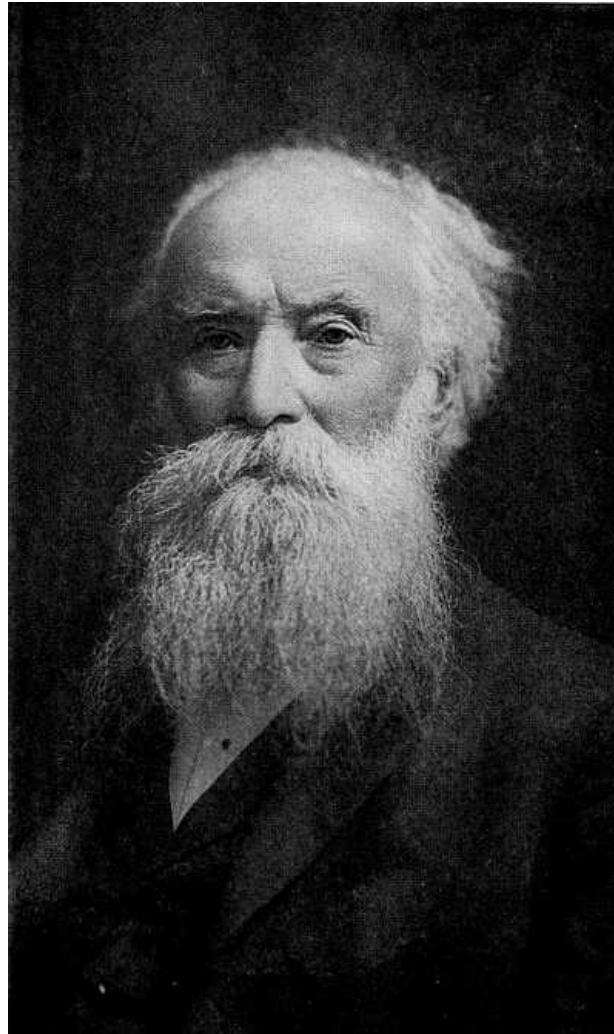
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## **RAMBLES WITH JOHN BURROUGHS**

**R. J. H. De LOACH**

*Illustrated with photographs by the Author*



**RICHARD G. BADGER**

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**To  
THE DEAR OLD  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
and her Noble faculty who have ever inspired me  
I dedicate this little volume**

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## **PREFACE**

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There is a longing in every student's life some time or other to share his pleasure with the world, and if he happens to find himself in the proper environment he cannot forego that pleasure. His studies, his anxieties, his loves and his devotions are a part of him and he cannot give himself to the world without giving these.

My personal contact with John Burroughs has meant a great deal to me and these papers represent in a measure what I have enjoyed, though they come far short of what I would like them to be. Some of them were written among his native hills and it is hoped they will give the flavor of his own experiences. Others were written at odd times on trains, on boats, and in my study here, where I have enjoyed re-reading so many times his essays on Nature. The qualities of the man and his papers have always made a direct appeal to me, and I love to come in contact with him and spend days with him.

Long before they were printed in book form, I had collected most of his poems in my old scrap book and studied them. Their simplicity and beauty combined with their perfect rhythm impressed me and almost at one reading I was able to remember them line for line.

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The names of Burroughs and Whitman are forever linked together and one can hardly think of one in certain relations without thinking of the other. To the literary public they have many ideals in common, and their bonds of sympathy have been knit together forever in Burroughs essays. To be associated with Burroughs is therefore to get many interesting and valuable hints on the life and works of Whitman. While I write this preface Mr. Burroughs talks with me in the evenings on the possible future influence of Whitman on American literary methods and criticism. The reader will not be surprised therefore, to find in this collection of papers, one on the relation of these two grand old men.

I have not attempted to interpret John Burroughs. He is his own interpreter and the very best one. In writing the papers, I have had in mind only just what he has meant to me. How he has affected me and changed the course of my life. How he has given me new eyes with which to see, new ears with which to hear, and a new heart with which to love God's great out-o'-doors.

Athens, Ga. January, 1911.

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## THE SIMPLE LIFE

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### I

The great majority of people consider that this expression about defines a summer outing, or a camping trip and that is the end of it. They cannot associate it with any form of living for they have not tried the simple life. A few weeks in summer they are in the habit of unfolding their tents and going away to the mountains where they can for a short while rid themselves of conventionalities and try out nature. On such occasions they are forced to do most of their own work, and hence are primarily interested in reducing this to the minimum. Usually those who seek this form of the simple life are glad when the spell is over and they are back safely in the home.

Once in awhile and perhaps at long intervals, the world gives birth to a character tuned in a lower key than the average of us, that by virtue of its inborn love of simplicity and lack of things to worry over, prefers to remove the deadly weights of the conventional and to live in harmony with the forces of the world. In this way native merits are allowed to expand and grow. Such persons are meek and lowly with much humility of spirit and usually gifted with a great capacity for love. Unconsciously they are continually weeding out everything from their lives that tends in any way to abate their natural forces, and by the time they are far on the way of life they have become entirely free from those things that hold most of us aloof from the best the world has to offer.

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The human race has given very few such characters to the world, in fact not a great enough number to formulate in any sense a law of the probability and chance of their production. Diogenes is an illustration of such a character, who after an early life of luxury, settled upon an extremely simple life during his later years, and grew in wisdom and understanding in proportion to his devotion to such life. Gilbert White after a thorough college training refused many offers to appointments to honorable posts in order to live simply at the Wakes and make a complete record of the Natural History about Selburne. In preference to large paying positions in many parts of the Kingdom, he chose clerical work at very low pay that he may remain at home and not miss any important event in the Natural History thereabouts. Thoreau is another type of the advocate of the simple life. He could have remained about Concord all his days as other men and have amounted to as little as many of them did, if he had preferred. But instead, he deliberately planned an experiment in plain living and high thinking. It has been thought by many that he was an extremist, but how many of us there are who would gladly take his claim to immortality. His experiment was a success. So soon as he cast off all obstacles to free thinking, his mind seized on the things he most loved and desired, and made him famous.

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Another character that belongs in this category, and the one in whom we are the most concerned in the present paper, is John Burroughs. Born in one of the most beautiful sections of a great country, and reared on a farm where he learned first hand the secrets of nature, he has never departed far from the simple life. At the age of seventy-five he still finds greatest comfort away from any human habitation, and the earth beneath—the sky above, and nothing to mar his inner musings. Strange to say the happiest environment that ever comes to him is amid the very hills where he first saw the light. Recently, he confessed as he lifted his eyes to a Catskill sunrise: "How much these dear old hills mean to me! When in my playful youth little did I think as I went along this roadway to school every morning that some day I should fall back upon these scenes for thought, love, inspiration! O what a wholesome effect they have upon me!" This I am sure is not an exaggerated statement of the case. He really longs to get back among the hills of his nativity on the return of summer, and so long as health and strength permits he will 'return to the place of his birth, though he cannot go back to his youth.' There in the quiet of the country, nestled among those beautiful hills and valleys, he can get into the free and wholesome open air and live as he likes, while the many pleasant memories of his earlier days seem to act as a lubricant to his already active mind.

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A simple life is not necessarily a life of idleness, but may on the other hand be the very busiest of lives. In fact, is the product of any mind as wholesome, as pure, as great as it might be when the denominator is not reduced to its lowest terms? Let us not get the little summer visit to the mountains confused with the larger simple life. Very few campers on a summer vacation ever know the real joy of a quiet life as Thoreau lived it at Walden Pond, or as Burroughs lives it at Slabsides in spring and at Woodchuck Lodge in summer. Such a life as I am writing about is a psychological condition as well as a physical environment, and results from a choice or preference of two or more methods of living. It carries with it no regrets, no envy, no covetousness. Perhaps such a life would prove impossible when forced upon one, but happy indeed is he who, having lived as other men, learns "to reduce the necessities of subsistence to their lowest terms" and proves, "that in every life there is time to be wise, and opportunity to tend the growth of the spirit." 'Tis then and only then that he can "share the great, sunny, joyous life of the earth, or be as happy as the birds are! as contented as the cattle on the hills! as the leaves of the trees that dance and rustle in the wind! as the waters that murmur and sparkle to the sea!"

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All of this I think John Burroughs has realized if ever any man has realized it. Sitting in an old barn about a hundred yards from Woodchuck Lodge, his summer home, in his home-made chair, and for his writing desk an old chicken coop with one board-covered side, and a large piece of heavy manila paper covering this, is the way I found him at work. In front of the opening or barn door was The Old Clump, the mountain of his boyhood days to inspire, to uplift him. Even the summer home in which he lives savors too much of the conventional. To be absolutely free is a consummation devoutly to be sought for—and this he finds, experiences, cherishes. Writing at seventy-five? Yes, thinking and writing,—but writing, thinking and living best when living simplest. With his dark brown wash-suit and cap on, he is not afraid to sit or roll on mother earth nor to climb a tree if necessary. Before breakfast we go to gather some apples for the table, and nothing would do but I should hold the basket while he mounted the tree and picked the apples. Then over the brow of the hill after breakfast to get potatoes for dinner—but to stop long enough at the old barn for a snap-shot of him and to learn of the junco's nest built in the hay only six feet from his chicken-coop desk. The bird as busy in her work rearing her young as Burroughs writing his essays, and the two blend beautifully in the picturesque barn. This is the only record, he tells me, of a junco nesting under human habitation, so I get two very good pictures of the bird entering the nest.

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Only a few weeks before, he had remodeled Woodchuck Lodge and put a rustic porch on it. His niece, referring to Mr. Burroughs during the time, says: "I never saw a happier person than Uncle John was then. He would work all day and rest well at night, and was in a happy mood all the time. If there ever was such a thing as a happy person on earth, I think he was then." And nothing delights him more now than to point out the different pieces of furniture he made with his own hands. Every piece of it is up to the standard of the Craftsman, and the buffet and dining table quite tasty, while the rustic reading table and cot showed considerable ingenuity in the adaptation of odd-shaped pieces of bark covered wood to man's needs. All in all, it was an excellent piece of work, and far more picturesque than any factory work I ever saw.

This man of whom we write is in many respects a wonderful man. His first dash into literature was purely and simply Transcendentalism, a kind of a mixture of Emersonian philosophy and metaphysics, and is by no means poor literature, but perhaps far too complicated or vague for the mental fibre of its author. So he starts from the first again and writes about the common things of the farm and forest. "It was mainly to break the spell of Emerson's influence," he says, "and get upon ground of my own that I took to writing upon out-door themes." The selection has been a happy one and has probably done much to recast, as it were, the author of *Expression*—to reduce his denominator, if not increase the numerator. Thinking and writing on every-day themes has induced him to almost get out and live with the animals and plants. It has very largely been responsible for the growth of his sane, wholesome mind housed in such a healthy body. Under no other conditions it seems to me could he have given to the world "so much of sane thinking, cool judgment, dispassionate reasoning, so many evidences of a calm outlook upon life and the world." In fact, could he have experienced these things in conventional life? His philosophy is well ripened and at the same time wonderfully human and appreciative. Each new book from his pen shows in every way the intense enthusiasm of the author for the great study that he has made his life work.

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### **BURROUGHS IN THE OLD BARN IN WHICH HE DOES HIS WRITING**

We may ask, how does he spend his time in this country home when not actually engaged in writing? Going about from farm to farm talking to the common people about the seasons, the crops, and perhaps now and then advising with them on some phase of farm work, such as curing hay or mowing grain. Sometimes he goes to the mountains and under some ledge of rocks he will be found studying the nature of the geological formation of the earth. A small angled stone in his hand, he picks into the side of the stone wall and makes some interesting discovery. While thus engaged, he hears in the hemlock forest behind him lively bird notes, and suddenly turning gets a glimpse of the author when for the first time in that particular woods he sees the warbling or white-eyed vireo. On his return he follows up a stone fence for several hundred feet to get a little study of the chipmunk, or to locate a new flower that he happens not to have seen this season. He knows where it ought to be, but has not located it yet. With the growth, color, and size of a particular species he associates its environment and perhaps learns something new about this too before he reaches home again. Wherever his fancy leads him, whether it be to the trout stream or the mountain side, he shows a wonderful vigor, keen vision, and alert attention to the life about him that is apparent in all his writings. I find no other writer on Natural History themes quite up to Burroughs in honesty and keenness of observation, delicacy of sentiment, and eloquent simplicity of style.

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For the past few years, Burroughs' mind has turned to philosophy rather than Nature study—the *causes of things* rather than *things*. This is to be expected of one who has given the mind opportunity for consecutive development for the past half century. He has always been a philosopher, but only his two last volumes of essays—*Ways of Nature*, and *Leaf and Tendril* show the deeper currents in his life. It is in these that we see him much concerned about the constitution of nature and the history of creation. His mind has ripened to this, and it is surprising to know how versatile he is on the structure of organic beings, and the geological

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formation of the earth's crust, and the evolution of life. Perhaps no nature writer, ancient or modern, is so largely responsible for the universal interest in the nature study movement at the present time, as John Burroughs. How many he leads to an appreciation of nature! and how many personal friends he has among all classes of people! Then too his writings have recently found their way to the schools—thanks to Miss Burt. With all his love for the freedom of the woods and mountains, he is a sociable being, and is thereby subject to many interruptions from friends. But despite this he has accomplished far more in the way of substantial writing than the average author, and recently said that if he keeps up his present rate he will soon have his shelves filled with his own writings. One thing is quite conspicuous about his relation to other people—His friends are the warmest of friends, and whenever I have been with him, he has had a good deal to say about them. In his *Indoor Studies*, he confesses that he is too conscious of persons. "I feel them too much, defer to them too much, and try too hard to adapt myself to them." But there is a certain influence he has felt from friends that has, in all probability, given him a calmer and more beautiful outlook upon the world. Often he is invited to dine with the rich, but always reluctantly accepts, and I think the best part of it to him is his return to the simple life. He says: "I am bound to praise the simple life, because I have lived it and found it good. When I depart from it, evil results follow. I love a small house, plain clothes, simple living. How free one feels, how good the elements taste, how close one gets to them, how they fit one's body and one's soul!"

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## II

Not many years after I had known Mr. Burroughs personally, it occurred to me to look up his literary record and see just how his years have been spent and associate with this the fruit of his labors. The long jump from *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867), his first book to *Leaf and Tendril* (1908), his last volume, marks a wonderful change in interest and study. But the record is made, the books stand for themselves, and we would not have it otherwise. This is the way of nature and of her best interpreter, John Burroughs, whose nature books almost have the fresh and sweet flavor of wild strawberries, and tell in unmistakable language the author's love for and knowledge of the out-door world in which he has spent so much of his life. Reared in the country, he knows country life and country people and loves them. In his early years, his mind must have been very susceptible to impressions of truthful observations, which formed a setting for his after work. Of this I think he is still conscious, judging from the advice he gives teachers in a copy of the Pennsylvania School Journal I happen to have before me. "I confess, I am a little skeptical about the good of any direct attempt to teach children to 'see nature.' The question with me would be rather how to treat them or lead them so that they would not lose the love of nature which as children, they already have. Every girl and every boy up to a certain age loves nature and has a quick eye for the curious and interesting things in the fields and woods. But as they grow older and the worldly habit of mind grows upon them, they lose this love; this interest in nature becomes only so much inert matter to them. The boy may keep up his love of fishing and of sport, and thus keep in touch with certain phases of nature, but the girl gradually loses all interest in out-door things.

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"If I were a teacher I would make excursions into the country with my children; we would picnic together under the trees, and I would contrive to give them a little live botany. They should see how much a flower meant to me. What we find out ourselves tastes so good! I would as far as possible let the child be his own teacher. The spirit of inquiry—awaken that in him if you can—if you cannot, the case is about hopeless.

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"I think that love of nature which becomes a precious boon and solace in life, does not as a rule show itself in the youth. The youth is a poet in feeling, and generally he does not care for poetry. He is like a bulb—rich in those substances that are to make the future flower and fruit of the plant.

"As he becomes less a poet in his unconscious life, he will take more and more to poetry as embodied in literary forms. In the same way, as he recedes from nature, as from his condition of youthful savagery, he is likely to find more and more interest in the wild life about him. Do not force a knowledge of natural things upon him too young."

If Mr. Burroughs had been taught nature after the academic fashion, he would never have developed the love for the subject that is so evident in all his out-door books. My impression is that his early environment was best suited to him and he was the child so "like a bulb." He absorbed nature without having any consciousness of what it meant. "I was born of and among people," he says, "who neither read books nor cared for them, and my closest associations since have been with those whose minds have been alien to literature and art. My unliterary environment has doubtless been best suited to me. Probably what little freshness and primal sweetness my books contain is owing to this circumstance. Constant intercourse with bookish men and literary circles I think would have dwarfed or killed my literary faculty. This perpetual rubbing heads together, as in literary clubs, seems to result in literary sterility. In my own case at least what I most needed was what I had—a few books and plenty of things." The roaming over the hills and mountains and following up trout streams was most conducive to his life, and thus it was he spent his odd hours and rest-days. This gave him "plenty of real things," and just what they have meant to him you will be able to learn from his twelve out-door volumes. But what brought all this long string of books out of him? How comes it that he turned to literature as a profession? From the earliest he had a passion for authorship, and when in the "teens" resolved to become a writer. "It was while I was at school, in my nineteenth year," he says, "that I saw my first author; and I distinctly remember with what emotion I gazed upon him, and followed him in

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the twilight, keeping on the other side of the street.... I looked upon him with more reverence and enthusiasm than I had ever looked upon any man.... I suppose this was the instinctive tribute of a timid and imaginative youth to a power which he was beginning vaguely to see—the power of letters."

By this time Mr. Burroughs had begun to see his own thoughts in print in a country newspaper. He also began writing essays about the same time and sending them to various periodicals only to receive "them back pretty promptly." These perhaps rather conventional papers on such subjects as *Genius*, *Individuality*, *A Man and His Times*, etc., served a great purpose. They tutored the author of them into his better papers that were welcomed by the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and other leading periodicals. In his twenty-first year, he discovered Emerson—so to speak—in a Chicago book-store, and says: "All that summer I fed upon these essays and steeped myself in them." No doubt Emerson's essays had a wonderful influence on this young reader and almost swamped him. They warped him out of his orbit so far, that had he not resolved to get back upon ground of his own, we would never have had *Wake Robin*. Emerson had complete possession of him for a time and was hard to shake off, but constant writing upon out-door themes did the work, and put Burroughs back in possession of himself.

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**THE OLD STONE WALL IN FRONT OF THE BURROUGHS HOME, BUILT BY DEACON SCUDDER. THE CATSKILLS DIMLY SHOW IN THE DISTANCE**

In the year 1863, he went to Washington apparently to join the army, but somehow never did. Instead of this, he received an appointment in the Treasury, as a guardian of a vault, to count the money that went in or came out. During this time he had many leisure moments which he put to good account writing his nature sketches that make up his first nature book, *Wake Robin*. Before he had been in the National Capital a great while he became acquainted with the poet Walt Whitman, and immediately fell in with him. Whitman's poetry was not new to Burroughs who had already developed a taste for it. The man Whitman seemed to be an embodiment of the poetry, *Leaves of Grass*, and Burroughs was so greatly moved by a study of the man that he soon began making notes of this study which resulted in his first book—*Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867). This little volume is one of the best, raciest and freshest books on Whitman, and certainly is as readable as Burroughs' later book on *Whitman: A Study*, (1896).

To any man, who would rise in the world, one thing must become evident; he must know that the idle moments must be the busiest of all. On this basis Burroughs worked. While at his work in the Treasury, he recalled his many experiences in the Western Catskills, and wrote these experiences. His Sundays and Holidays were spent in the woods around the National Capital that he may each season increase his knowledge about natural history. The *Atlantic Monthly* began to publish his nature papers about 1864, the year after he reached Washington, and has continued to do so at regular intervals ever since. In fact at the present time that periodical has three of Burroughs' essays yet unpublished. *Wake Robin*, a collection of these early nature sketches and his first book on out-door themes, was published in 1871, just four years after the little book on

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Whitman came from the press. Perhaps we have no more readable book on bird life than this volume of nature sketches, which won for the writer immediate and complete success.

Mr. Joel Benton formally introduced Burroughs to American literary people in the old Scribner's Monthly in 1876 while his third volume, *Winter Sunshine* (1875), was fresh in the mind of the public. In this timely article Mr. Benton claims: "What first strikes me in Mr. Burroughs's work, even above its well-acquired style, is the unqualified weight of conscience it exhibits. There is no posturing for effect; an admiration he does not have he never mimics. We find in him, therefore, a perfectly healthy and hearty flavor. Apparently, he does not put his pen to paper hastily, or until he is filled with his subject. What has been aptly termed the secondary, or final stage of thought, has with him full play.... A natural observer of things, he summons all the facts, near or remote—there is no side-light too small—and, when the material is all in, it seems to undergo a long incubation in his mind; or shows at least that reflection has done its perfect and many-sided work. Under his careful treatment and keen eye for the picturesque, the details get the proper artistic distribution and stand forth in poetic guise. The essay, when it appears, comes to us freighted with 'the latest news' from the meadows and the woods, and bears the unmistakable imprint of authenticity." This is a good testimonial from a good source, especially since it is the first public utterance of an opinion by an authority, on the quality of Burroughs' literary work. In a recent letter, Mr. Benton writes: "I did not say Burroughs was made by me, or that he remembers the priority of my article, but that I had the privilege and honor of being the first to write about him." This paper, I am sure, renewed his hopes for literary distinction and fame, and perhaps encouraged him to greater efforts.

In *Birds and Poets* (1877), we find our nature student measuring other men's observations by his own deductions. He is beginning to branch out in literature and note nature references in the poets and now and then calls them to task for stepping beyond the bounds of truth. Here we find Burroughs as much of a student of literature as he is of nature, and as delightful in his literary references as one could desire. Ten years after his appointment, he tired of his clerkship in the Treasury, as he resigned in 1872 to become receiver for a broken bank in Middletown, New York. Pretty soon after leaving Washington, he was made bank examiner for the Eastern part of New York State, which position he held till 1885. Since this last date he has depended entirely on literature and on a small farm for a livelihood. He purchased a place up the Hudson river at West Park about 1873 and began immediately to build a stone mansion which he named Riverby, and in which he has lived since its completion. But stone houses did not prove best suited for his literary work and he built a small bark covered study only a few yards from Riverby in which he has done most of his literary work. The most active period of his literary career was when he settled at West Park. Mention has already been made of *Birds and Poets* (1877). The magazines are full of his essays at this time and the volumes come thick in the blast: *Locust and Wild Honey* (1879), *Pepacton and Other Sketches* (1881), *Fresh Fields* (1884), *Signs and Seasons* (1886). The increased revenue from his books and literary work, supplemented by his little grape farm, enabled him to resign as Bank examiner in 1885, as above suggested, and he has never held office of any kind since. It was about at the age of fifty that Mr. Burroughs seems to have developed a considerable consciousness of literature as an art, as a consequence of which we find him beginning to write papers on literary criticism and *Indoor Studies* (1889). From this time on his nature books are written in a different key, just as interesting but not quite as enthusiastic, and in most of them a touch of nature philosophy. In 1886 there appeared in the Popular Science Monthly an essay by him under the caption, *Science and Theology*, which showed pretty clearly the deeper currents of his mind. This paper was followed by others of its kind for several years until they were collected into a volume, *The Light of Day*, Religious Discussions and Criticism from the Naturalist's Point of View (1900). Studies on such themes are the logical outcome of the growth and development of a mind like that of Burroughs', and in the present case the papers are accompanied with that "unqualified weight of conscience" referred to in Mr. Benton's article and are valuable discussions on themes that never grow old.

Again we find him delighting himself and the reading public on his out-door observations around *Riverby* (1894), his stone house by the Hudson, in the preface to which he expresses the belief that this is to be his last volume of out-door essays. *Whitman: A Study* (1896), and *Literary Values* (1902), are books for the critic and are fully up to the standard in that field of activity. This book on Whitman is claimed by many scholars to be the best criticism of Whitman yet published. It is a strong defense of the "Good Gray Poet" and his literary method. Beginning with the year 1900, and perhaps a little earlier, there developed a great demand from the public for a larger crop of nature books and a great many of our good writers, seeing this demand, began to try to fill it whether they were naturalists or not, and the consequence was that a great many fake nature stories got before the reading public. This, of course, bore heavily on Mr. Burroughs' mind who had lived so long with nature trying to understand her ways and laws, who in 1903 issued his protest against this practice in a strong article, "Real and Sham Natural History," in the March Atlantic Monthly of that year. This paper brought forth a warfare between the two schools of nature study in America, the romantic school and the scientific or the sane or sober school, which did not end till about 1908, and in fact, a little fruit of the controversy still crops out here and there in magazines and papers. In this controversy Burroughs won the battle of his life. The main point at issue was: Do animals have reason to any degree in the sense that man has reason? Burroughs claimed that they do not, and the romantic school claimed that they do, and to prove the claim hatched up a great many fairy tales about the animals and declared that these statements were made from observations under their own eyes. Before it was over, Burroughs had won the strong support of Mr. Frank M. Chapman, the ornithologist; Dr. Wm. M. Wheeler, W. F. Ganong, and Mr. Roosevelt, then the President of the United States, together with a great



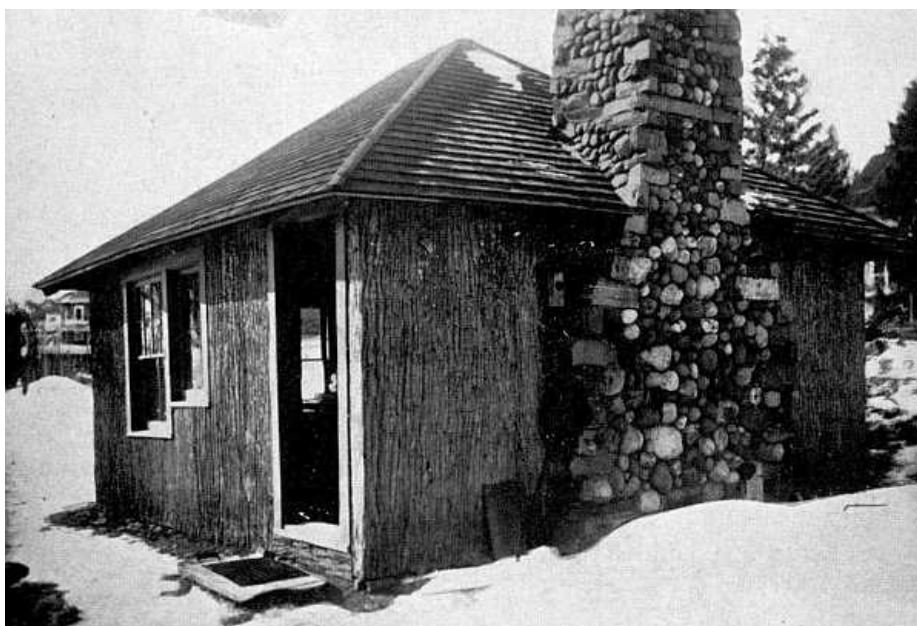
many other distinguished naturalists.

It was natural and fitting that Burroughs should be the first one to come to the rescue of popular natural history, when it seemed to be falling into the hands of romancers, as he was and is the dean of American nature writers and is our best authority on the behavior of animals under natural conditions. The result of this controversy was the publication of *Ways of Nature* (1905), containing all the papers which were the outcome of the currents of thought and inquiry that the controversy set going in his mind. The volume contains many fine illustrations of his claims and is a complete answer to the many attacks made upon him by his enemies in this controversy.

At the urgent request of his many friends he collected in a volume and published his poems, *Bird and Bough* (1906), which for perfect cadence and simple sweetness have not been surpassed by any of our minor poems. In 1903, he went west with President Roosevelt and spent the month of April in Yellowstone Park studying natural history with him. The President surprised Mr. Burroughs in his broad knowledge and enthusiastic study of nature. The little volume, *Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt* (1907), contains an account of this trip and brings out Mr. Roosevelt's strong points as a naturalist. During the last few years his philosophy has been ripening and a great deal of his energy has been spent in working out natural philosophy rather than natural history, though he has never gotten away from the latter. His last volume of essays, *Leaf and Tendril* (1908), contains a resume of his studies along this line and are, perhaps, the most readable of all of his late books. Another volume of papers is now in the hands of the printers, which will likely appear in print next spring (1912).

The names and dates of appearance of his many volumes are as follows, and mark the evolution of his mind:

- 1867—Notes on Walt Whitman, as Poet and Person.
- 1871—Wake Robin.
- 1875—Winter Sunshine.
- 1877—Birds and Poets.
- 1879—Locusts and Wild Honey.
- 1881—Pepacton and Other Sketches.
- 1884—Fresh Fields.
- 1886—Signs and Seasons.
- 1889—Indoor Studies.
- 1894—Riverby.
- 1896—Whitman: A Study.
- 1900—The Light of Day.
- 1902—Literary Values.
- 1902—John James Audubon, A Biography.
- 1904—Far and Near.
- 1905—Ways of Nature.
- 1906—Bird and Bough.
- 1907—Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt.
- 1908—Leaf and Tendril.



**THE DEN, BURROUGHS' STUDY NEAR HIS STONE MANSION, RIVERBY, AT WEST PARK**

This does not include a great many papers that were never printed in book form, nor many of his books and parts of them edited by other writers. This list is a good account of a life well spent, and treats of almost all phases of our American natural history. In the main, Mr. Burroughs has

been a stay-at-home pretty much all his life, though he has been about some. In 1872, he was sent to England, and returned there of his own accord in the eighties. An account of these visits will be found in the two volumes, *Winter Sunshine* and *Fresh Fields*. From Alaska, 1899, and the island of Jamaica, 1902, he brought back material for most of the volume, *Far and Near*. In recent years he has visited the Golden West and Honolulu, an account of which we shall doubtless see in his volume now in press. The best part of all his travels is undoubtedly his return to the simple life at West Park and Roxbury, New York. His little bark covered study near by Riverby, where he has done so much of his writing, was his first love up to a few years ago. At present, his Roxbury summer home, Woodchuck Lodge, seems to be his place of greatest interest. In either place, he can lounge about as he sees fit and feel at ease, as he can no where else.

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Wherever he goes he continues writing in his ripe old age, and only last summer (1911), completed eight new essays while on an extended stay at Woodchuck Lodge. In the morning, from eight till twelve, he does his best work, and in the afternoon he rambles around the old place of his birth and among his neighbors. In the preparation of the above eight essays, he writes: "I lost eight pounds of flesh which I do not expect to regain." He is now beginning to "serenely fold his hands and wait" for the inevitable end, though the chances are he will live many years and win many battles against Nature Fakers and put many awkward students of nature in the paths of righteous observation. Strong and healthy, he can climb fences, ascend mountain heights with very little fatigue. Writing of his experiences with a party of friends in California, March, 1911, he says: "During the mountain climbing the other day, I set the pace and tired them all out. Mr. Brown, of the Dial, is sixty-six, but he had to stop and eat a sandwich and have some coffee before the top was reached." Not many of the school of literary men to which he belongs are now living. But what does he say to this: "The forces that destroy us are going their appointed ways, and if they turned out or made an exception on our account, the very foundations of the universe would be impeached." If needs be, I am sure he can boldly and fearlessly,

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"Sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach *the end*,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams,"

and if needs be, I am as well persuaded that he can for another score of years, teach the world how to observe nature. He is optimistic and has always been, because he has always found plenty to do. His friends enjoy each victory he makes, and are glad to see so much interest center about his name as the years roll by.

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## AROUND SLABSIDES AND THE DEN

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It was a cloudy day in December when I made my first trip up the Hudson River to the home of John Burroughs, and how well I recall the invitation into the Den. On opening the door I stood face to face with the object of my pilgrimage, the distinguished naturalist, a man of low stature, rather small frame, a well formed head and sharp eyes, and much younger in appearance than his photographs would indicate. His hair is white, but he can read without glasses and see birds better with the natural eye than I can. He had on a brown jersey wool coat or jacket, beneath which was a vest and trousers of spotted brown and dark to match, all of which were well set to his body and limbs. His shoes were of cloth and rubber with rubber bottoms. When he walked out he put on a short gray overcoat, a small crushed brown or gray hat, and arctic overshoes. His general appearance would not indicate that you were with John Burroughs, but if you got a clear view of his face and eye, you could not mistake him for an ordinary man.

West Park, the little station on the West Shore branch of the New York Central and Hudson River R. R., is a small village with not more than a hundred houses, and is quiet and almost puts one in a dreaming mood, when he thinks of being in the land of the great Literary Naturalist, who drew the most of his neighbors there. The Burroughs home, popularly known as Riverby, is in perfect keeping with the nature of the man. Hidden from the street behind a number of evergreens, it presents rather a secluded appearance, and is a part *of* nature rather than apart *from* nature. The house seems as if it sprang up from the soil, the lower half not yet above the ground. About twenty-five or thirty yards from the house is the study, which is pre-eminently the place of interest to the visitor. On entering this cozy little den—I found Mr. Burroughs reading *Evolution and Ethics*, by Huxley, and upon remarking that I noted what he was reading, his reply was that he had thought of writing something along that line and he wished to see what had already been said. "Right at this time," he said, "my mind is rather in a chaotic condition. I am not sure just what I shall hit upon next. I cannot definitely plan out my writing; but rather write when the mood comes on. I feel that I want to write on a particular subject and just get about it."

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When I expressed my appreciation of his great service in the way of interpreting nature, and

reducing life from the conventional to the simple, he remarked at once: "I have never run after false gods, but have always tried to get at the truth of things, and let come of it what may. I do not believe in hiding the truth. Whatever I have accomplished in the way of writing, I attribute to this fact." This led me to ask him about "Real and Sham Natural History" (an essay written by him that appeared in the March Atlantic, 1903). He leant back in his chair and after a wholesome laugh, "Yes, I found it necessary to say something about the tendency of men like Thompson and Long who were taking advantage of their skill as writers and their popularity, to fool the people with those nature myths. If they had not advertised them as truth, it would have been all right. But when I saw that they persisted in teaching that the stories were true to nature, I could not stand it any longer. I just had to expose them! I could not rest till I had told the people that such stories were false!" Here Mr. Burroughs grew quite spirited, and his very manner indicated his lack of patience with those who make an effort to falsify nature. "I do not think that Long will ever forgive me for telling on him, but Seton Thompson is quite different. He seems to be all right and has shown me much courtesy at two or three dinners in New York. His wife, however, seems to have been hurt worse than Thompson himself. She is a little shy of me yet. I trust however that she will soon be all right. I have dined with them and she treated me very nicely."

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"Are these the only two that were offended by the article?" I asked. "What do you think of Miss Blanchon?"

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"She is a very pleasing writer, and writes rather for the younger readers. She is generally reliable—never says a thing that she is not convinced is true. I have been out with her and she has a very keen eye. She reads nature well. I think she is a genuine nature student."

"I note that in the preface to your little volume of poems, some one could forgive you everything but your poetry. Who was so unkind to you?"

After talking at length about the polemical essay, it interested me very much to hear Mr. Burroughs say that after all the article was probably of passing importance only and had likely served its purpose, so let it drop. He had seen good evidence of the fruit it had borne.

Already it had become evident that he was worried about this false spirit among certain unreliable writers, and soon he began to tell me of his new article soon to appear in *Outing* (and which did appear in the February number, 1907). He had no patience with these Fake writers, and did not see any reason for the editors to allow themselves to be duped in such a manner. I shall not forget the expression he used in portraying his efforts to deal with such writers. "I just 'spank' them good for telling such lies. I have no patience with such writers, who doubtless are trying to follow in the steps of Long, and I cannot content myself to remain silent. If they did not vow that such stories were actual observations, I could forgive them. But here is where the danger comes." At times he showed his impatience, then he would tell one of these unbelievable stories, and burst into wholesome laughter. "Nothing but lies," he said. "A bigger lie was never told."

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After I had been gone for an hour to walk around the little West Shore station, I returned to the "Study" and found Mr. Burroughs cutting wood for his study fire. I said to him: "You still enjoy cutting your wood, do you?" "Yes," he says, "I find some daily exercise aside from my walks, necessary in order for me to keep my health. I feel better when I take my daily exercise."

"What kind of wood is this you use?"

"Beech."

When we had taken the wood to the study, the time had come for us to journey over the mountains to Slabsides, and that was what I was eager to do. For I was anxious to see the far-famed cabin in the woods. As we followed the beaten pathway up the rugged mountain side, Mr. Burroughs appeared perfectly at ease, and would tell of the famous visitors who had come along the same path with him to Slabsides.

Nothing pleased him more than to speak of his high appreciation of President Roosevelt, and of the day the President and Mrs. Roosevelt spent at Riverby and Slabsides.

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### **SLABSIDES, THE WOODLAND RETREAT OF JOHN BURROUGHS**

"They came right along this path with me that warm August day in 1903. The President was full of life, and would jump and sport along the mountain path as a child would do. I am very much impressed with him as a man."

"Do you remember the incident that occurred between you and the Chicago editor, where he spoke of you going to the Park to teach the President Natural History, in reply to which you state that President Roosevelt knew more western Natural History than four John Burroughs rolled into one?" "Yes, and I believe he does with reference to that big game in the west. You see he lived out west a great deal and has a very keen eye. Where did you see that?"

"How did you enjoy your stay in the Park with the President?"

"Oh! I had a very pleasant time except I got quite tired often and it was cold out there. The ground was covered with snow all the time."

Directly we were beyond the loftiest part of the mountains in a roadway, and with all the anticipation of an enthusiast, I said, "What clearing is that in the distance? Is that Slabsides on the right there? O, I shall never forget this moment!"

Mr. Burroughs answered in a very quiet way: "Yes, there is the little house called Slabsides, which you have heard so much about, and the clearing beyond is my famous celery farm."

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Now we were almost in front of Slabsides and Mr. Burroughs cast his eyes to the ground and saw by the roadside a small flower in which he manifested much interest, and called my attention to it. But my eyes were fixed on the very odd, yet beautiful house, that we were about to enter. The thought that here is a house that nature lovers, literateurs, college boys and girls, business men, working men, and all classes and conditions of humanity had made pilgrimages to see, caused my first sight of it to sink deeply into my heart. The house was so well suited to its environment that one might call it Nature's own. The bark covered slabs out of which it was built, the rustic looking doors, floors and steps, made me happier than anything I had ever seen, except the man who built it and called it home. The scattered shelves on the rustic walls filled with all kinds of books indicated what the house was built for. The table on one side of the room, covered with papers of every description, and letters, the little ink-well and goose quill pen, all contributed to my interest in the place. On the table lay a book containing a list of the names of visitors to Slabsides, in which I was asked to write my name. By this time Mr. Burroughs had found a letter from President Roosevelt which I read with considerable anxiety. It was full of sane and healthy thoughts.

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Mr. Burroughs did not fail to express his high regard for the President.

The plain open fireplace and the cooking utensils scattered in the room were all suggestive of Mr. Burroughs' philosophy of life; plain living and high thinking, or as Thoreau would have it, "Lessening the Denominator."

To my surprise, there was an upstairs to Slabsides, and the great philosopher and poet, on taking me up in the second story of his little house, told me that he had entertained more than a half dozen men and women, two or three days at a time, at Slabsides.

On returning to the sitting room, we rested for a short while, during which time I asked him some questions on the American poets. He was at home in that field, and freely expressed himself. I asked what he thought of Longfellow, and if he had ever seen him. "No," said he, "I never had but one opportunity of seeing him, and thinking that I might have a better some day, neglected that,

but Longfellow died before another opportunity presented itself. I think he was a real poet, and I like him very much. He was not elemental like Whitman, nor as serious as Emerson, but wrote some fine verse."

"Do you enjoy your stay over here at Slabsides?"

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"Yes! But not like I did a few years ago. Nature appeals to me here as it does nowhere else. I built this house in order to get further away from the conventionalities of life, and to get a first hand acquaintance with Nature. The Hudson is such a highway for the yachts of millionaires of New York and other cities, that I wanted to withdraw into the wilderness, to get back from the river, and live close to Nature's heart, and I bought this little place. It has given me a great deal of pleasure, and I have never had cause to regret the investment."

Around Slabsides have been built a number of other summer houses, probably the most interesting one of which is that of Ernest Ingersoll, who is a warm friend of John Burroughs, and who bought his land from the latter on which to build.

It was of much interest to me to hear the distinguished Naturalist tell of his celery farm, and the ancient lake bottom in which it is located. To the south of the little farm is a spring which we visited at his suggestion. For the spring is one of the integral parts of Slabsides and the celery farm. While standing at the spring, and discussing the little farm generally, we heard distinctly the whistle of a bird in upper air, which he told me was that of a pine grosbeak come down to spend the winter. I rejoiced to hear also the sound of the goldfinch.

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When I was leaving Slabsides, I could not help but turn back two or three times to get another and yet another glimpse, for I had been helped by my visit, my soul had been enriched, and I was loath to wind around the mountain path, beyond the eminence behind which I could no longer see the never-to-be-forgotten little sylvan home. I could not help but say to the naturalist that Thoreau and Walden Pond had been on my mind much of the hour.

Before we reached the Den, I expressed my appreciation of "Bird and Bough," and remarked that the poems were quite musical and suggested the power of natural objects to incite poetic vision, and my belief that such poetry would have a tendency to influence the poets of the future, to sing more songs of nature. About this time we entered the Den again, where John Burroughs gave free expression to his feelings in reference to his own poems. He would have it, that there was more truth than poetry in them, that there was some real good natural history in them.

I referred to some of his critics and what they had said about him, and could not help but feel deeply impressed with his wholesome view about the whole question of literature. "These things do not worry me at all. I take the position that any man's writings must live by merit alone, and the bad will drop out and the good live on. Every writer must be judged finally, by whatever of his writings that stand the test of time."

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Just as I heard him make these remarks I arose to bid the great philosopher good-bye, for it was nearing train time and I had to return to New York that evening.

The day had been an epoch making day for me. I had long loved the writings of John Burroughs, and had had some correspondence with him, but now for the first time, had my fondest hope come true. His whole air is one of pleasantness and when he speaks he says words of wisdom. Frequently as I sit in my study, I live that day over, and live in the hope of making many other pilgrimages to Riverby and to Slabsides, and of bringing away renewed inspiration from the poet-naturalist.

His conclusions in natural history are reached after careful study and the closest observation, and are not to be controverted. I was much impressed with his keenness of intellect and frank confessions. He predicted the controversy in the school of nature writers, which was so noticeably before the public last year, 1907-1908, and assured me of the necessity of calling a halt on the Fake Natural History writers, whose stories have duped so many of the Magazine editors. Most of these Fake writers are masters of the English language and to their credit be it said, are able to make the stories sound well and catch the public mind, and if they would only advertise them as myths, they would be of great educational value to the public, but when such myths are held to be actual occurrences in Nature, they destroy the usefulness of such talent, and tend to place editors at a discount. The new writers may consider themselves in advance of the old school naturalists, and more in keeping with the progressive age in which they live, but give me the man or the school that does not trifle with facts in all his nature pictures. Give me the man or school that sees wisely and turns the mirror up to nature. This is what we have in White, Thoreau and Burroughs.

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## I

Shall I ever forget the morning that John Burroughs, a basket in one hand and hand bag in the other, walked up from the train to my house?

His eyes caught a glimpse of every bird on the ground, in the trees and in the air above, and he would rejoice saying: "I hear the thrasher somewhere!" "There is a robin!" "How many jays you have down here!" "There is a tree in full bloom; it looks like one of the plums!" These bits of natural history made him feel at home, and as if he were among his neighbors. Every flower seemed to be a revelation and an inspiration to him, and his very love for them proved a great inspiration to me. He noted with special emphasis that our Spring in Georgia is at least a month earlier than theirs in New York. The weather was ideal while Mr. Burroughs was here, and, as a result of this, he would often, while walking in the late afternoon, speak of the saffron sky and of the season it foretold.

When urged to feel at ease, he would reply: "I want to invite my soul; just walk around and take things easy. I like to saunter around." It is remarkable to see how vitally all objects of natural history affect him now, and he 72 years of age. They seem to be a part of him. Go to Nature with him and you will be especially impressed with his remarkable keenness of perception, and ability to read and enjoy the 'fine print and foot notes.' He looks into the secrets of Nature and interprets them. He goes to the woods because he loves to go. When he returns he tells, in his essays, just what he saw and felt. In the evenings his conversations lead up to these things, and the philosophy of natural history. He will be found putting two and two together to make four, and of course when he finds that some other writer on these matters makes five out of two and two, he knows it and is ready to challenge it.

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### BY A SOUTHERN WOODLAND BROOK, LISTENING TO THE CARDINAL GROSBEAK

Few men are so prominently before the American world of letters at this time as John Burroughs, and any incident in his life interests a great many people. He has long been considered the Dean of American Nature writers, and his essays for the past few years have been drifting toward human interests. Now he is working out a complete system of philosophy about human and animal life, and is at the same time, in a certain sense, a check upon our present crop of Nature writers. No time in the history of any literature has the tendency been so strong to exaggerate about every-day occurrences, as it is at this time among American Nature writers to tell incredible stories about our remaining wild animals and birds. It is this unwarranted tendency that brings forth from Mr. Burroughs such essays as "Real and Sham Natural History," or "The Credible and Incredible in Nature." Under normal conditions, he is a calm, peaceful prophet of Nature, but try to perpetrate upon the reading public such stories as I have suggested above, and he buckles on his sword and goes forth to set straight the crooked paths.

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The difference in the time of printing the books is not greater than the difference in the nature of the contents of *Wake Robin* (1867), and *Ways of Nature* (1905). The former is the plain and simple record of the observations of an enthusiastic lover of Nature, while the latter goes into animal psychology and natural philosophy, without showing any loss of enthusiasm manifested in the first.

## II

His visit through the South during the Winter and early Spring of 1908, is rather significant, especially among his literary and Nature-lover friends. It is another evidence of his determination to understand Nature under all conditions, and removes far from us the idea that he is a local figure like Thoreau or White.

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When it was known that Mr. Burroughs intended to spend part of the Spring of 1908, traveling through the South and visiting in Florida, nothing seemed more fitting than to have him stop in Georgia. This he consented to do, and was with us a week beginning March 4. As soon as he consented to visit in Georgia, an effort was made to have him meet "Uncle Remus," and Mr. Harris was invited to call on Mr. Burroughs, but on account of sickness that finally got the better of Mr. Harris and caused his death, July 3, also on account of business details during the combining of *The Home Magazine* with *Uncle Remus's Magazine*, the two men did not meet. In expressing his regrets, "Uncle Remus" wrote of his debt and relation to Mr. Burroughs as follows:

There is not in the wide world a man whom I would rather meet than John Burroughs. He is the only man in the country who is living the ideal life. I have just been re-reading his essay on Walt Whitman, and I feel closer to him than ever. There are some details of the deal with the *Western Magazine* still to settle, and I am sorry indeed, not to be able to accept your invitation. I thank you for thinking of me. Give Mr. Burroughs my love.

Faithfully yours,  
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

Both of these men have lived the simple life, and yet, "Uncle Remus" thought that "Oom John," as Mr. Roosevelt calls Burroughs, was the only man in the country living the ideal life. One thing is evident, no man ever enjoyed life more than Mr. Burroughs, and as per his own statement, work has been the secret of his happiness. "Oh, the blessedness of work," he says, "of life-giving and life-sustaining work! The busy man is the happy man; the idle man is the unhappy. When you feel blue and empty and disconsolate, and life seems hardly worth living, go to work with your hands, —delve, hoe, chop, saw, churn, thrash, anything to quicken the pulse and dispel the fumes. The blue devils can be hoed under in less than a half hour."

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This, he goes on to say, is his own experience, and therefore he has always found something to do. Not many days ago he wrote: "I have recently got to work again and hope to keep at it." And he will keep at it as long as life shall last.

Mr. Burroughs was born April 3, 1837, on a small farm amid the Catskills at Roxbury, New York, where he lived during the early years of his life. The love of the farm still clings to him, and you will frequently hear him say, "Anything that savors of the farm is very pleasant to me, and recalls my early years at Roxbury on the old home farm." He belongs to that class of men who got an education by working most of the time and going to school when there was little work to do. In order to gain his way to the academy, he had to earn his own money, as his parents were poor and there were nine children in the family. To earn the necessary money, he taught school and with the money he thus earned, went to Ashland Academy. Afterwards, he closed his school days at Cooperstown in 1854, where he studied one term. Upon leaving school, the spirit of adventure seized him, and he went to Illinois and spent some time teaching. But because of the girl he loved, he soon returned to New York, and married in 1857, while teaching in a small town in the east central part of the state. The two have enjoyed a wide acquaintance among the literary characters of America for the last half century. To them has been born one child, Julian Burroughs, who is already known in the literary world as a Nature writer.

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### III

Mr. Burroughs was teaching when his first essay was accepted and printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1860. He continued teaching till 1863, when he went to Washington City to enlist in the army, but finding many objections to such a life, he entered the Treasury Department in January, 1864. Here he served in various capacities, and finally became chief of the organization division of the Comptroller of Currency. In 1873, he resigned to become receiver of a bank in Middletown, N. Y. He was afterwards made bank examiner in the Eastern part of New York state, which position he held till 1885. Since then he has relied on his writings and his fruit farm for a living.

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He has always been an optimist, and at 72 years of age is full of sunshine. In religious belief he is perhaps, a fatalist. He is willing to bide his time fearlessly, for his portion. His experience is largely a home experience, though he has been to England twice, to Alaska once, and to the island of Jamaica, and for the past two years has spent his winters in California and Hawaii. These visits have each been the inspiration for several essays. His literary work has always been a labor of love, and with these few exceptions, together with several short papers on men and literature, his essays have been the outgrowth of his contact with Nature up on the Hudson River and around Washington City. His books number 18 volumes of essays and one volume of poems. Since the recent school of Nature fakers has come so prominently into public notice, his mind has shown remarkable activity in his efforts to hold Nature writers to the truth. Only a few years ago he added some land over the mountain to his estate, and in a beautiful rich valley, about a mile from Riverby, he has built with his own hands, out of rough bark-covered slabs, his rustic retreat called "Slabsides." For several years he has spent part of his time in this primitive-looking house, which he says was built because he wished to get back to Nature. Many books and periodicals are in this sylvan home, and its owner has often spent days at a time there, communing with Nature, and taking notes on the return of Spring, the songs of new bird visitors, and the ways of wood folks. Nothing has ever made so deep an impression on the writer as the sight of Mr. Burroughs in and around "Slabsides."

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No man of the century has put himself in an attitude to get more out of life than Burroughs. His

peace of mind and satisfaction with life as he finds it and makes it, are largely responsible for his power as a writer. No man can read his sane, wholesome truths about Nature, men, and literature, without growing better and more satisfied with life, and more resigned to the ways of the Powers that be.

Most of what follows is the result of conversations in the evenings with Mr. Burroughs on natural history, literature and people, the three things about which he talks very freely when you know him. The first evening he was with us the discussion led to his recent essay, "The Divine Soil," and he, with a soul full of this interesting subject, went into the matter at length, giving his idea of Man and Nature, of the possible age of the earth, and the gradual wearing away of the continents. As well as I remember, he said:

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"It will take only about 6,000,000 years—a brief period in the history of creation—for all the continents to wear away, at the present rate. In trying to indicate what is meant by the long periods of time that it has taken for Nature to reach the present stage of development, one author used this figure: That it had existed and had been forming as long as it would take to wear away the Alps Mountains by sweeping across them with a thin veil once every thousand years.

"What progress man is making upon the earth! At the present rate, he will soon be able to harness the winds, the waves of the sea and even the tide waters. He will store up electricity in batteries to be used at his will. All these things will become necessary when the population grows out of proportion to our present resources. No doubt man's progress will be as great in the future as it has been in the past, and just what he will be found doing when all the present supplies of Nature are exhausted, no one can tell. One thing becomes evident, he will learn to use much of the energy that is now lost. Necessity will soon become the mother of many inventions.

"The largeness of the Universe has always been a subject of much thought for me. I like to think that we are making our voyage on such a large scale. The Heaven and Hell that we used to hear so much about, are no longer considered the one up and the other down. There is no up nor down in Nature, except relative to our own earth. The farthest visible star, so many million times a million miles away, is only a short distance in infinite space, from which we could doubtless see as much further, and as many more worlds as we now see from our old earth. I like Whitman because his largeness puts one in tune with Nature in the larger sense. No other poet with which I am acquainted, gives one such large and wholesome views about the world in which we live."

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**AT THE BARS IN FRONT OF THE OLD HOME BURIAL GROUNDS**



On the following evening, which was the evening of March 5, Mr. Burroughs entered fully into a discussion of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. His conversation ran about as follows:

"Thoreau was somewhat eccentric and did not reach a large class of people like Emerson, who always savored of youth, and stimulates all who read him. Thoreau was original, however, and his books breathe the breath of real things. Whitman was larger than Thoreau, and encompassed the whole world, instead of a little nook of the woods like Walden Pond. He used to breakfast with us on Sunday mornings when we lived in Washington, and he never reached our house on time for meals. Mrs. Burroughs would fret and worry and get hot while the breakfast would get cold. One moment she would be at the door looking down the street, another she would be fanning with her apron, wishing that man would come on. Presently, Walt could be seen, and he would swing off the car, whistling as if a week was before him in which to get to his breakfast. To have him in our home was a great pleasure to us. He always brought sunshine and a robust, vigorous nature. Once Mrs. Burroughs had prepared an extra good meal, and Walt seemed to enjoy it more than usual. After eating most heartily he smiled, saying: 'Mrs. Burroughs knows how to appeal to the stomach as Mr. Burroughs does to the mind.' I often saw him on the front of a horse car riding up the streets of Washington. Far down the street, before I could see his face, his white beard and hair could be seen distinctly. He usually rode with one foot upon the front railing, and was with Peter Doyle, a popular cab driver, oftener than he was with any one else. Doyle was a large Irishman with much native wit, and was a favorite of Whitman's.

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"The Atlantic is my favorite of American periodicals, and I like to see my papers printed in it. It seems always to hold to a very high standard of excellence. I remember well when the magazine was launched in November of 1857. I was teaching at the time, and having purchased a copy, in the town in which I was teaching, I returned home and remarked to Mrs. Burroughs that I liked the new magazine very much and thought it had come to stay. Somehow, the contents made me feel assured of its success. I was married in September before the magazine appeared in November. My first essay was printed in the Atlantic in November of 1860, three years after it had been launched. I was very proud, indeed, when I had received the magazine and found my own work in print in it. The essay was 'Expression' and was purely Emersonian. Now I knew it would never do for me to keep this up, if I hoped for great success. This essay was so like Emerson, that it fooled Lowell, the editor of the Atlantic, and Mr. Hill, the Rhetorician, who quoted a line from it giving Emerson as the author. (Here Mr. Burroughs laughed.) You know, it was not customary to sign names to articles written for periodicals in those days. I was so much worried about this Emersonian mask that I resolved to lay it off. So I began to write of things that I knew about, such as birds and flowers, the weather and all out-door Nature. I soon found that I had hit upon my feet, that I had found my own.

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"The title of my first book was 'Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person,' and was published in 1867. Later I wrote a book on 'Whitman: A Study.' Since I first turned attention to Whitman, he has never released hold upon me. I found a more wholesome air in his than in any other poetry, and when I met him and learned to love him, his attractive personality strengthened my love for his writings. He is the one mountain in our American Literary Landscape. There are some beautiful hills.

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"I don't seem to be in a mood to write poetry. One cannot write when he thinks to do so. He must have a deep consciousness of his message, if he would say something that will hold water. Probably I shall find my muse again some day; I don't know.

"I have always been a lover of the farm. I am a man of the soil. I enjoyed the smell of that manure as we passed up the road today. It recalled my early days when I used to put it out on the farm. Anything that savors of the farm and of farm life is pleasant to me. Nothing makes me happier than my annual visits back to my old home in the Catskills. When Mrs. Burroughs and I decided to buy a home and move away from Washington, I could not decide just where would be best for us to settle, so we thought to get near New York and at the same time as near the old home as possible. We have enjoyed our life at Riverby very much, and it is convenient in every way. We have a great many visitors, and like to see them come.

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"At this time America has no great writer, but many who use pretty English. They seem to have no great message. Stedman wrote well, but his essays always savored too much of the mid-night oil. They read as if the best of his energy had been spent in something else, and the tired mid-night hours turned to literary work. They are not fresh like Lowell's essays. I do not think anything he wrote has lasting qualities, with the possible exception of two or three poems. Aldrich wrote sweet verse, but it is sweet in the sense that a peach or a plum is sweet. It has no fast colors. Trowbridge is one of our best present-day writers, and much of his work will be unknown to the next generation. He is a man of attractive personality and exceptionally pleasing manners. Mrs. Burroughs and I have, for a long time, enjoyed his friendship. As for my own writings, I sometimes wonder just how they have affected people, and what my life has meant. I have always hoped that some would be helped by my books. A short time ago, I had a letter from a preacher in the upper part of New York state, who had just finished a book on 'The Gospel of Christ,' and he asked me if I would write a book on 'The Gospel of Nature.' After I received the letter and began to think about the matter, I was much perplexed as to whether there is a gospel of Nature. I have since then written something along the line suggested, but I do not know whether it will ever appear in print. It is always interesting to have suggestions from any one about what I should write. Writing is more a product of the soul than of the will.

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"I once asked President Roosevelt what he would do when he left the White House. He replied

quickly: 'Oh, I'll find plenty to do. Don't worry about that.' And he will find plenty to do. He is a man of intense activity, and will always be happiest when he is busiest. I admit that he takes large liberties as the executive of the nation, but he is a natural leader and controller of men. When he sets his head to do a thing, he keeps digging away till it is done. He is full of resources. I have just received a letter from him consenting to be interviewed by my friend, William Bayard Hale. Hale is a good man, and will give a most reliable account of his visit to the White House."

John Burroughs, who is destined to be called "the good gray naturalist," is a man who enters freely into the life of those who admire him and his writings. Recently it was my delight to read and discuss one of his short poems, "The Return," with Mrs. Burroughs, and I could not resist the temptation to remark that Mr. Burroughs must have been homesick for the old place when he wrote it.

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The wife said: "Yes; you have no idea how true that is! Mr. Burroughs often goes back to his old home at Roxbury, up in the Catskills, and walks over the farm and through the woods where he used to go when he was a boy, and he always tells me how sad it makes him feel. I sometimes think that he would like to live his life over, he has so many fond memories and pleasant recollections of his early life."

### THE RETURN

He sought the old scenes with eager feet,  
The scenes he had known as a boy,  
"Oh, for a draught of those fountains sweet,  
And a taste of that vanished joy!"

He roamed the fields, he wooed the streams,  
His schoolboy paths essayed to trace;  
The orchard ways recalled his dreams,  
The hills were like his mother's face.

O sad, sad hills! O cold, cold hearth!  
In sorrow he learned this truth—  
One may return to the place of his birth,  
He cannot go back to his youth.

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## RAMBLES AROUND ROXBURY

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### I

To one who is interested in the most beautiful things in nature a day trip up the Hudson by boat in mid-summer is a real treat. Here you get a general idea of the palisades and are far more impressed with their beauty and significance than is possible when taking a hurried trip by rail. You are constantly shifting the scenes from hill to hill, from mountain to mountain and from outline to outline, each scene characterized by its particular fascinating beauty, till you reach the climax as you approach the Highlands. Here you get the best the Hudson has to offer, and you almost feel suddenly lifted above yourself as you approach these round mountain peaks clad in dark and light green, and reflected almost as perfectly in the calm gentle flowing river.

An additional charm is added to the trip as you approach West Park, a small station on the West Shore Railroad, about five miles above Poughkeepsie, the home of John Burroughs, the great literary naturalist, the interpreter of Nature, the delightful man of many parts. From the boat you can see Riverby, his stone house, and the small bark covered study near by. Perhaps if he were here, we could see him in the little summer house overlooking the river, taking his mid-day rest. But he is back at the old home farm in the western Catskills, at Roxbury, enjoying again the scenes of his boyhood, or better, as he himself puts it, "drinking from the fountains of his youth." From time to time, he goes back to his native heath and rambles over his favorite boyhood haunts, and climbs the hills and stone walls he used to climb. He was born in a farm house in one of the valleys just above the little town of Roxbury, to the northwest, on one of the best farms in that part of the state of New York, and the homing instinct appeals to him no more than the desire to get back to the farm he helped develop, and to enjoy the free open air of the hills and mountains.

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**EATING RASPBERRIES ON THE SITE OF HIS GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE, LONG SINCE  
TORN AWAY**

"Well, you did come didn't you," are the first words he spoke as I stepped off the afternoon train from Kingston Point. Yes, he was there and what a warm and welcome hand-shaking he gave me! Soon plans were perfected for our journey up the hill from the railway station to Woodchuck Lodge, a farm house where Mr. Burroughs keeps house of late years while he visits his old home. This house is on the south and west edge of his brother's farm, in the direction of the station, and is a comfortable place for his summer work. He thinks that he will fit it up and spend part of every summer in it as long as he lives. John Burroughs had been tramping all day with some friends, and but for his vigor of manhood, would have been too tired to meet the train that afternoon, but one of the party said he was right in for meeting the train, and never thought of yielding the task to another. When he gets back among his native hills he is no longer aged, despite his gray hairs, nor does he credit his own lines, "One may go back to the place of his birth, He cannot go back to his youth." Here he is back to his youth and it is not to be denied. He is as optimistic as any young man ever was.

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With all his optimism, however, there are many sad hints mingled. Before we had reached Woodchuck Lodge, he pointed many scenes of his childhood, and said in a little undertone: "These are the scenes upon which my eyes first opened, and I sometimes think I would not mind if they closed for the last time upon them. I would not mind if I come to the end of my journey right here among these hills." As we went slowly up the hillside, he began pointing out the many places of interest about the town, among which was the Roxbury Academy, a large two-story frame building, that he longed to attend as a young man but never did. The academy looked about as it did sixty years ago, and was conducted practically along the same lines. Many modern ideas and methods had crept into the curriculum, but the tendency was to stick to the traditions of the past. "This little brook here used to be a famous trout stream when I was a boy. Many are the times I have fished up and down it when a bare-foot boy, and have caught some fine fish in it too. They are all about gone now, so many people have moved in and taken the timber from the valley of the brook, and have fished it out. We shall go up by the edge of that pond and follow the trail around the upper end of it, instead of going around the roadway. In this way we can make our walk some shorter." His mind wandered from one thing to another as he led the way up the hill. Now he would be pointing out some interesting flower or plant, now some bird or nest, and in it all he found joy and, as truly, shared it with me.

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The small artificial pond we were passing was stocked with fish, and I was told by the keeper had a half million trout in it. Pointing back toward the town Mr. Burroughs said: "Over there is the

famous Gould Memorial Church, built by Helen Gould, and just to the left of the church you will see the Gould home, in front of which is a beautiful park." As we approached the upper end of the pond he saw a gopher run up a tree and disappear in a hollow, a sight he had never witnessed before, and he remarked with some pride: "One never gets too old to learn. I thought I knew the gopher pretty well, but this is the first time I ever saw one hide himself in a tree after that manner." About this time a hyla sounded his familiar note in a small tree just across the brook, and Mr. Burroughs hastened to that part of the bog and lingered about this tree till we heard a vesper sparrow singing his evening hymn on the stone wall just beyond the bog. "I never tire of such music as that. The vesper sparrow sings for me many months in the year and has been doing so as long as ever I can remember, but its music is as fresh and sweet today as it was the first time I ever heard it. There is something strange about the constancy of nature and the inroads she makes upon one's mind and soul." It would hardly be a mistake to say that the appeal which nature makes to John Burroughs has kept before him all these years high ideals and a great purpose, and has been responsible for his success as a writer. He has been constant in his love for and devotion to nature, but has had to wait (and he has done it patiently) for the great welcome the world is now giving him. His circle of admirers was very much restricted for many years during the beginnings of his literary career, but he kept before him the lessons of nature, and never lacked for enthusiasm to reflect truth when the appeal came.

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The afternoon was beautiful. As we approached Woodchuck Lodge the shadows were growing long and dim, and the sky was beginning to turn saffron, but there was some signs of discontentment in the weather, which did not fail to bring fruit before morning, for there was a strong wind from the east before mid-night, which brought clouds with a little sprinkling of rain and a considerable drop in temperature before morning. The walk had ended and we were tired, but how refreshing was the shredded wheat and fresh sweet milk, the home-made loaves, the maple cookies (Mr. Burroughs' boyhood favorites) and the beautiful white honey. This repast was fit for a king, and served in this simple manner, tasted better than it would have on any king's table. Whatever else he was doing, once in awhile I could hear him sigh: "I get so home sick for these dear old scenes of my early days! I cannot stay away from them long at a time! I come back every year and spend some time following up the paths I helped to make around the old home place! Mrs. B. used to come with me, but she doesn't enjoy it now like she did years ago. It is the best of tonics for me."

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After the evening meal, Mr. Burroughs took me over to the old Burroughs' home, where his brother now lives, and who could have experienced greater pleasure than I, when it was announced that I was to occupy Uncle John's room for the time of my stay! To think that I should look out from the windows that he looked from, and would see the scenes that inspired him so much during the formative period of his life, was all joy to me. To know the interesting family of his brother, and to sleep under the roof that had for so many years, brought happiness to the man whom I had gone far to see, these were experiences that add much to one's resources of life. Here in this beautiful valley among the hills of the western Catskills, nestled the village in which grew the boy who now, at seventy three years young, brings people from all parts of the world to his door. A man who has put man and Nature on good terms and brought happiness to thousands of homes. No wonder he sighs for the hills and for the home of his youth! They gave him his first love for Nature.

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His interest in the affairs of the farm was keen. He would ask his nephew: "How is your crop of oats turning out? Aren't you afraid to leave the shocks in the field too long? I should think they would begin to rot. When are you going to cut the field up by the road?" Nothing of interest about the farm escaped his attention, and though his interest was altogether a personal interest, you would think he was getting half the revenue of the crop.

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## II

Before going to the woods and mountains the next morning, Mr. Burroughs showed me a copy of the Atlantic Monthly containing his essay, "Expression," published in November, 1860, and asked if I cared to read the essay. I found it interesting and as perfect a piece of work as John Burroughs ever did. It begins: "The law of expression is the law of degrees,—much, more, most.... There is no waste material in a good proverb; it is clear meat like an egg,—a happy result of logic, with the logic left out, and the writer who shall thus condense his wisdom, and as far as possible give the two poles of thought in every expression, will most thoroughly reach men's minds and hearts." Thus ends the first paragraph of the essay, and it continues to abound in Transcendentalism to the end. The following is the last and much quoted paragraph: "Johnson's periods act like a lever of the third kind, the power always exceeds the weight raised." It is filled with proverbs and brilliant thought. Perhaps it is Emersonian, but certainly it is different from anything Emerson ever did. It is so entirely different from anything else Burroughs did that one can hardly feel while reading it that he is following after the author of "Wake Robin," or "Winter Sunshine." It is so well done, however, that one cannot help but feel that if he had given himself over to that form of literature, he would have rivaled Emerson, or any other writer, in that field of expression.

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Wake Robin, though keyed in a much lower tone than the essay, is as fresh as the morning dew, and sparkles as much, and we cannot help but feel that Mr. Burroughs did the proper thing when he came down from his high perch of Transcendentalism.

After breakfast was over, and the chores were done, we prepared for the morning tramp in the

hills. Our itinerary, which had already been mapped out by Mr. Burroughs, lead down the road by the old home farm and up the lane beyond to the south and east. In the corner of a meadow, to the right of the road beyond the Burroughs' house, is an old family grave yard, and when we reached this, Mr. Burroughs stopped and gave a little history of the farm and of several of the people who had been planted there in the city of the dead. "Ezra Bartram owned this farm before father, and sold it to father. Bartram built the house in which I was born. When I was a young boy father built the house you see down there now. Edna Bartram, the grand-daughter of Ezra, was my first sweetheart and I recall now just how she looked." We entered the old grave yard from the bars in the stone fence, and Mr. Burroughs had much pleasure reading the names and telling of the people who were buried there. When he came to the name of Jeremiah Dart, he recalled that he had three sons, Dave, Abe and Rube, and that Rube once worked for his father. The Scudders were teachers and preachers. The Corbins were successful farmers and respectable people. "Deacon Jonathan Scudder had a farm joining father's farm on the southwest, and well do I remember how straight he was. The Deacon built that fence over there beyond our farm, and I can see him now as straight as a rod, picking up stones in that pasture. He never bent except at the hips. How he ever built that wall is a puzzle. But he was forever going through the pasture picking up stones and putting them on the fence one by one. He was thrifty and always had things done right about him." Mr. Burroughs went on across the grave yard and came to a name that interested him a great deal. "Nath Chase was the first to introduce top-knot chickens in our community, and O how I wanted some of those chickens!"

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**RESTING UNDERNEATH A CATSKILL LEDGE WHERE HE HAS OFTEN BEEN PROTECTED FROM THE RAIN IN SUMMER**

From this grave yard we went over the hill to the east, following the public road, till we came to a large patch of raspberries on the left of the road, which were growing in a hole surrounded by heaps of stone and brickbats. Mr. Burroughs did not tell me why his fancy led him there, but I knew when he told me that his father was born there, and that it was his grandfather's place. He was loath to leave here, but sat down on one of the old timbers in the centre of the place where the house stood and ate raspberries for some time. "How delicious these berries are! Far better it seems to me than any cultivated berries that ever grew." Having said this, he gave me a handful that I might try those he himself was gathering. From this place we went to the site of his grandfather's barn, where Mr. Burroughs discovered a few years ago his father's initials cut in a slab of stone. "These letters, 'C. A. B.' stand for Chauncey A. Burroughs, my father, born in 1803, who must have cut them here many, many years ago. I was very glad to make the discovery."

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Just as we began our journey toward the nearby woods, he pointed out to me the little red school on the edge of the opposite hillside, where he got most of his education. "That school and the grounds about it, are about as they were when I was in school there over sixty years ago. The house was painted red then as it is now, and on some of the old seats I can see where some of my

schoolmates cut their names." The call of a sharp shinned hawk attracted our attention from the school house, to the woods. Now we halted for several moments in the lower edge of the meadow. Mr. Burroughs thought they must have found some prey and that we might see what it was if we kept still and quiet. But the hawks went across the valley in the direction of the school house and we never saw what was the cause of the disturbance.

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Going south from here, we came to some beautiful woods, at the bottom of which flowed a clear cool brook. At the upper edge of the hill was an outcrop of stratified rock. This was of the greatest interest to the naturalist, who, just back from the petrified forests of Arizona and the Yosemite valley, where he had enjoyed the companionship of John Muir, was chuck full of Geology and the Geological history of the earth. "You can see the effects of water in this perfect stratification here," he would say, as he pointed out the leaves of stone so perfectly marked there in the hillside. "If we could just roll back the pages of history a few millions of years, we could read some interesting and wonderful stories of the formation of Mother Earth's crust. Just look at the wave marks of the sea along the edges of the hill! How I wonder if old Triton did not have a great task allaying the waves that folded these pages! O what a small part man plays in the history of the earth! The creature of the hour and a mere speck on the face of nature." There is a sadness and sweetness in the associations with a man like this, and I could not help but think of Wordsworth's little poem as I listened to John Burroughs tell about his idea of the earth in its relation to man, and of how little man studies Mother Earth.

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"The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This sea that bears her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be  
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."

There is kept before your mind the unquestionable seriousness of the influences of cosmic forces; the effects of an intimate relationship with Nature. Burroughs always sees the better and larger side of things. You never hear any of the nature prattle so common among the less serious students.

At this moment the red-eyed vireo burst in full song only a few feet from us and a Rubenstein would not have commanded our attention quicker. "The little fellow is doing almost the work of two," said the naturalist, so fluent was the song. He came within close range and softened down into a low mellow song, whereupon Mr. Burroughs remarked: "His audience is not quite as large as he first thought, so he is tuning his harp down accordingly." Here we came into the settlement roadway and returned to the Lodge for dinner.

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### III

In the afternoon, we set out early from Woodchuck Lodge for a long tramp through the pasture south of the Burroughs farm and in the direction of the Nath Chase farm. Back through the woods between the Lodge and the old farm, were scattered apple trees, which had some apples on them. Mr. Burroughs told something of the history of some of these apple trees, that they had been grafted many years ago by his father, and that others had been planted by the cattle as they followed the pathway through this pasture. There were signs that the gray squirrels had been eating the apples. We saw several piles of chips and a few apple seeds scattered on the wall fence, which the squirrels had chosen for a festal hall. On this wall, the naturalist would lean and look off over the hills toward the town of Roxbury, and tell of the neighbors who had settled this field and that. His mind sometimes seemed to be on,

"Far-off things,  
And battles long ago."

Suddenly he looked around and said: "It's sweet to muse over one's early years and first experiences. I was just thinking of the many times I had gone through these woods. But O, how I dislike to see these trees cut down for wood, when so many are already down and rotting. This patch of woods extended to the bottom of the hillside, when I was a boy, and I think it was much prettier then than it is now." A very interesting piece of natural history pointed out to me beyond this pasture, was the tendency of birch to trace its roots over large areas of stone almost barren of soil. It has a preference for rocky places. The root of this tree will sometimes trace a small crevice in the stone twenty or thirty feet and does not seem to reach into any soil throughout its whole length.

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At the edge of the flat grass covered hill beyond the pasture, was a perpendicular wall of several feet in height,—the outcrop of the same stratification of stone we had observed during the earlier

part of the day. A number of birch roots had reached all the way down to the bottom of this ledge and fastened themselves in the soil below. Several phoebe nests had been built on the shelves of rock along under the ledge, which the naturalist pointed out to me. Under one ledge that extended over at least twelve feet, was a phoebe's nest that Mr. Burroughs thought had been there for more than a quarter of a century. On the table of rock beneath the nest was a pile of waste ten or twelve inches in height, and there was enough material in the nest itself to build more than a dozen phoebe's nests. The place was so inaccessible to other animals, that the birds took advantage of this, and doubtless made of it hereditary property, handing it down from generation to generation since its discovery.

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Passing on down through the Scudder pasture toward the lower woods, to the south, we met a lad herding cattle for the night, and after a few words with him, we turned to the left and went up the side of a steep hill through a deep hemlock forest. This was a pretty hard climb, and I kept looking for Mr. Burroughs to stop and blow a little, but not a bit of it. He took the lead and kept up the climb without even a hint of exhaustion. In fact, I had begun to wish that he would stop and rest for a moment, when pointing up to a white wall of stone he said, "There is the Old Gray Ledge. It looks like a white house from here. This is one of the most beautiful places you will find in this part of the Catskill mountains, and O, the times I have come here for rest and study!" There is a rough broken surface of rock wall at least seventy-five feet high, all covered with moss and lichens, and almost as gray as whitewash on a stone house. In the hemlocks toward the valley from here, are hundreds of fine timber trees, and we could hear among them nut-hatches, chickadees and titmice. We spent almost an hour about this beautiful place, discussing in a friendly way, neighbors and people, great and small. Our next task was to get to the top of the Old Gray Ledge, which we did by going a little distance south and picking the place that showed the least resistance. The woods on the top of the Ledge were level and consisted of much shrubbery and some large hardwood trees and a few hemlocks and pines. We soon came out of the woods to the west and entered a pasture on the Nath Chase farm, from which we could see across the beautiful valley to the south and many mountain peaks, among which were a few that Mr. Burroughs said he could see from the top of a mountain by Slabsides, down at West Park. This was the connecting link between the old and the new home.

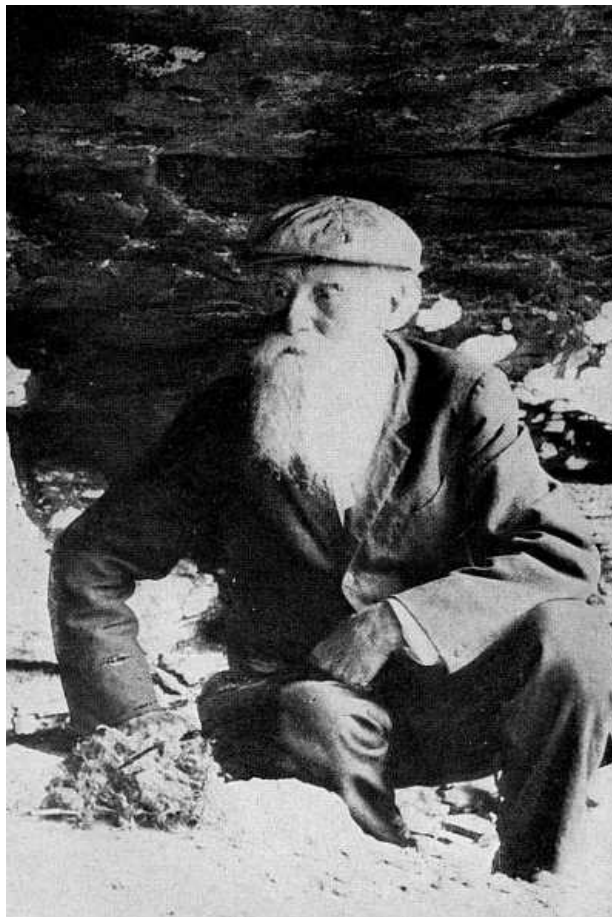
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Turning around, we could see to the north across the valley, in which was the Burroughs farm and the Old Clump beyond. There was a swift breeze from the northeast and the air was quite cool for the early part of August. But after our climb up The Old Gray Ledge, it was quite wholesome and renewed our strength. The pure swift mountain breeze fitted well with my own feelings, for I had begun to feel the effects of a steady pull up the hill and needed oxygen and ozone. But best of all, I had enjoyed the day with the man who brought the pleasures of the woods and the mountains to me, and I felt that I had been blest. I had felt the sympathies and love of a strong poetic pulse. I had a glimpse of something that,

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"Made the wild blood start  
In its mystic springs,"

and I wondered if we have any greater heights to look forward to! I wondered if we should ever find in the trackless paths of eternity a joy that would eclipse this! I thought I had learned "that a good man's life is the fruit of the same balance and proportion as that which makes the fields green and the corn ripen. It is not by some fortuitous circumstances, the especial favor of some god, but by living in harmony with immutable laws through which the organic world has evolved, that he is what he is." We reached the Lodge just as the sun was going down, and soon the evening meal was over. I went back across the hill to the old home for the night, and as I passed down the road way, I called to mind many things that had interested me during the day. After I had retired for the night and sleep had been induced, the joys, the pleasures, the happiness of the day, haunted me in my dreams, and I knew that I had 'staid my haste and made delays, and what was mine had known my face.'



**A CATSKILL MOUNTAIN SIDE WHERE THE PHOEBE BUILDS**

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## **THE OLD CLUMP**

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It is Sunday morning, and the mists are beginning to roll away and the summer sun of August just beginning to smile once more upon a world of beauty and of love, after the ugly days during the latter part of the week. The cattle are lowing to the north and to the south, and the shadows of the clouds are floating o'er the meadows less swiftly. The mountain peaks are clearing up after their cloud-baths. When I reached the Lodge in the early morning, I found John Burroughs preparing breakfast, and I brought the water and the wood and stirred the malted wheat while he prepared some other foods.

After the meal was over, I read the papers and walked around in neighboring meadows, while Mr. Burroughs went down to the home farm for a pail of milk. The flickers were playing in the corner of the pasture to the south, and the goldfinches seemed to be feeding their young in the large apple trees across the road, but I never found a nest. To the west I saw an indigo bird flitting about some shrubbery by the stone fence, which attracted me that way. I thought perhaps something had disturbed the birds' nest, but I looked in vain for some vindication of my suspicion.

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By this time, Mr. Burroughs had returned and all were ready to begin our climb to the summit of the Old Clump, the mountain most beloved of all by the naturalist, and the one about which he speaks oftenest. His father's farm extends far up the southeast side of this mountain and, of course, he played on and about it when he was a young boy. The face of this mountain doubtless made inroads on his character, and stimulated him to a love of nature. For on the summit of it, he sits or rolls and dreams of former—and he almost thinks better—days.

Here on the summit of this mountain is where Mr. Burroughs wrote, "Mid-summer in the Catskills," August, 1905, which is possibly the best poem he ever wrote, with the exception "Waiting." Just as we had left the Lodge, we came to a tree under which was a large boulder. The naturalist mounted this boulder and sat for a moment sighing: "How many times, I have played upon this rock when I was a boy. I remember mother used to look this way when she did not find us about the house." Below this boulder, two of the small boys in the party found a vesper sparrow's nest, in which we all became interested, but in order to get back to dinner we must be



away and up the mountain. To go straight up the side of the Clump would have been a hard climb, so we went angling across toward the east, and after passing the boys' sleeping place in the trees, we turned back to the north and west, following the old pathway that leads from the Burroughs farm to the mountain top. Not far had we followed this path before we came to a spring flowing with cool, clear water, and nestled in the side of the mountain. Here we all quenched our thirst, Mr. Burroughs taking the lead. "Many times have I quenched my thirst here at this spring," he said. "The Naiads have welcomed me here for more than sixty years, and still they guard this sacred fountain for me. Narcissus meets me here every summer with refreshing beauty after my hard pull up the mountain. I still join the great god Pan in making love to the wood nymphs hereabouts. O, there are so many ways of getting happiness in these places." Imagine how delightful it was to hear the voice of John Burroughs as he told these stories of his love for these his native scenes! There was every indication that he was experiencing much happiness as he recalled his first walks up the mountain and of his first sight of that spring.

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The mountain woods were beautifully decked with flowers everywhere, the *antennaria* perhaps taking the lead so far as numbers go. This was particularly plentiful about the top of the mountain. Soon we were on the highest peak from which we could see the many neighboring peaks in all directions, and the blue folds of the ridges, layer upon layer for many miles to the south and east. What a fine view-point! The exhilaration of the mountain air, how much it means after a long hard climb! Down in the valley are markings of the farms with the long straight stone fences, so delicate and so finely drawn! The panoramic view of the valleys present the colorings and fine markings of maps on the pages of a book, but much more beautiful, and in these parts more perfect. The liquid depths of air and long vistas are a feast to the eyes.

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I was anxious to know where Mr. Burroughs was nestled on this lofty peak when he wrote the poem of which mention has been made, and asked him to point out the place when we reached it. "It is over near the northeast edge of the summit, and we shall soon be there." As we pushed our way between two large boulders where, Mr. Burroughs told us it had long been the custom for young men to kiss their girls as they helped them through there, and of the many he, himself, had kissed there, we came to a large open grassy spot. Here the naturalist sat down and rolled over in the grass, indicating that he had at last reached home. About twenty paces off toward the eastern edge of the mountain top, was a large flat rock, almost as level as a table top, just beneath which was a fine growth of large trees, the tops of which were a little above the table of stone. "Here," he said, "is where I began writing 'Midsummer in the Catskills'."

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The poem begins as follows:

"The strident hum of sickle bar,  
Like giant insect heard afar,  
Is on the air again;  
I see the mower where he rides  
Above the level grassy tides  
That flood the meadow plain."

"I remember," he says, "on that day I saw, in the field toward the Betsy Bouton place, the cradlers walking through the fields of grain, and it made a deep impression on me."

"The cradlers twain with right good will,  
Leave golden lines across the hill,  
Beneath the mid-day sun.  
The cattle dream 'neath leafy tent  
Or chew the cud of sweet content  
Knee-deep in pond or run."

We could see the cattle in the nether pasture on the old Burroughs' home place, and my mind was full of the above lines which I had committed to memory when they were first printed.

"The dome of day o'erbrims with sound  
From humming wings on errands bound  
Above the sleeping fields."

What a picture of bees in the upper air freighting honey from field to hive and storing it away for the winter supply! The two following stanzas perhaps interpret the beauty of the situation better than any other part of the poem:

"Poised and full is summer's tide  
Brimming all the horizon wide,  
In varied verdure dressed;  
Its viewless currents surge and beat  
In airy billows at my feet  
Here on the mountain crest.

"Through pearly depths I see the farms,  
Where sweating forms and bronzed arms  
Reap in the land's increase;  
In ripe repose the forests stand  
And veiled heights on every hand

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The truth of these lines lay out before us. There lay the grain in the fields where the cradlers had reaped in the land's increase. There stood the veiled heights on every side which John Burroughs named beginning on the right: Table mountain, Slide mountain, Double Top mountain and Graham. From the front of Woodchuck Lodge he had already named for us Bald Mountain, Hack's Flats, Schutle's and the one we were now on. Truly they were all veiled heights as we viewed them from the summit of the Old Clump.

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As I loitered about among the boulders on the mountain I became much interested in the names cut in the large boulders of people who had lived in the Burroughs community, and seeing that Mr. Burroughs himself was also interested in them, I began to ask him about them, and I copied many of them in my note book. Nothing pleased the Naturalist better than to tell of the people who used to be his neighbors, and I think he remembered them all. As we looked out again across the valley, his eyes got a glimpse of the old Betsy Bouton place, and he recalled that she was a widow who had one daughter and two sons. "These were the laziest human beings I ever saw,—these boys. They would sit up by the fire and mumble, while the mother brought in the wood and the water, and cooked the meals, and the daughter would do the milking. Nothing could the mother get out of them, but to sit around the open fire and grumble at their hard lot, and that they had so much to do. She used to have a hard time getting them up and ready for school."

From here we could see the vicinity of the little red school house where John Burroughs had gone to school sixty years before, and he told of his experience with Jay Gould. Jay paid him for writing an essay, and he paid Jay eighty cents for a grammar and an algebra. "These were my first grammar and algebra, and I paid for them with the money I had earned selling sugar from my individual boiling pan in the sugar bush. I shall tell you about it and show you where I boiled the sugar, as we go down that way."

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**UNDER THE OLD GRAY LEDGE**

He enjoyed telling of one certain student—a schoolmate of his who had long curly hair. "His hair was as curly as you ever saw and turned under at the bottom. O, how I longed to have my hair look like his did! I thought it was the prettiest hair I ever saw grow."

Our descent from the mountain top was easy. We followed the path to the right coming down, and the decline was a little more gradual. The upper Burroughs pasture extended almost half-way up the mountain side. It was separated from the lower pasture by a stone wall. I never saw so many stones and small boulders in one place as I saw in this lower pasture. The ground was

almost covered. There was certainly a much larger crop of these than of grass. Here I thought Deucalion and Pyrrha must have failed to convert stones into people, but continued throwing, even to the tiring of Jupiter's patience. Rolling them down the long steep hill afforded some fine sport for us. Mr. Burroughs told of a very interesting incident in his early life. "I remember," he said, "when I was a young chap I used to roll stones down this hill very often. One day I got a large, round boulder high up the mountain side and turned it loose with a good push. Those bars down there had just been finished by father and had cost him considerable work and worry. The stone was heavy and was almost a disc, and had gathered considerable momentum as it neared the base of the hill, and ran directly into the bars and literally knocked them to pieces. Perhaps I could not have remembered the incident so well if this had been all, but as a further reminder, father gave me a pretty severe lashing. I remember how out of patience he was at my carelessness."

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Passing through these bars we went through the sugar maple bush, that had longer than he could remember, supplied the family with syrup and sugar. The old vat and the furnace were there and the shell of a house to ward off the cold winds of April,

"While smoking Dick doth boil the sap."

I was thinking of *Spring Gladness*, and *The Coming of Phoebe*,

"When buckets shine 'gainst maple trees  
And drop by drop the sap doth flow,  
When days are warm, but nights do freeze,  
And deep in woods lie drifts of snow,  
When cattle low and fret in stall,  
Then morning brings the phoebe's call,  
'Phoebe, Phoebe, Phoebe'."

As we came down to the roadway that leads from the old farm to Woodchuck Lodge, Mr. Burroughs pointed out to us a junco's nest just outside the road. This nest had afforded him much pleasure during his present stay up at Roxbury, as he saw it two or four times a day, as he passed by on his way to his brother's home for milk. On the crest of the hill between the two houses—the old home and Woodchuck Lodge—I stopped and looked for several moments at the place of the naturalist's birth, and at the farm, with all the beautiful meadows and pastures, for I knew that I would not see them again soon. When it was told me that all these meadows and woods and stone walls, look now as they did sixty and more years ago, I could understand how a country lad, born and reared among such scenes, could grow into a great naturalist. I could now enjoy and understand some of the qualities of his literary productions. The country was a new one to me and altogether unlike any I had seen, but having tasted of it through the medium of good literature, I was prepared to make the best of my opportunity to study it. What particularly impressed me, and what was so different from the scenes of my childhood, was the buckwheat fields dotting the meadows here and yonder, and the long straight stone fences marking the meadows and hillsides. "These walls were built by a generation of men that had ginger," Mr. Burroughs said, "a quality so much lacking these days."

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No words could express the happiness that had come to me during the week that I was rambling through the Catskills. While going down through the meadow in front of Woodchuck Lodge, on my way to the railroad station, I seemed to be flooded with memories of a happy experience. These memories still haunt me and may they continue to do so even unto the end of time. I had learned better than I ever knew, that "this brown, sun-tanned, sin-stained earth is a sister to the morning and the evening star," and that it has more of beauty and love written on it than has ever been read by all the poets in the distant ages past; that there are still left volumes for the interpreter. I had taken a little journey in the divine ship as it sailed over the divine sea. I had heard one talk of the moral of the solar system,—of its harmony, its balance, its compensation, and I thought that there is no deeper lesson to be learned.

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## JOHN BURROUGHS AS POET

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A few years ago Herr Brandes, the great French critic, in commenting upon the method of criticism used by Saint Beuve, sounded a pretty harsh note to the old school of critics, on method and material in poetry, which in a measure explains what I am about to say of the poetry of John Burroughs. "At the beginning of the century," he says, "imagination was considered the essential quality in poetry. It was his capacity of invention which made the poet a poet; he was not tied down to nature and reality, but was as much at home in the supernatural as in the actual world. But as romanticism, by degrees, developed into realism, creative literature, by degrees, gave up its fantastic excursions into space.... It exerted itself even more to understand than to invent."

An observer cannot fail to see in modern poetry a tendency to beautify objects of nature, and facts of science. Past ages were taken up with the heroic, the legendary in poetry. Legends were creations of the mind and in turn subjects for all poetic effort. Some moral and spiritual lesson or truth, must be taught by the introduction of ideals drawn purely from imagination. Such an ideal was many times created for the special lesson at hand. The Homeric poems, Virgil's Aeneid, Dante's Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost, are all poems of this character. They are founded on the unknown and the unknowable, yet they bring to us suggestions that inspire us and make us better for having read them. Milton never knew how Paradise was lost, nor even that it ever was lost. Dante did not know the history of the departed soul, nor did Homer and Virgil know what part the gods and heroes played in the fall of the city of Troy, nor has the riddle of the origin of the Latin and Greek races ever been written. Yet such themes give us pleasure when they come from the great poets, who actually believed what they were writing to be true, and the poems themselves will live forever.

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We have reached a new order of things in the present era of the world's history, and we must look to something else for poetic inspiration, as well as to interpret the origin of things in the light of the last word on evolution. The minor poets have about worn these old themes threadbare, and the public mind is beginning to look to something else for entertainment. People are now seeking the poetic interpretation of facts of science and of nature, and the poet of the future will have the peculiar task of giving us new eyes with which to see truth, instead of leading us into fields of fancy.

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John Burroughs is an interpreter of this latter kind. He has gone to nature with the poet's eye, and has needed no fiction to get us interested in what he is trying to tell us. The facts need only to be seen with the poet's eyes to make them beautiful, and he has translated them in terms of the human soul, without having to create beings of fancy to interest us while he tells the message. This is what differentiates his prose and poetry from the poetry of the past. It is true, he ranges from the commonplace to the sublime, but in it all with unfaltering devotion to truth, which should be the aim of every poet and is the aim of every true poet, despite the claims of some that literature is only to entertain, and should never be taken seriously. If it is not serious, it is not literature, and if it is serious, it will always have, as its entering wedge, some fundamental truth. The whole aim of Burroughs is to lead humanity into the proper method of interpreting the truths of nature, and if all his poetry is not the best, he has sacrificed poetry rather than truth and owns up to it like a man. He says: "My poetry is not the free channel of myself that my prose is. I, myself, do not think that my poetry takes rank with my prose." His best poetry takes rank with his or any body's prose. Replying to some questions with reference to *Mid-summer in the Catskills*, Mr. Burroughs says: "It was an attempt to paint faithfully, characteristic mid-summer scenes of that locality. I do not think it ranks high as poetry, but it is true. The genesis of such a poem, or of any poem, is hidden in the author's subconsciousness." Perched on a mountain top that overlooked the beautiful valleys amid the Catskill mountains, and seeing the many activities of farm life in August, Mr. Burroughs saw the beauty and simplicity of the situation, and could not forego his duty of telling it to the world.

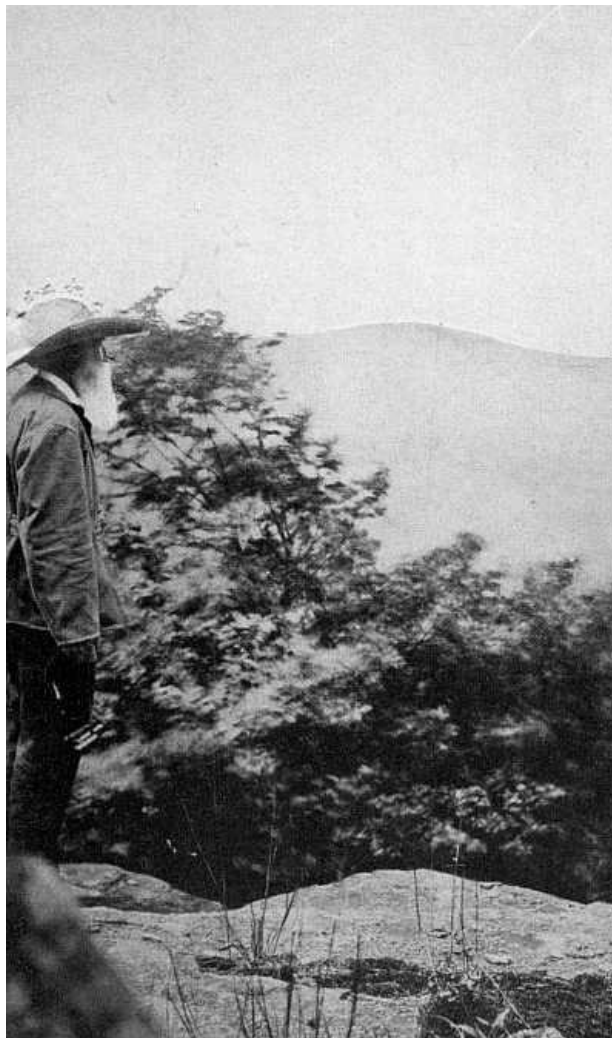
[96]

"The strident hum of sickle-bar,  
Like giant insect heard afar,  
Is on the air again;  
I see the mower where he rides  
Above the level grassy tides  
That flood the meadow plain."

From beginning to end the poem paints the rural life amid the Catskills in its busiest season, and associates with it all the best in Nature. It is literally a poet's vision of his own country, after many years absence from the fields he paints. How many times he himself has gone.

"Above the level grassy tides,  
That flood the meadow plain,"

but perhaps without seeing the beauty that the scene now brings to him.



**ON THE SUMMIT OF THE OLD CLUMP, LOOKING IN THE VALLEY BELOW "WHERE SWEATING FORMS AND BRONZED ARMS REAP IN THE LAND'S INCREASE"**

Far different from this is his first poetry, which is the expression of a youth groping in the dark for some unknown god, with his only guide that of faith in the world, faith in himself and faith in his fellowman. He says of his early poem: "Waiting was written in 1862, during a rather gloomy and doubtful period of my life. I was poor, was in doubt as to my career, did not seem to be able to get hold of myself, nor to bring myself to bear upon the problems before me. Yet underneath all was this abiding faith that I should get what belonged to me; that sooner or later I should find my own. The poem was first printed in the old Knickerbocker Magazine of New York, in the fall of 1862. I received nothing for it. I builded better than I knew. It has proved a true prophesy of my life."

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"Serene I fold my hands and wait,  
Nor care for wind, nor tide, nor sea;  
I rave no more 'gainst Time or Fate,  
For lo! my own shall come to me.

"I stay my haste, I make delays,  
For what avails this eager pace?  
I stand amid the eternal ways,  
And what is mine shall know my face.

"Asleep, awake, by night or day,  
The friends I seek are seeking me;  
No wind can drive my bark astray,  
Nor change the tide of destiny.

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"What matter if I stand alone?  
I wait with joy the coming years;  
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,  
And garner up its fruits of tears.

"The waters know their own, and draw  
The brook that springs in yonder heights;  
So flows the good with equal law  
Unto the soul of pure delights.

"The stars come nightly to the sky;  
The tidal wave unto the sea;  
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,  
Can keep my own away from me."

It is this willingness to wait the results of his efforts without fretting or worrying, to which Mr. Burroughs owes his success. This I think, is what has toned and sweetened his prose and poetry, and makes him so readable. He looks for truth and finds it, and lets it ripen into expression in his mind, and we get the good after the smelting process has completed its work, and the dross all worked off. The above poem has been a true prophesy of his life. His own has come to him, and he is now experiencing the richest reward for his long years of waiting and patience. If too much success comes to us in the beginning of any career, the career is most likely to suffer, or possibly better, we are likely to develop a little vain glory and never return to the proper attitude to truth and service. Mr. Burroughs in his plain simple way has been 'still achieving, still pursuing,' and has long since learned 'to labor and to wait.' His attitude toward his work is almost as pleasant as the work itself. Never in a hurry—though he always manages to get much done. The melancholy days have been 'few and far between' with him, though we do see some few sad but wholesome lines in his poetry. These almost sound like some homesick visitor in a foreign land. The following from the poem, "In Blooming Orchards," is a good illustration of this:

"My thoughts go homeward with the bees;  
I dream of youth and happier days—  
Of orchards where amid the trees  
I loitered free from time's decrees,  
And loved the birds and learned their ways.

"Oh, orchard thoughts and orchard sighs,  
Ye, too, are born of life's regrets!  
The apple bloom I see with eyes  
That have grown sad in growing wise,  
Through Mays that manhood ne'er forgets."

"The Return" is another of his poems in which this longing for the days of his youth crops out:

"O sad, sad hills! O cold, cold hearth!  
In sorrow he learned this truth—  
One may go back to the place of his birth,  
He cannot go back to his youth."

Again in "Snow Birds" he says:

"Thy voice brings back dear boyhood days  
When we were gay together."

His contact with out-door life and his habits of observation are unmistakably those of a poet. "In the rugged trail through the woods or along the beach we shall now and then get a whiff of natural air, or a glimpse of something to

"Make the wild blood start  
In its mystic springs."

Burroughs says himself, 'the very idea of a bird is a symbol and a suggestion to the poet. How many suggestions to the poet in their flight and song! Indeed, is not the bird the original type and teacher of the poet, and do we not demand of the human thrush or lark that he shake out his carols in the same free manner as his winged prototype?... The best lyric pieces, how like they are to certain bird-songs!—clear, ringing, ecstatic, and suggesting that challenge and triumph which the outpouring of the male bird contains.' Again he says 'Keats and Shelly have pre-eminently the sharp semi-tones of the sparrows and larks.'

But what shall we say of Burroughs? His poetry is somewhat matter-of-fact, like the songs of the Indigo bunting and the Thrushes, and we cannot help but feel that the songs of these birds had the effect on him that Burns speaks of in one of his letters: "I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild, mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of the soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry." Verily he has achieved his purpose. 'He has brought home the bough with the bird he heard singing upon it. His verse is full of the spirit of the woods and fields; the winds of heaven blow through it; there is the rustle of leaves, the glint of sunlight; the voices of the feathered folk are present. One finds himself in touch with out-doors in every line.' O, what a blessing when one can drink from the great fountain of Nature! When one can be so inured with the larger and more wholesome truths of the universe that he forgets to fret and to make records of the negative forces of the world! This we claim is pre-eminently true of Burroughs. He tells truths about Nature in his simple, musical verse, and almost vindicates Wordsworth's definition of poetry: "The breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," or "The impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science." I would almost say of him what Dryden said of Chaucer: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." Perhaps Mr. Dowden, in speaking of Coleridge's poetry, comes nearer than any one else to the truth about Burroughs' poetry. "These poems contemplate and describe Nature in a resting and meditative temper. There is no passionate feeling in their

delight. The joy he has in the beauty of the world is the joy of dreaming, often only a recollected joy in what he has seen. He found in poetry, paths of his imagination. The pensiveness, the dying fall, the self-loving melancholy, are harmonized by him with Nature." Thoreau says in one of his books: "Very few men can speak of Nature with any truth. They overstep her modesty somehow or other, and confer no favor." The richest flavor in the poetry of John Burroughs is the flavor of truth, and 'beauty is truth, truth beauty.' Unlike Thoreau, he never forgets his fellowmen, nor has he ever failed to find beauty in man as well as in Nature.

"He sees the mower where he rides  
Above the level grassy tides  
That flood the meadow plain,"

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and writes a poem. He dislikes the conventional in man no less than he dislikes the conventional in poetry, but man unaffected is as beautiful as the Nature that surrounds him.

A few years ago when Mr. E. H. Harriman took a number of friends to Alaska on what was known as The Harriman Alaska Expedition, John Burroughs was selected as a purely literary man to write a narrative of the Expedition. In addition to the story of the trip, Mr. Burroughs was so inspired with the new scenery of those Borean Hills that the muse seized him and the result was three of his best poems: *To the Oregon Robin*, *To the Golden Crown Sparrow of Alaska*, and *To the Lapland Longspur*. Since that trip in 1899, he has written no verse, I believe, except *The Return*. Before then he was an irregular contributor of poetry to the current magazines since the appearance of *Waiting*, in 1862. He says now that he does not seem to be in a mood for poetry, but that he may find his muse again some day. The total number of his poems in print amounts to only thirty-five and none of them are lengthy. The longest of all is his very life which is to me one continuous poem. His verses are only sparks from the life in which they grew, and never rise to the height of the fountain head.

Perhaps one way to test a poet is to measure him by the number of single line poems that can be found in his poetry; lines that make the real poem of a number of verses. Pope thought that a long poem was a contradiction of terms, and we certainly know many references in the poets to suggestive lines that are almost poems in themselves. Wordsworth's *Solitary Reaper* contains one or two passages of this kind.

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"Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago."

or the following from the *Ode*:

"Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal Silence."

Another of his most exquisite lines is,

"And the stars move along the edges of the hills."

Walter Pater finds in Wordsworth's poetry an extraordinary number of these short passage poems, which he called 'delicious morsels.' Coleridge says of Wordsworth: "Since Milton, I know of no poet with so many felicitous and unforgettable lines." Many critics have found these suggestive lines in the poets, and I find Wordsworth full of them. The lines of this kind that I find in the poetry of John Burroughs are rather numerous for the amount of poetry he gave to the world, and some of them are as fine as the language has.

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"Like mellow thunder leagues away,"

"I hear the wild bee's mellow chord,  
In airs that swim above,"

"Once more the tranquil days brood o'er the hills,  
And sooth earth's toiling breast,"

"The dome of day o'erbrims with sound  
From humming wings on errands bound,"

"Pausing in the twilight dim,  
Hear him lift his evening hymn,"

"Again from out the garden hives  
The exodus of frenzied bees;  
The humming cyclone onward drives,  
Or finds repose amid the trees."

"Then waiting long hath recompense,  
And all the world is glad with May."

"Oh, skater in the fields of air," he says of the swallow. How well this expresses the flight of the swallow!

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"The robin perched on treetop tall  
Heavenward lifts his evening call."

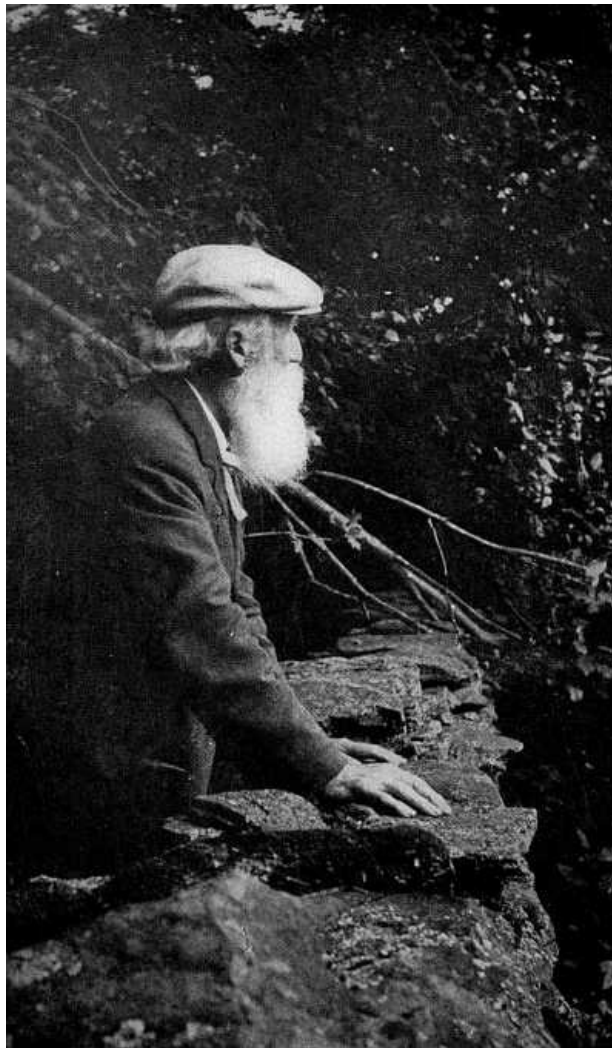
"Forth from the hive go voyaging bees,  
Cruising far each sunny hour."

There are many passages of this kind in his poems and they express the moods of Nature, perhaps as well as it is possible for them to be put in words. In *Arbutus Days*, he uses the following figure to paint a spring day:

"Like mother bird upon her nest  
The day broods o'er the earth."

To him the common things are all beautiful and if we only have the eyes to see with, they are made beautiful for us by him. Recognizing the fate of every insincere book, he declares: "Only an honest book can live; only absolute sincerity can stand the test of time. Any selfish or secondary motive vitiates a work of art, as it vitiates a religious life. Indeed, I doubt if we fully appreciate the literary value of staple, fundamental human virtues and qualities—probity, directness, simplicity, sincerity, love." He is probably not an inspired poet, but I shall claim for him that he is an honest singer, a sincere interpreter of Nature, and every virtue referred to in the above quotation he has woven into *Bird and Bough*. What he says of another we can appropriately say of him: "This poet sees the earth as one of the orbs, and has sought to adjust his imagination to the modern problems and conditions, always taking care, however, to preserve an outlook into the highest regions."

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**LOOKING ACROSS THE PASTURE WALL IN THE DIRECTION OF THE NATHAN CHASE FARM**



A certain publisher, who honored very much Walt Whitman, could have paid him no higher tribute than to have closed the preface to Whitman's Poems as follows: "To have met Whitman was a privilege, to have been his friend was an honor. The latter was mine; and among the many reminiscences of my life, none are to me more pleasing than those which gather about the name of 'The Good Grey Poet'."

John Burroughs was for thirty years the intimate friend and constant associate of Walt Whitman, and I have heard him say that those were among the most pleasant years of his life. All who ever knew Whitman, and became in any way intimate with him, have practically the same to say of him. No writer ever unfolded himself and his greatness more completely than Whitman, and yet we have a great many excellent critics who are pretty harsh on him. This we believe is so, because the critics have not read the poet aright. They have failed to get out of the poems what was put in them. Whitman is not a poet according to classical standards, but as a "Creator" he is. [109]

Emerson says of his poetry: "I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." Julian Hawthorne says of it: "Original and forceful, Whitman cannot be judged by ordinary literary standards. His scornful trampling upon all metrical rules, and his freedom in treating of matters, usually passed in silence, have so far been a decided barrier to the approval of his work."

Professor Underwood of the California University has the following good word for the poet: "Pupils who are accustomed to associate the idea of poetry with regular classic measure in rhyme, or in ten-syllabled blank verse or elastic hexameter, will commence these short and simple prose sentences with surprise, and will wonder how any number of them can form a poem. But let them read aloud with a mind in sympathy with the picture as it is displayed, and they will find by Nature's unmistakable response, that the author is a poet, and possesses the poets' incommunicable power to touch the heart."

Professor Pattee of the Pennsylvania State College, on the other hand says: "It is certainly true that to the majority of readers, 'Leaves of Grass', contains a few good things amid a disgusting mass of rubbish.

"Whitman is confessedly the poet of the body. His book is not upward. He grovels in the earthly and disgusting parts of human life and experience. His egotism is remarkable. [110]

"All the great poets have looked away from their disgusting surroundings and fleshly fetters, into a world of their creation that was bright and ethereal, but Whitman cries: 'I am satisfied with the perishable and the casual.' This alone would debar him from the company of the great masters of song."

Professor Newcomer of Stanford University, divides honors by offending and defending:

First: "It deliberately violates the rules of art, and unless we admit that our rules are idle, we must admit Whitman's defects."

Second: "It is diffuse, prolix."

Third: "This is perhaps the most that can be charged—he was needlessly gross."

Fourth: "The innovations in his vocabulary are inexcusable."

In the following, he as faithfully defends the poet.

First: Of the charged egotism: "It was not to parade himself as an exceptional being, but rather as an average man to hold the mirror up to other men and declare his kinship with them."

Second: "Taking Whitman simply at his own valuation we get much. The joys of free fellowship, the love of comrades, none has sung more heartily or worthily. And his courage and optimism are as deep as Emerson's."

Third: "He became the truest laureate of the war, and of Lincoln the idol of the people." [111]

Fourth: "Comerado this is no book. Who touches this touches a man! As such, therefore, the book must go down to posterity, not a perfect song, but a cry vibrant still with the feeling of the man who uttered it."

Professor Newcomer closes his estimate by the declaration that Whitman stands for the American people, but not in the sense that Washington or Lincoln or Lowell does, and that his office was somewhat like one who stands by and cheers while the procession goes by. He thinks that Whitman did not sit in the seats of the mighty.

Charles W. Hubner is much more charitable and in fact just, with our poet of the body. He says: "Proclaiming the sanctity of manhood and womanhood, the power and eminence of God within us and without us; the divine relationship of body and soul; the eternalness of spirit and matter, he aims to teach us that all of these are manifestations of the Almighty spirit, present within and without all things, and out of whom all created things have come." How far this critic removes Whitman from the class of those who stood by and cheered while the procession moved on! Hubner makes him a *real teacher* and revealer of divine laws and eternal truth.

Joel Chandler Harris has also given a vivid picture and a most wholesome interpretation of Whitman: "In order to appreciate Whitman's poetry and his purpose, it is necessary to possess the intuition that enables the mind to grasp in instant and express admiration, the vast group of [112]

facts that make man—that make liberty—that make America. There is no poetry in the details; it is all in the broad, sweeping, comprehensive assimilation of the mighty forces behind them—the inevitable, unaccountable, irresistible forward movement of man in the making of the republic." These estimates pro and con could be multiplied indefinitely.

How much more beautiful it is to face this new force in American poetry and deal with it justly, than to stand off and bark like some of our lesser critics have done and are doing! A recent comment upon Whitman says he has come to stay, and we must make up our minds to study him and to dispose of him by getting in sympathy with him, rather than by decrying him. This seems the just way, and the only safe way to deal with any great original force in literature.

John Burroughs has undoubtedly interpreted Whitman better than any other critic, and unquestionably owes Whitman more than any one else. He has found in the poet what so many others have found in Burroughs. "Whitman does not to me suggest the wild and unkempt, as he seems to do to many; he suggests the cosmic and the elemental.... He cherished the hope that he had put into his 'Leaves', some of the tonic and fortifying quality of Nature in her more grand and primitive aspects." From Whitman, I am constrained to believe, Burroughs has drawn much of his primitive strength as a writer. Whitman opened the book of Nature to him, and led him into a certain wilderness of beauty. At twenty, Burroughs began to read Whitman's poems, and says of them: "I was attracted by the new poet's work from the first. It seemed to let me into a larger, freer air than I found in the current poetry.... Not a poet of dells and fells, but of the earth and the orbs." He knew that he had found in Whitman a very strong and imposing figure, but he was doubly reassured when he came upon the statement from the English critic, John Addington Symonds, that Whitman had influenced him more than any other book except the Bible,—more than Plato, more than Goethe.

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#### **THE PILE OF STONES MARKING THE SITE OF THOREAU'S CABIN, BY WALDEN POND**

It was about the year 1858, when Burroughs first began reading Whitman and five years after that, in 1863, when Burroughs moved to Washington, the two men began to cultivate each other and were frequent companions till Whitman moved to Camden in 1873.

The friendship of the two men became so beautiful and grew so sacred, till Mr. Burroughs visited him every year in Camden, from 1873 till 1891, when he saw the poet for the last time. Whitman also visited Mr. Burroughs, who had gone back up the Hudson in 1873, and built his home at West Park, New York.

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The peculiar mountain wilderness around Slabsides induced the Naturalist to name the woods about his home, Whitman Land, and now you will hear him speak of the border of "Whitman Land," when he approaches Slabsides. I have sometimes thought that Whitman's influence on

him, more than Thoreau's, induced him to retreat to the woods and build Slabsides, where he could "follow out these lessons of the earth and air." So much of this elemental power or force has he seen in Whitman, that he honestly, and probably justly, thinks him "the strongest poetic pulse that has yet beat in America, or perhaps in Modern times." A study of the poet is to him an application of the laws of Nature to higher matters, and he pleads guilty to a "loving interest in Whitman and his work, which may indeed amount to one-sided enthusiasm." But this is honest, real, and not affected.

After a long study of the art of poetry and the artists, together with a thorough appreciation of form and beauty in all art, Burroughs declares there is once in a great while "born to a race or people, men who are like an eruption of life from another world, who belong to another order, who bring other standards, and sow the seeds of new and larger types; who are not the organs of the culture or modes of their time and whom their times for the most part decry and disown—the primal, original, elemental men. It is here in my opinion that we must place Whitman; not among the minstrels and edifiers of his age, but among its prophets and saviors. He is nearer the sources of things than the popular poets—nearer the founder and discoverer, closer akin to the large, fervent, prophetic, patriarchal men, who figure in the early heroic ages. His work ranks with the great primitive books. He is of the type of the skald, the bard, the seer, the prophet." In another place, Burroughs thinks that one can better read Whitman after reading the Greeks, than after reading our finer artists, and I have found this true.

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We cannot wonder that he finds Whitman "the one mountain in our literary landscape," though, as he appropriately says there are many beautiful hills. Tall and large, he grew more beautiful in his declining years, and "the full beauty of his face and head did not appear till he was past sixty." However he was dressed, and wherever he was, one could not fail to be impressed "with the clean, fresh quality of the man." To me, his poems have this same clean, fresh quality, and I never read one of them that I don't feel far more satisfied with my lot.

Whitman says: "I do not call one greater and one smaller. That which fills its place is equal to any." To him, as to any prophet of the soul, greatness is filling one's place, and the poor get as much consolation out of this almost, as they do from Christ's beatitude: "Blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the earth." To make a world, it takes many kinds of individuals, and Whitman did not rank them severally according to money, culture and social position. If a man filled his place, he was equal to any one else, for that is the whole duty of man.

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He did not grovel in the earthly and disgusting, as one of our "artistic" critics has said above. He alluded to many things that the over-nice could call disgusting, but he saw and painted only the beautiful in it all. For an instance that happens to come to my mind, he alludes to the battle of Alamo, but overlooks the military display, the common part of the slaughter. This may be found in any battle, and why Alamo and Goliad, if only to picture an army! Certainly there were more imposing dress parades than that. But after Fannin had surrendered and had accepted honorable terms that were offered by the Mexican General Urrea, Santa Anna orders the entire body of United States Soldiers executed, and on that bright and beautiful sunshiny Palm Sunday, they were marched out upon the neighboring prairie and shot down in cold blood, and their bodies committed to the flames! Such a horrible picture has not been recorded elsewhere in the history of this republic. What then does Whitman say?

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"Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young  
men.  
Retreating, they formed in a hollow square, with their baggage for  
breastworks;  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times their number  
was the price they took in advance;  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone;  
They treated for an honorable capitulation, received writing and seal, gave up  
their arms, and marched back prisoners of war.  
They were the glory of the race of rangers;  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.  
The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads and  
massacred—it was beautiful early summer;  
The work commenced about five o'clock, and was over by eight.

None obeyed the command to kneel;  
Some made a mad and helpless rush—some stood stark and straight;  
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart—the living and dead lay  
together;  
The maimed and mangled dug in the dirt—the newcomers saw them there;  
Some, half-killed, attempted to crawl away;  
These were despatched with bayonets, or battered with the blunts of muskets;  
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came to  
release him;  
The three were all torn, and covered with the boy's blood.

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At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies:

That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men."

After reading this picture of the horrible battle or slaughter at Goliad, who wonders that the battle cry at San Jacinto was, "Remember the Alamo!" or "Remember Goliad!" And still less do we wonder that the Mexicans, while scattered after the battle could be heard on all sides, "Me no Alamo!" "Me no Goliad!" Our poet has given the best picture we shall ever get of the Alamo and Goliad. The burden of his big, warm heart was to portray in vivid colors, the tragedy of the four hundred and twelve young men, and how manly they suffered.

John Burroughs has observed from the notes of Mr. Charles W. Eldridge, that Emerson was not only an admirer of Whitman, but that every year from 1855 to 1860, he sought Whitman in his Brooklyn home. The two men were together much, but Walt never sought Emerson. When he was invited by Emerson to Concord, he refused to go, perhaps because he feared that he would see too much of that "literary coterie that then clustered there, chiefly around Emerson."

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Burroughs is also responsible for the suggestion that Whitman burst into full glory at one bound, and his work from the first line is Mature. At the age of thirty-five, a great change came over the man and his habits were different thereafter. His first poem, "Starting from Paumanook," outlines his work, observes Burroughs, and he fulfills every promise made.

"I conned old times;  
I sat studying at the feet of the great Masters,  
Now, if eligible, O that the great Masters might return and study me!

The Soul:  
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—longer than water  
ebbs and flows.  
I will mate the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual  
poems—  
And I will mate the poems of my body and mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my Soul, and of  
immortality."

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And so he did. As perfect as the last or any part of his work is the first. But the poet is true to himself and to the great undertaking.

In what particular qualities does Whitman differ from the other poets? Especially the poets who conform to the traditions of the past.

"When Tennyson sends out a poem," observes Burroughs, "it is perfect, like an apple or a peach; slowly wrought out and dismissed, it drops from his boughs, holding a conception or an idea that spheres it and makes it whole. It is completed, distinct and separate—might be his, or might be any man's. It carries his quality, but it is a thing of itself, and centers and depends upon itself. Whether or not the world will hereafter consent, as in the past, to call only beautiful creations of this sort, *poems*, remains to be seen. But this is certainly not what Walt Whitman does, or aims to do, except in a few cases. He completes no poems apart from himself. His lines or pulsations, thrills, waves of force, indefinite dynamic, formless, constantly emanating from the living centre, and they carry the quality of the Author's personal presence with them in a way that is unprecedented in literature."

The more I read Whitman the more I am drawn to him, and feel the greatness of the man. His poems have meant to me recently, what Emerson's Essays meant to me as a younger man. In about the same way they affect me now, only my love for the poems grows with each reading.

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It is well to recall that so much was John Burroughs inspired by his early contact with Whitman that his first book was, *Notes on Walt Whitman, as Poet and Person*, which was printed in 1867. A little later, in 1877, he renewed his study of the poet, in his last essay in *Birds and Poets*. The title of the essay is "The Flight of the Eagle," and is one of Burroughs' best papers. Still later, in about 1895, he wrote his final word on Whitman, in his volume, *Whitman: A Study*. This last volume is a complete interpretation of the poet. The poems of the man are given full treatment, and it is perhaps the best defense of Whitman in print.

The publishers of these books have long expected to get John Burroughs to write a biography of Whitman, but his many other literary activities, have combined to banish their hopes, and in his stead, Mr. Bliss Perry, in 1905, was asked to write the biography, which was published in 1906.

In recent years, Whitman has been gaining pretty general acceptance, and most of the papers in current literature expose his merits. His enemies are growing fewer and fewer, and those who still survive are not so bold. They are on the defensive instead of the offensive. He is such a potent factor in the present day literature of America, that our only conclusion is that he is with us to stay, and the sooner we learn to 'Walk the open road' with him, the better will we be prepared for the future critic of American literature.

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Bliss Perry thinks that on account "of the amplitude of his imagination," and "the majesty with which he confronts the eternal realities," instead of the absolute perfection of his poems, he is bound to a place somewhere among the immortals.

Mr. Perry has made a critical study of Whitman, and his judgment and conclusions are charitable and will stand. No critic can ever give an adequate conception of Whitman's poems. As he,

himself said, "They will elude you." In order to understand in any degree his eccentricities and his poetic freedom, one must go to the poems and read them as a whole. One will either turn away from them for a breath of air, or he will be forever won by them.

I happened to be among the latter class, and I must agree with his most enthusiastic critics, that he is a real poet, and one of the few that make you think and feel. Most of our other American poets have said some pretty things in verse but are not elemental. They lack the "high seriousness," the all-essential quality of a real poet. This quality we cannot fail to recognize in Whitman, from the beginning to the end, if we tolerate him.

Mr. Stedman's paper on Whitman, though less readable than Burroughs', and far more labored than Mr. Perry's, contains many excellent estimates of Whitman's democracy, and a lover of Whitman cannot afford to be ignorant of his fine judgments. He thinks that Whitman is well equipped as a poet—having had such genuine intercourse "With Nature in her broadest and minutest forms."

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## JOHN BURROUGHS AND THE BIRDS

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One day while I was at West Park, John Burroughs and I had started over the mountains to Slabsides, and just as we had crossed the railroad we noticed a small flock of English sparrows in some nearby trees. We both halted suddenly and after a moment's silence he said: "I think the English sparrow will eventually develop some form of song. Listen to that suppressed sound so near to song! I have often wondered if all birds do not develop song by degrees, and if so, how long it takes or has taken such birds as the thrushes, the song sparrows and the wrens to develop their songs. Bird songs have always been an interesting study to me." It would be hard for me to conceive of one of his books being complete without some mention of bird life in it. I am sure he would not attempt to complete a Nature book and leave birds out of it.

One of our first American Bird Societies, which was organized in 1900, was named after him, but I am not sure that this ever pleased him, as he was not an ornithologist in any restricted sense, and he certainly sees how much better it is for the organization to have been renamed and after Audubon, our greatest Ornithologist. Whenever I have been with him, and a bird of any kind appeared in sight or in hearing, he was sure to observe it first, and has been the means of sharpening my eyes and ears. Each of the little stories that follow, has been the result directly, or indirectly, of my walks in the woods with him. No school library is quite complete without a copy of his *Wake Robin* as it savors of that peculiar delight with which out-door life imbues him, as no other book he ever wrote, and I must say, puts one in tune with Nature as no book with which I am acquainted. The two essays *Spring at the Capitol* and *The Return of the Birds*, give one the true spirit of the Naturalist, and have the best spirit of the out-door world in every paragraph and sentence.

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Mr. Sharpe rightly thinks that Burroughs is more than a scientist, for he is always hiding his science in love and genuine interest, though he is generally true to the facts. As an evidence of his genuineness he refuses to go to Nature in 'the reporter fashion, but must camp and tramp with her' in order for the truth to sink in and become part of him. Then he gives up only that which has clung to him, and certainly we do not find in his writings anything but the reflection of some phase of Nature. Go to the fields and the mountains with him, and you will soon be impressed that he is on speaking terms with bird life in almost every detail. This sincerity has impressed me as much as his ability to see and read Nature.

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### THE TRAGEDY OF THE CHICKADEE'S NEST

Usually when I find a bird's nest in a conspicuous place, I have a peculiar feeling that the bird has not chosen wisely, but I suspect that most birds that are on good terms with man, choose to brave his presence rather than risk themselves further away from man, and out where birds of prey and animals dangerous to them, are accustomed to go. They seem to think that man will do to trust, while they know that Nature knows no other law but struggle and destruction.

The little nest about which I am now to tell was in an old decayed fencepost about three feet from the ground on the south side of the lane that leads down through the pasture and to the lake beyond. It was easily accessible to all that passed along the lane, and besides, the chickadee is so motherly in her habits and so innocent of all that is going on about her, that one can see her on the post or even in the door of the little house almost any time. The interest I had taken in the nest, caused me to frighten her away many times as I passed down the lane on my morning and afternoon walks. I thought that I would by this means train her to be a little more cautious, but she seemed to take my warning as a joke and finally became so gentle that I could almost put my hand on her.

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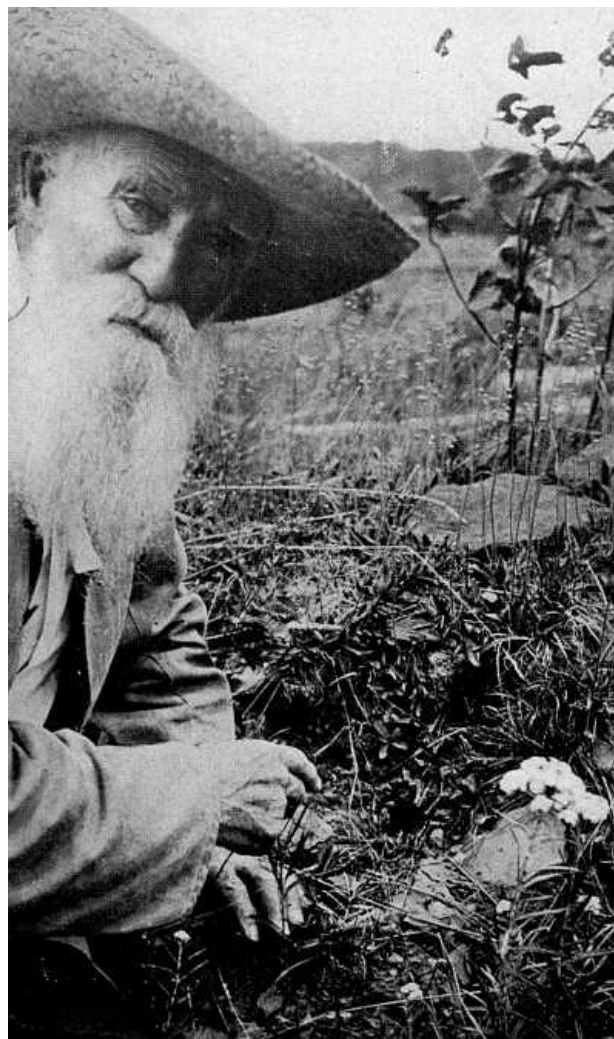
When I knew that many of the day laborers had discovered my nest and had become somewhat

curious about it, I began to entertain grave doubts as to whether the brood would ever come off. For very few people have a real love for birds and bird-life, and most people rather delight to tell of their brutality to the bird kingdom, when they were smaller. Many times have I sat and listened to men tell of how many bird nests they broke up when they were boys, and they seemed to think that a boy could spend his time no better. Some of my neighbors have large collections of birds' eggs that were taken in this spirit, and I think they belong to that class of 'Oologists,' spoken of by Burroughs as the worst enemies of our birds, 'who plunder nests and murder their owners in the name of science.'

While I was out one morning for my usual walk, my attention was attracted by an unusually joyful song, "*Chickadee-Dee, Chickadee-Dee,*" in rapid succession, a little softer and sweeter than I had heard from my black cap this season, and I decided to see if there was not some love-making going on. As Seton-Thompson says, I 'froze' for a few moments and saw what it all meant. The mother bird was building her nest in the post to which I have already referred. The male bird did not appear till three days after, but how interested he was when he did come upon the scene. When these little birds decided to neighbor with me my heart rejoiced, for I had often during the winter seen the vacant home and wondered if it would be occupied in the summer, and if so by whom. As soon as I knew that my chickadees were really to stay I thought to myself: Well I shall have one good neighbor at least. On the morning of the 26th of April, I looked into the nest to see what progress was being made with the new home, and found the female bird on, but she made no attempt to fly away. I went away whistling and at the same time thinking that I should soon see some fledgelings with open mouths for food, and that I would in all probability, have the pleasure of giving them a morsel occasionally. To aid the mother in this way helps to get in sympathy with bird life. For then we feel that we have become partly responsible for their health and daily *bread*. I had often aided mother birds in feeding their young, though I do not remember to have rendered such service to chickadees. I have, however, known for a long time that chickadees are noted for their gentleness and fearlessness. When they meet honesty they are always ready to make friends and will cheer you with their little familiar ditty, but they seem to divine evil, and will get on the other side of the tree from the boy that carries a sling-shot. Nature seems to have taught them what and whom to fear.

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### POINTING OUT THE JUNCO'S NEST BY A MOUNTAIN ROADSIDE

I shall never forget how provoked I was, when I passed down the lane on Monday morning, May 4th, and found that some vandal had been there and robbed and partially destroyed the nest on Sunday, the day before. I was cross all day and could not collect myself. Everything in my office went wrong and what little work I did that day had to be done over later. This little nest had

meant a great deal to me, and the most interesting stage of its development had not yet been reached. If it had been any other nest probably it would not have affected me so seriously or grieved me so much, but this little family had, in a measure, become a part of my own family, and I had a most tender feeling for it. The poor mother bird I saw in some small oaks not far from the wrecked home and I watched her for a long time, that I might see just what emotions she would express to me. The sadness of her song chickadee-dee, chickadee-dee, was evident, but she uttered these words in rapid succession. The following seemed to be her feeling:

### SOLILOQUY OF THE CHICKADEE

"Alas! How fallen is man! I never yet have given cause for complaint, nor cost man anything. My deeds have been deeds of kindness. I am calm and peaceful among my neighbors, and have ever loved man's humanity. Never did I think that such a fate as this awaited me at the hand of man whom I have cheered all seasons of the year, in May and December alike, as he has gone forth to and from his daily labor. Had this misfortune been brought on by some cat or mink or weasel, or even by some of my bird enemies, I could have reconciled myself to it. But I have been man's best friend and he knows it. My numberless ancestors have been among man's best supporters. My dream has been, during these many days of toil and care, to watch my happy little family of birds grow up in the ways of chickadees, that they too could soon be able to go forth prepared for the battle of life and partake of the great feast of insects and worms and insect eggs, so abundant over there in the orchards and lawns and to which all farm crops would become a prey without us.

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"But alas! My hopes are blighted and my dream turned into a nightmare. Only one egg pipped, so I could glimpse the little mouth beneath! A ray of sunshine! A consummation devoutly to be wished for! My little ones breaking through those prison walls, soon to become my companions!

"Today it is all over. A funeral dirge instead of songs of joy and gladness! Some vandals have wrecked my home and destroyed my prospective little ones! I almost wish they had taken me too. What have I done to cost me this? You said you would protect me, O man! Are you doing it? Have I proved unworthy of your good will and friendship? My record will bear me witness before any court in the land."

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Presently the male bird came upon the spot, but had very little to say. What little he did say seemed to be very consoling to the mother bird. As he receded to the thick of the pasture again, the mother bird began anew her low melancholy song. How can we ever reconcile such thoughtless deeds with the higher forms of civilization! But we must return to the nest. It was not entirely destroyed, and I gathered the remains, which contained two eggs covered in the litter torn from the walls of the nest. I sawed off the post just below the nest cavity and put it in my office. The eggs were white with brownish red spots. The nest was made of fibrous roots, jute fiber lined with hair. Dr. Bachman found one made of fine wool, cotton and some fibres of plants, containing pure white eggs, the nest being in a hollow stump about four feet from the ground. It is safe to say that the chickadee is a resident bird throughout the United States and is rather abundant in the Southern states.

I have often thought that we could make ourselves far happier if we studied birds aesthetically, rather than economically, but it seems that we shall for a long time to come, count the worth of any factor in Nature by utilitarian methods. If we must do so, let us see what kind of showing our chickadee makes for herself. Let us see just what relation she bears to plant life. Edward H. Furbush finds that the chickadee feeds upon tent caterpillars and their eggs; both species of the cankerworm moth and their larvae; codling moths with their larvae; the forest tent caterpillar, and the larva chrysalis and imago of the gypsy and brown tail moths. They also eat the lice and their eggs of the apple and willow. We see then that a great deal can be said in their favor. Another thing so favorable to our little friend is that of all his or her habits of life, we know of nothing bad. All that can be said is in her favor, more than can be said of many of us.

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The sad story of my chickadee's nest will suggest to all thinking people the reason why so many of our valuable birds are so rapidly vanishing or diminishing in numbers, and the urgent need for an immediate check upon our wreckless slaughter. Upon a careful count in several parts of the country it has been found that birds are a natural check upon insect pests, and not to protect and welcome them is to foster the growth of these pests. The fate of this little nest is likewise the fate of many thousand nests annually, of useful birds. Who could ever estimate the gallons of innocent blood shed at the hands of the untrained and wilfully evil bands of boys roving the woods on the Sabbath!

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### ROBINS

Recently in a letter to the Burroughs' Nature Study Clubs of a Southern state John Burroughs wrote:

"If your club can help to send back the robin to us in the spring with his breast unstained with his own blood, but glowing with the warmth of your shining and hospitable land, I shall rejoice that it bears my name."

The people in the Northern United States have courted favor with the robin and in every way possible protect him, and are always ready to welcome him back after the winter is over, and in fact, the robin is to be praised for his summer popularity as much as he is to be pitied for his winter treatment in the south. One writer says his return to the north 'is announced by the newspapers like that of eminent or notorious people to a watering place, as the first authentic notification of spring.' There, where robins are appreciated, they become quite tame and build and raise their young in the orchards and about the houses. Birds are not altogether unlike people in that they never forget favors. They always know in what sections of country they are welcomed.

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When robin redbreast returns south, he comes driven by the chilly blasts of the Ice King of the north, and I regret to say has to face the Southern people with fear and trembling. Parents allow boys to take guns and go out and kill anything legally or illegally, and such boys always develop the brutal and barbarous instinct of murder—taking innocent blood. The following I clipped from the locals of a weekly newspaper in the Southern part of Georgia:

"They have about succeeded in killing all the robins out at 'Robin's Roost,' near Robert's Mill. Thousands of these birds had been flying to a ford near there to roost, and they offered fine sport for those who like shooting."

The reporter of the above seemed to count it a success to kill all the robins. Moreover he affirms that killing them is fine sport. This spirit of slaughter is no doubt born in us, but it does seem that we could teach the young how to love, to protect, and to enjoy rather than to kill! kill! kill! Some boys I know can hardly bear to see a live bird of any kind, but are perfectly at ease if they can kill something. They take some weapon with them as religiously as they take their books to school, in order that nothing escape them. They are always hoping to see some form of bird life to persecute or slaughter. Our public schools are beginning to interest themselves in bird protection, and I am glad to say, have accomplished great good wherever they have tried to teach simple lessons of bird life to school children.

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The robin is too valuable to exterminate as he feeds upon noxious weed seeds and injurious insects, and usually has a good appetite and certainly never eats useful plants in the south. His practical value to Orchards and Agriculture generally, should be impressed upon parents and a love for him impressed upon the younger minds. When we cannot appeal through either of these channels, we should arouse the sympathy of the public. Robins ordinarily come south to spend the winter, as the weather is much warmer and they get a greater food supply. But in 1905, a small flock of them wintered near Lake Forest, Illinois. This I think was due to the fact that the birds did not care to face their enemies of the South. In that section of country from Lake Forest to Waukegan, Illinois, not a robin had been shot for several years past. The birds knew their friends and preferred to brave the Northern winter with them, rather than come down south where our youths are forever running through the woods with gun on shoulder ready to take life.

Burroughs says: "Robin is one of our most native and democratic birds; he is one of the family (in the north) and seems much more to us than those rare exotic visitors with their distant and high-bred ways." The carol of the robin is very inspiring as you hear him:

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"Heavenward lift his evening hymn,"

or perhaps when you first wake in the morning at early dawn, and listen to his love song, as he perches on some treetop in the edge of a nearby woods. How rich his red breast looks from such a perch just as the sun comes above the horizon and reflects its first rays against him! Just one experience like this in the whole year, how much it would add to life's pleasures! "With this pleasing association with the opening season, amidst the fragrance of flowers and the improving verdure of the fields, we listen with peculiar pleasure to the simple song of the robin. The confidence he reposes in us by making his abode in our gardens and orchards, the frankness and innocence of his manners, besides his vocal powers to please, inspire respect and attachment, even in the truant schoolboy, and his exposed nest is but rarely molested," says Nuttall, who writes eloquently of the robin.

The robin sings in autumn as well as in spring, and his autumn song is by no means inferior to his spring song, and I have always loved the old song, *Good-bye to Summer*, because of the special tribute to the robin's song, the chorus of which goes,

[137]

"O, Robin, Robin, redbreast!  
O, Robin, Robin, dear!  
O, Robin, sing so sweetly,  
In the falling of the year!"

It is rather interesting to note, however, that they usually sing in concert when they return south in the autumn. You can hear them in great numbers singing while feeding around a patch of *Ilex glabra*, the berries of which afford them considerable food in mid-winter. I love to welcome them back to the south in the autumn, and to hear their beautiful concert song.

## BLACKBIRDS

It is rather remarkable to note how easy it is to cultivate the friendship of birds, even birds that are ordinarily quite wild. When I used to go to my office in the early morning, I always scattered a few handfuls of grits around the back window that I might accommodate some of my special



friends to a breakfast, and it required only a short time for me to win the confidence of so many birds that I had to limit them to quite a short breakfast. At first no blackbirds came near me or my place of business. Soon they would sit on nearby trees and return to the grounds immediately after I returned from the yard back into the house. I had among my daily visitors not less than three or four hundred of these welcome friends. They would play around in the yard very amusingly and pick at each other much like children and afforded me much amusement and many pleasant moments in the course of a week.

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Blackbirds have very little music in them or rather get very little out of themselves. John Burroughs has this to say of their music: "Their voices always sound as if they were laboring under a severe attack of influenza, though a large flock of them heard at a distance on a bright afternoon of early spring produce an effect not displeasing. The air is filled with crackling, splintering, spurting semi-musical sounds, which are like pepper and salt to the ear." I really enjoy the mingled sounds produced by a great congregation of them, and often follow a flock of them down the creek side to their favorite resting place, just to hear them. They are always in great flocks here during the winter, and sometimes when feeding along on a hillside, the rear ranks marching over the bulk to the front in rapid succession, present an appearance somewhat like heavy waves of the sea, and one a short distance looks on with admiration and even surprise, to see such symmetry and uniformity in their movement.

One cannot fail to appreciate how much good a great flock of them do in a day as they move across a field covered with noxious grass and weed seeds. They seem to form an army in order to co-operate with man in every possible way to balance up the powers of nature. Weeds prevent crops from growing. Every seed that germinates in the soil and is allowed to grow, if only for a short while, tends to exhaust the soil. If the birds get these seeds in winter before germination begins, the useful plants will have a much larger fund of food from which to draw. Once in a while our blackbirds get a little grain and the farmer condemns them and looks upon them only with a murderer's eye. The birds do a hundred times more good than evil, and should not be condemned on such slight provocation. Their hard fare during the winter makes them rush into the fields sometimes in spring and get a taste of grains useful to man, but surely they should be pitied rather than censured, and so long as I can get them to depend on me for help, I am going to put out a mite for their breakfast. With sorrow I bid them good-bye each spring, but with renewed delight I hail with joy their return in autumn with their young.

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### THE NUTHATCH

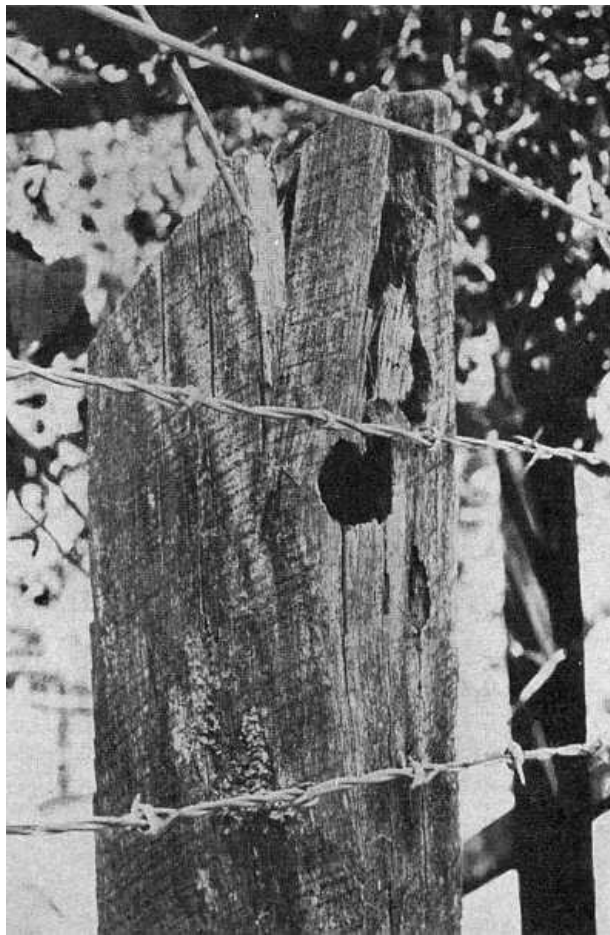
Could I ever be satisfied were I located in some nook of this old earth where the voice of the nuthatch is not heard once in a while! His simple song—I speak of the white-breasted nuthatch—beats time to my daily routine of laboratory and field work and its very simplicity adds dignity to my little friend's life. All will easily recognize this useful little neighbor. His coat is of light blueish gray above, with a crown, nap, and upper back black. His tail and wings have black markings, while his lower parts and sides of head are white in the main. It is remarkable to find the nuthatch so ready to make friends with us, when he is generally considered a forest bird in this part of the country.

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I see two or three of them near my office every day, and take much delight in my study of them and their habits. They have a peculiar way of perching, head downward, on the trunk of a tree and go that way most of the time. A small white-breasted bird on the trunk of a tree with head downward, is pretty good evidence that it is the nuthatch. This attitude is so natural that the older ornithologists—Audubon and Wilson—claim that they sleep in that position. I am not prepared to affirm or deny the rumor as my study of this bird, and all other birds, is restricted to their daylight comedies and tragedies, though I do often hear certain members of bird families singing at all hours of the night during certain seasons.

His song is, as above stated, quite simple only one note repeated over and over—konk-konk, konk-konk, two strokes generally in rapid succession—a kind of a nasal piping, or as one bird lover has said: "A peculiar, weird sound, somewhat like the quack of a duck, but higher keyed and with less volume, having a rather musical twang."

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### MY CHICKADEE'S NEST

During the winter months he finds much time to search about on the ground for food, and consequently his crop is at such time partly filled with noxious weed seeds. In spring and summer, he searches all round the trunks and branches of trees for small insects and insect eggs, and as you approach him to study him he seems entirely unconscious of your presence, which I have thought almost approaches human affectation, and I wonder if this is not one of the alluring arts of the white-breasted nuthatch. Birds, in some way or other, express almost all human attributes, love, hate, anger, joy, sorrow, if we only are able to read them, and it is not unreasonable to assume that they are sometimes affectatious. The Southern mocking bird certainly seems to border vanity sometimes.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RAMBLES WITH JOHN BURROUGHS \*\*\*

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