

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE'S FOREST

"Millions of massive raindrops
Have fallen all around." Anon

After a winter more or less cooped up indoors with studies and other work, I returned to my outdoor life in the spring of 1938 by raising my umbrella tent on Alice's land, at the back of her large country yard, on the upper edge of a wooded ravine. Alice now had a home shared by a husband and a one year old son.

It was a very wet spring and I was more than grateful for my little wood stove. I was confined indoors, in my tent, by the weather; my days were mostly spent reading and writing, and animal or bird watching occasionally. Now and then I baby-sat for Alice, which made me feel useful.

Apple blossoms were scenting the damp air with their heady perfume. Violets dotted the woods and the field edges with scraps of blue. Lilac blossoms were still in bud; everyone hoping their opening would be delayed until Memorial Day. But an early heat wave, into the 90's, was pushing them. In full bloom were buttercups, dogwood, highbush blueberry and sand violets. Also much in evidence after the long winter sleep were Jill-over-the-ground, a wild mus^h

Sherwood
tard, and saxifrage; wild strawberry blossoms were tantalizing prophets of the near future.

The warm spell persisted so long that the first of the lilacs dismayed us all by blossoming May 4th. By then the apple blossoms were shedding their petals on my tent as I had placed it under an outer branch. It had become much too warm to use my stove even at night. A rose-breasted grosbeak sat on a low limb watching me now and then while I moved about my campsite picking up sticks for an unneeded fire; when I walked along the woodland path across the top of the ravine he kept moving just a tree ahead of me, glancing back as if to see if I were coming.

Having been raised in the city, where almost the only birds were dull gray-brown house sparrows, and an occasional more brightly-colored robin, it was still a marvel to me to see these handsomely-colored birds of the country. And their voices seemed exotic. A wood thrush sang from a low branch in front of my tent about mid-morning every day, making a symphony in the woods with his flute-like chords. The grosbeak further enchanted me with his own ~~own~~ melodious song.

May 6th was a Friday that year. About 5:30 a.m. I rose up on my elbow and looked out the back tent window, where I could see the sky. But that was a northern view, which told me nothing except what had already passed by. The thunder was in the southwest, and had been incessant now, for about an hour. Gradually it grew closer until it echoed up and down the ravine. I got up and tied back one of the tent door flaps so I could see the action out there. I could now see the Solomon Seals in the lightning flashes, bending in the storm's turbulent air. When the first heavy raindrops hit a tattoo

on my tent I got up again and dropped down the door flap reluctantly. After a winter of yearning to be out in my tent, I just snuggled into my cot bed, lighted a candle, and read, quite contented with the close proximity of wildflowers and trees, with nature's sounds vigorously roaring around me, feeling bathed in the delicious scents stirred up by the rain.

I could have run into Alice's kitchen, only a few hundred feet away, but inflexible walls and ceilings had no appeal.

Alice, two of her brothers and I rescued a nestful of red squirrels two days later, from a tree which had been hit by lightning that day. The mother was dead on the ground at the bottom of the tree; one dead young one was with her. Three others, still alive, were in the bottom of a hole high in the tree, from where we rescued them. All four looked starved, with flat bellies. None had their eyes open yet. We placed the three in a pail in back of Alice's stove, after feeding them milk with a medicine dropper. In a few days they were up and around, with rotund bellies, and gradually opening eyes; they were so lively we put them into a large cage. Eventually the cage wound up in the tent with me, but it wasn't long before I had them living with me without the cage. They prospered, is the best way to sum it up. I was just as pleased when they discovered the outdoors and the woods; they left home in a few days, looking as sleek and silky as red quirrrels can. Only one or two came in now and then for a handout.

Alice and I were up and out under the open sky at 4:00 a.m. on the 14th, for the moon was going into eclipse. Our neighbors all lay abed, heads smothered under blankets, while the cosmos enacted one of its simpler but thought-provoking dramas. We two humans watched from a universe sideline, freed from superstition but impressed

into silent contemplation.

During the night of May 15th there was a severe rainstorm and high wind. Water blew into the tent under the dropped door flap for the first time since I had the tent, even though the door faced the sheltering woods. In the morning I had to bail ~~two~~ good-sized puddles off the canvas floor. Rain had not come through the roof or walls, however. But the roar of the wind in the trees and its echo in the ravine had been deafening and scary during the night so that I hadn't gotten much sleep. There were moments when canvas seemed a fragile protection.

It rained off and on for the next two weeks; the sun came out only a few moments between clouds. Yet I didn't think it too unusual, for the spring when I was sixteen or seventeen the sun shone only briefly once during a cloudy, showery May. On the 28th of this May we had heavy showers and thunderstorms. We caught glimpses of the red squirrels now and then, and wondered what they were finding for food. The loss of the chestnut tree to blight forced changes in squirrel diets.

On June 12th we had a thunderstorm of the rolling-thunder kind, traveling from cloud to cloud rather than from cloud to earth. When we were children we used to say the angels were rolling barrels up in heaven during that kind of storm. Rolling thunder has always had for me a cozy "all's well with the universe" sound. But I admit I wisely fear and respect the sharp cracking kind.

On the 28th of June I picked up my tent, more like an indigent Indian than a silent Arab, and stole away to the State People's Forest in a western part of the state, where a job awaited me as forest museum curator and nature trail guide. I took it for granted

Sherwood
 that it was going to be a wet season, that a camping location west of the Connecticut River wasn't going to be any dryer than east of it.

I set up my umbrella tent on the West Branch of the Farmington River, a beautiful glacial-rock trout stream almost twice the width of the Fenton, and worthy of a much more euphonious name. In fact I think it is now called The Tunxis by some. The spot I chose was a small public campsite on a narrow shelf about five feet above the river, which was a rather secluded area. It was half way between the Museum at Pleasant Valley and the small town of Riverton, on what was known as the East River Road. But it wasn't right on the road; the campsite was down a steep slope, then about 300 feet across the sandy river flat to the river edge; thus I was down below a higher river terrace. It rained the day before I left Alice's, and the day that I arrived by the river, but I persistently set up my tent anyway. Were I superstitious, those two difficult days would have been portentous.

Once more I was brushing my teeth by a stream edge and spitting toothpaste to lure little fishes, and washing dishes in an improvised little pool to the delight of bigger fishes; ~~for~~ again I was doing my laundry in a Biblical scene, and looking at tree tops and sky upside down as I washed my hair in a basin on a ~~camp~~ ~~at~~ bench by a stream.

Life was soft here for a camper. About 300 feet up a trail through the woods along the river there was a pump with icy cold drinking water. Near it was the hugest pile of fireplace-size cordwood I had ever seen, all seasoned, much of it of a size to fit my stove, cut and stacked by the CCC boys. Some of it required a little splitting back at my campsite, but that was always

u am enjoyed chore, for I still had my double-bit axe. Looking back at that massive pile of cordwood it was like having lived in a logging camp where dozens of men keep a pile stacked up. I've never had anything like it available to me again, though I have since camped from one end of this continent to the other, and lived in the Maine woods.

f There were six campsites on this river shelf, all furnished with the usual park fireplaces, picnic tables and privies. Unlike many park fireplaces, where the grate and the firepit bottom are so far apart you have to build a bonfire to get the heat up to cooking pan bottoms, these pits were smaller and the grates adjustable.

The river banks were fringed with tall maples, hemlocks, oaks, and white pines, with a delicate tracery of shrub and ground green undergrowth. No artist, no craftsman, could reproduce for a millionaire what I had in the natural, synchronized loveliness of this scene. Nature can only be imitated, and never with the truth of the original. Man can only substitute.

A live, breathing, three-dimension wall of trees and shrubs, a floor of plant-covered soil undisturbed by man, a backdrop of island, a flowing, whispering, rock-strewn stream, a busy, throbbing population of birds, dragonflies, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, all interwoven in action with their own dramas, can never be rivaled by plaster, bricks, tile, cement, paint, furniture and ruffled curtains, and the veneered behavior of humans moving about, constantly affected by their artificial paraphernalia.

When I first arrived on a Monday, the other campsites on this river shelf were deserted. I half hoped they would remain that way

Shenwood
all summer though I knew that was a selfish wish. One site, at the far end of a point of land which extended beyond the shelf on which were the rest of the campsites, petered out in the stream. But on its high, solid area there was a sizeable tent in place, battened down under a big tree. Another spot, the third site downstream from me was occupied by a staked-down old small brown house trailer, one of the first trailers I ever saw. The ranger had told me that the same people come to those two sites almost every weekend. I found it encouraging that a tent which you can't lock, and such an old trailer which would be easy to break into, were safe there all summer with no one tending them during the week. It made me feel more comfortable about going up to the museum every day and leaving my tent there alone.

My first Saturday there those two primitive domiciles came to life with returned inhabitants. In addition, a family of two parents and two little girls, Ruthie and Beverly, whom I was to know the rest of my life, set up housekeeping for the ~~summer~~ week-end on the campsite right next to my camp, downriver from me. As I occupied the last (or first) campsite up river, there was nothing but woods to the firewood pile on my right.

This is the stream in which were built major test stream improvements in the state in 1933 by the CCC. With a greater number of young people available to do the work and to maintain the structures, the stream improvements in the West Branch of the Farmington were larger and more ambitious, though still simple, than in other streams where only a few students were available now and then. I had been driven to this stream a few times in 1933, ^{from the Fenton} to test the water temperatures and collect aquatic insects. The improvements were so obvious, and even attractive, here, that many professional-quality photographs were taken.

chestnut blight twenty-four years before.

Chestnut was our most decay-resistant native wood, thus much timber was still salvageable from the big old trees more than twenty years after they died. It was worm-eaten wood by then, but the pattern of the wormholes was so attractive that some commercial lumber concerns borrowed the idea from nature and gouged depressions in good wood of other species to simulate wormy chestnut. In the museum this natural pattern made very attractive window seat covers and big exhibit tables.

A huge heatilator fireplace, constructive with native field stone, ~~and~~ large enough to take a four-foot log with space left over, was the outstanding feature at the east end of the building. Its great stone chimney was decorative both indoors and outdoors where it extended above the roof.

This delightful building attracted many of the visitors to the 'eople's Forest. It was an adequate place to set up public nature exhibits; it was a comfortable meeting room for outdoor societies and Scouts, and often ~~served~~ ^{served} as a lecture room for state forest and game management employees, so long as people were willing to sit on the floor in front of the fireplace, as the window seats were not moveable.

There was a long, narrow room behind the wall back of the fireplace, and a lavatory with cold running water in the corner opposite to the fireplace. These were at my disposal any time I wanted to sleep at the museum instead of at the campsite. I was so enamored with tent life, however, I just couldn't see staying indoors. Little did I dream that the storm of the century was to make it mandatory that I move up to the Museum.

Silverwood

A nature trail ran down the wooded slope from the Museum to the open field below. It extended across the field to Mathies Grove, which was a white pine stand of very mature trees along the river, where there were picnic tables under the shady pines. Another trail, developed by the CCC, as had been all the other trails in this Park, began in the tall pines back of the Museum and made a loop of about a quarter of a mile through the nearby woods, over a rustic bridge crossing a small but gurgling brook, and back to the Museum.

By the time I arrived at the Forest most of the trail signs, which had been hand painted in oil colors by some art-talented CCC boys, and fastened to thick posts set deep in the ground, had been pulled up or ripped off by insatiable souvenir hunters. Camp White offered to paint more signs for me but I didn't want the task of having to guard them. Instead, I obtained a handful of ordinary shipping tags, typed the name of a species on one side and educational information on the other, dipped them in white shellac then tied them onto trees and bushes, or ^{upright} onto sticks in beds of low ground plants. Replacing those could be quick and inexpensive.

That summer the handsome scarlet oaks, the mountain laurel, the maples and birches, and the dogwoods and other indigenous species all along the trails were tagged as if to be shipped somewhere. I used the stick system to tie tags onto for beds of clintonia, wintergreen, Canada mayflower and shinleaf. Similarly I tagged the lush beds of ferns along the brook at the back end of the trail. I even tied informative messages to the bridge railing, telling visitors about the cardinal flowers, skunk cabbage and the foamflower in sight of the railing. It was fun to come upon people who were walking the trail by themselves, seripusly reading the information

Sherwood
on the tags.

It was possible to add much more information on the tags than on the painted or carved-burned signs. And I was pleasantly surprised, as the summer progressed, to learn that very few tags were removed or deliberately damaged. I was never quite sure why; whether they didn't appeal as attractive souvenirs, or whether the type of information on them was so instructive that people realized others should have a chance to read them. In fact, when I visited the Forest three years later some of the tags were still in place and also still legible though weathered.

On one of the big, heavy chestnut tables I set up a running exhibit of wildflowers as they came into bloom, for new ones came out about every two weeks. Stashed away in the window seat boxes were several standby exhibits, such as specimens of the state's rocks, Riker mounts of insects, especially butterflies, and ^epieces of veneer wood made from all of the Connecticut commercial tree species. All of these attracted visitors; I typed extra information for each exhibit, as I couldn't always be there to explain things, or the number of visitors were too many for me to talk to more than a few at once.

The CCC boys had assembled an exhibit of all of the trees in the Park Forest, in the form of small logs with their bark still on. The logs were stood up on a wooden platform; the tops were cut on a slant, and varnished to make the growth rings easy to see. It was a very effective exhibit of the differences in tree species.

Good
I kept in active ¹condition a terrarium with small live frogs, salamanders, snails and various insects, and also a large covered glass [✓]bw in which I had planted a young poison ivy plant. Next to

Shenwood
snakes the most misunderstood and least recognized form of life in the woods of the northeast is poison ivy, though it is so easy to recognize once you look it square in the eye.

Most visitors, of course, came on week-ends and holidays. When crowds were anticipated, two or three CCC boys were sent over to help me protect the exhibits, but compared to more recent years, the problems were minimal. It was the kind of Museum which was so small it felt homelike, yet it had as much information as most individuals cared to try to absorb at any one time. I tried posting notices of group discussion-talks, but no one ever came. But now and then a group of visitors in the building would gather around me and ask intelligent and challenging questions.

The one question which was a strain on my patience, having heard it so often at Shade Swamp Sanctuary, and now and then ~~at~~ at the Fenton was, "Aren't you afraid of snakes?" I came to look upon that, which is almost exclusively a reaction of women, as a question welling up from a sex-linked gene. It is the one question about God's unconscionably vast, fascinating and beautiful planet, which bores me beyond endurance. I used to give a flip or facetious answer. Then, when I realized the fear was real, I tried instructive answers only to find that people WANT to hold onto their fears. Now I just shrug my shoulders, and find a way to change the subject. It is such a pointless, vacuous, unthinking, ~~purely~~ purely run-away-imagination question, maybe even a race-inherited foible which I can't change, ^{that} I recognize the futility of my struggling with it. So I walk away from it.

Judging by all that has been said to me over the years about snakes, the dangers of meeting them on paths and in the woods, I

Shrewsbury
should have been killed a thousand times over in the years that I have lived in nature, yet, there I would be, very much alive, listening to that inane question. It's amazing how urban people live in ^efar all day long the few times they can get out into the country, though someone living out there can't find a snake/^{even}when one is needed for exhibit or study. It's like the worm in the apple; city people don't want one worm in their apple, and they don't want one snake, no matter how helpless, in their woods.

Personally I have great admiration for the symmetrical beauty of snakes. They are among the most truly rhythmical and graceful creatures on the earth, and they are frequently exquisitely patterned. as for a snake being squirmy, I tell people they'd squirm too, if they had to travel across a room without arms or legs. The only way to get across would be to wriggle. That wouldn't necessarily make you poisonous or dangerous in any way. Snakes are actually handicapped reptiles; they are quadriplegics without benefit of prosthetics. They can manage to move only by raising scales on their undersides and pushing against the ground. And it works better if they squirm as they push. But I can't give this spiel every time someone asks me if I'm not afraid of snakes.

There were many other foot trails in the People's Forest. One of them led from the Museum up the Greenwood Road which began in back of the Museum. From it a footpath led off along the sides of the small mountain to Lookout Point. The view from there is one of the ~~best~~ most beautiful in all of Connecticut.

The Greenwood Road, which leads up to the top of the mountain back of the Museum, was an easy car or hiking road for seeing the vegetation changes which can occur almost every 400 ft. up, as that

Skene

is the equivalent of one degree of north latitude. Beginning in the low latitude, with its plants seen from the little bridge over the small brook, you gradually climb up into the boreal forest vegetation, where goldthread, bunchberry, moosewood and other Canadian flora become common though you never see any of it down below. This is the type of vegetation you see in northern Maine, or on the mountains of the Appalachians though they are in warmer latitudes. The equivalent of northern latitude is the key to the kind of flora present.

The work at the Museum wasn't all concerned directly with visitors. There was the usual maintenance work which any building requires. My CCC boys washed the countless panes of the casement windows. They repaired breaks in the paths around the building, and carried in the four-foot chestnut logs for the fireplace. While litterbugs weren't fined in those days for defiling the beauty of America they still found it easier to drop trash on the paths and roads than to bring it back home the way they had brought it to the Park. It was an endless chore for the CCC boys to keep it picked up. The rain was persistent throughout the summer, and one of their tasks was to repair washed out gullies.

While the work at the Museum may not have been as challenging as some of the boys had hoped, in general CCC work offered adventure to young fellows caught in the depression about which they could do nothing. Ennui was one of the enemies that had made home intolerable. Great droves of them, gathered from all corners of the nation, were enrolled in the tasks of harnessing nature and training themselves in self reliance. Natural medicine was what they needed and got.

City boys learned to drive trucks and tractors, to fell trees properly, to build bridges and forest buildings, to fight and prevent forest fires, to control forest insects, and to take care of them-

Shenwood
selves in the great outdoors. This was organized youth, but in an American-freedom way. They were under military supervision, but not in military training. To my way of thinking, even boom times ~~economically~~, a softening luxury time in America, has just as much need of a practical organization like the CCC to prevent waste of youthful energy and spirit which otherwise goes into delinquency. There is more work to be done in the world, especially in conservation, than can be done under ordinary circumstances. It takes mobilized manpower and equipment to tackle it. It wasn't many years later that the whole ~~infrastructure~~ infrastructure of America could use an extension of the CCC.

Camp White, on the West River Road, at the far side of "my" island, was typical of CCC camps throughout the country. About two hundred young men were there, in addition to their army supervisors. A work program for five years had been worked out for them, the period of time that Washington felt it would take to climb up out of the depression.

Until the camps began in 1933, our nation's forests were far behind in silvicultural work and fire protection for want of funds, equipment and sufficient labor. Now the reverse was suddenly true. There young fellows were up in the morning to a 6:30 breakfast; they were on the job from 8:00 until 4:00, thus putting in a standard work day. They were supplied with road-building materials, forestry tools, explosives, trucks, cement and all the other odds and ends of items needed for their work.

Most of our forests needed thinning cuttings for they were third and fourth growth saplings that had come up after removal of the first and second growth large timber. Most stands were too

dense for any of the trees to put on efficient growth. They stunted one another because of crowding for root and crown space. Those trees which were removed were too small for lumber but ideal for firewood or fence posts. When one considers that in the north it takes woodlot trees fifty to seventy-five years to reach lumber size it is obvious what a waste of time it is to permit a woodlot to remain unthinned.

With two to three human generations tied up, timewise, in woodlot trees, time is a consideration. With no immediate funds in sight, funds for labor don't exist to get in there and clean up a woodlot, especially on public lands. Only with an organization like the CCC could such a tremendous job be done on so large a scale. In just two years the boys advanced the state forest program the equivalent of about fifteen years, whipping the forests into such good growing conditions that within a few years after the CCC was disbanded their labor was beginning to be visible in some of the better forest stands.

For years I had been unhappy about the many standing dead chestnut trees in woods all over the northeast. Most of them were large trees, which could yield boards to 14 inches. I was torn between sentimental love of their huge, gray hulks, standing there like fossilized plant dinosaurs of a long gone time, and the knowledge that even they would decay eventually. Realizing they were rot resistant I was sure much sound wood must be still in their boles. But they were isolated individuals, as chestnuts didn't grow in pure stands, it would have been too costly to go in with a crew and equipment to remove one here and there. But few were even used as winter or sleeping dens by squirrels or raccoons as

Shenwood

there was little heart rot to permit formation of holes.

Then came the CCC. They harvested all of the chestnut on state forests. They converted quantities of it into posts and poles, which were used along state highways, and into lumber and shingles. Some of it was used as wall panelling in state-owned buildings. One of the spectacular uses of it, as already described, was the wall panelling and tables and window seats at the Museum, in the State People's Forest in Barkhamsted.

The White Camp boys kept a big pile of fireplace logs in a nook in back of the Museum building. Most of the time I had them bring in a big log for the back of the fireplace for me, as I much prefer the baklog type of fire, but sometimes I was able to move one in myself by turning it end for end. They also kept a pile of smaller firewood out there for me, oaks, maple, now and then a piece of hickory, which I used in front of the big log. But when it was really chilly, and that Museum room ^{with its high rafters} seemed a cavernous place to heat, I put two big chestnut longs in back, one atop the other, to get that much more reflection of heat.

Many a wet, chilly day I watched the chestnut burn with sad solemnity, as the flames gradually reduced the great logs to ashes. I never got over the feeling that I was watching friends burning up on a funeral pyre, for certainly not my generation, nor those in the foreseeable future, would be able to so profligately use chestnut in a fireplace.

I had the campsite up the river to myself the first couple of weeks because of the rain. Then one July evening I returned home to my campsite from the Museum to find that a family of two parents and two little girls were back, their tent set up ~~there~~

Sherwood
in the campsite next to mine. There was also woodsmoke, and other signs of life, at the old trailer. It was the two children who introduced me to the two trailerites, Herbie and Dave, retired stock company players. They had trouped with people like Katherine Hepburn and Spring Byington. Dave, the taller of the two, could sing; Herbie played a guitar. This combination made for many a pleasant summer evening, at one fireplace or another, listening to music of a slightly professional nature, and to the inevitable back-stage type of tales which have kept Hollywood magazines in business for years. But we were getting it first hand, and could ask questions. I suspect that some of the tales and answers were more than slightly enlarged upon, but I sure never expected to meet Hollywood in the New England woods.

Most of the summer, on week days, I was alone down there by the river ~~alone~~ first thing in the morning, and after work hours at the end of the day. One midweek afternoon I arrived back at camp a little early as there were no visitors at the Museum and I had locked up early. To my surprise there were three CCC boys, in regulation outfits hence easily identified, sitting on the bank of the island directly across from my camp. They looked as if they were untying their shoes, meaning that they intended to step into the river. I wasn't too disturbed at first, for I'd had only very pleasant and friendly experience with the Camp White Boys at the Museum. But as soon as these guys spotted me they began giggling in a coarse way which made me do some apprehensive thinking. I went into my tent, and watched them from there, where they couldn't see me.

The CCC had definite, tight, regular work schedules for all of the boys. Why were these three not with a work crew somewhere?

Shenwood
 They appeared to huddle in a conference for a few moments, then they rolled up their pant legs, obvious proof they intended to wade across the river. I decided to ~~step~~ outside, as the tent was no protection anyway, to make sure they did see me, to know that I was in residence on my private, allotted campsite. Soon they not only headed straight for my beach, but as their voices carried loud and clear over the water, it was quite clear that their intentions were something to be reckoned with. For the first time, that summer, I wished I had my hated old gun ba d. In fact I yearned for it, at that moment, but I had refused to keep it around one more summer.

I considered running up the car tracks to the road, but these combined with tall, big fellows, with strong, long legs, ~~and~~/things that were happening faster than ~~can~~ be told here, required better wits than my running. Traffic was rare on the East River Road during the week I couldn't expect any help to come along there, and if I sprinted for it I was sure the guys would overtake me, no matter whether I tried heading down the two mile stretch to the Museum, or the two mile stretch in the opposite direction to Riverton. My flashing mind considered getting up the steep hill toward Lookout Mountain, and climbing a tree and remaining there quietly, for city people are not too good at spotting anyone in the woods. But could I get away up there in time? I doubted it. It could be far worse to be trapped there than on the forest road.

What to do? It was pointless to yell. There was no one near enough to hear me. Every moment the fellows were coming closer at each step in the river, and talking coarser. I wondered how they dared come n^ear my camp, for they knew the rules. But all three were headed right for my campsite.

As they reached the last quarter of the way from the island to my place I decided to try saying something to them. "Hey, boys!"

Shawood
I shouted over the gently gurgling river, trying to sound both friendly yet firm., "You'd better land above or below. You are not allowed to come into an occupied campsite."

They hooted and caterwauled and said things that would have made my face red if I weren't so alarmed and furious. So I yelled crossly and firmly, "I'm ordering you to keep away from my campsite."

By that time they were stepping into the quiet shallow water at my shore. I went into my tent to get my axe, as it was the only weapon I could think of. Then I had visions of the three of them surrounding me and wrenching the axe from me; they would probably have no compulsions about using it on me.

Suddenly I had an idea, born of desperation. Would it work? Just as the boys walked up the beach to my picnic table and sat down to put their shoes on, I stepped quickly down to the water's edge near the tent and picked up a handful of stones and started throwing them at the guys. My aim was pretty good for a girl, as I use the baseball pitch rather than the ineffectual underhand throw of most girls. I hit one fellow on the first throw!

The guys grabbed their shoes and started to retreat up the woodland path toward the woodpile. The one I hit leaped right over the table yelling, "Cheese it, the woman's crazy!" As fast as I ran out of ammunition I picked up more. I kept up the fusillade until they were well up the path. Then I discovered that one of them had left a shoe behind. I picked it up and threw it after them, and shouted "You'll get your eyes and brains knocked out if you come in here again!"

No one was more surprised than I that my mode of defense worked. Thinking it over in recent years I have felt that a scene like that in television-crime days would have ended rather gruesomely. But in those days, even those inclined to do the wrong thing had their own

Shenwood
kind of native restraints. En masse, they were conditioned by a well-mannered society. There was no permissiveness out there, ready to slap their wrist and turn them loose again. TV had not yet been invented so those of rebellious mind were not yet schooled by a mass media in ways to criminal success.

Life being what it was at the time, having found a good thing I was going to make the best of it. I stacked piles of stone ammunition on the table, a pile at the water's edge, and another pile in my tent. When the boys were out of sight and the anger momentarily over, spontaneously I started strutting around the table. I suppose it was reaction. A gal alone in the woods, without a gun, had been able to defend herself against three husky brutes!. One moment I felt like a lone General who had outwitted a whole battalion. The next I felt deliciously primitive, back in the Stone Age. The latter was a fascinating sensation, the feeling of being part of a wild universe (a ~~feeling~~ ^{sensation} not easily attainable anywhere in civilization.

But come dark and bedtime I was anything but a strutting brave. I had long since learned there are no vicious wild creatures in the southern New England woods for a girl to fear living out there alone. It was the male half of my own species which was the hazard. I sat half the night on the river bank, where I could watch the stream in the starlight and become familiar with every dark shadow. Against the damp river chill I was wrapped in a blanket like a glum Indian. Beside me was a heap of stones, having moved them there from the table lest someone get to the table ahead of me.

It was going on three o'clock. Lulled by the quiet and the sibilant gurgles of the river and the abundance of fresh air, and feeling able to identify every shadow and sound and none were

Shenwood
ominous, I decided to quit. I suddenly remembered, too, that Camp White has a roll call at bedtime and if any of the boys were missing there'd have been a search on both sides of the river for them by now. Still, it took me an hour to get to sleep, for it was a sharp change to come inside where blind walls made watching impossible. I found myself straining to hear every sound. Human imagination can overpower logic all too easily. Then, suddenly, there was sunlight on the tops of the trees of the island out my door vista. I had slept late, for me.

Through the Museum boys who helped me all day I sent a message to the Camp Colonel. At suppertime the Colonel walked into my camp, and asked for details of the visit of the three boys in mid afternoon. He tried to give me a shotgun, but I told him of some of my adventures with a gun the ~~x~~ previous summers. The one he offered was too big to carry around, anyway. "If I leave it in my tent," I explained, "there is always the possibility someone has found it and is waiting in the tent for me." Now that the danger was over I just couldn't face having a gun again.

The Colonel explained that a gang of Brooklyn toughs had come in that week and there had been nothing but trouble since their arrival. "They don't belong in a small community like this," he said. "I'm thinking of transferring them out west before they set the townspeople against the whole Camp."

"I hope they don't have to be moved on my account," I quickly spoke up. "Just because I choose to live an unconventional life doesn't mean other people have to change their routine in order to make the world safe for me. I can move up to the Museum, you know, where I can lock that fortress-like door at night."

The Colonel shook his head. "They were breaking Camp Rules and

Shelwood
and the State Forest Rules when they came here into your camp. It doesn't matter who happens to occupy the camp. A campsite is the private home of whoever is the assigned occupant. Besides, they must have sneaked away from a work detail to have gotten over here at that hour of the day. I doubt if they will bother you again after I get through with them." He went on to suggest that I pretend I had a gun.

"If they do try coming in here again tell them that I gave you a gun and permission to use it in self defense. But I'm sure you'll never see those guys again."

That was the end of the Brooklyn boys. A few days later, after having gotten into some serious trouble in Riverton, they were shipped to the far west, to a camp far remote from any town. These were the kind of boys who needed real help, and the CCC tried to do what it could for them. Such behavior could mean dismissal from the Conservation Corps, but the Colonel felt as I did, that they needed patient guidance until they adjusted and could assume some responsibility.

My next problem was a simple one. Chipmunks were getting into my food. Since they are companions in my solitude, and all wildlings are my brothers and my sisters, and they all have to eat same as I, I found it difficult to make myself circumvent them. I suspect I subconsciously wanted them to help themselves to whatever I had to offer. But putting logic foremost I am opposed to feeding wildlife except in bad weather, or if it is known that their natural food is scarce for some reason. Most human food offerings aren't good for them, anyway. I finally borrowed a large metal can from a ranger, with a tight lid. That rescued my bread, crackers, cookies, and anything not sealed in cans.

One Monday, late afternoon, a man and wife and little girl of about three set up a trailer-tent two campsites removed from me. The

Sherwood
woman was a handsome almost matronly, redhead, a real glamor woman with all the associated costume trimmings which are so out of place in the woods. The man looked like a twin brother to Rudolph Valentino, who was still a movie idol at that time. The little girl was the most beautiful human child I had ever seen. She was ~~femininely~~ femininely dainty; her red hair was like spun gold and she possessed the sweetest little angel-face I ever saw. Oddly, she seemed happy in disposition, unspoiled.

They were on a two weeks' vacation. He went off fishing every day with his rowboat ~~carried~~ ^{towed} by his car. The mother and child remained in camp all day. This arrangement didn't last long, as I could have predicted the first day. In the middle of the week the wife demanded to be taken home. The car was gone all Thursday night, but the boat remained, and the tenting gear was not removed. Friday evening the man was back, without his family. He and I were the only campers present. I hoped Herbie and Dave would show up, or Beverly and Ruthie and their parents. Often they came on Friday evening for a long weekend, though sometimes they didn't appear until Saturday morning.

When I was washing my supper dishes in the river that Friday my lone neighbor came over and asked me if I would consider accompanying him to a nearby lake, and row for him while he cast for ~~fishes~~ bass. I knew it would be a bright moonlight night, and I had long wanted to see the lake which he mentioned for it had the reputation of having the clearest water in the state. You could see the bottom even in the deepest spots. He was courteous, and, knowing he had a family, there was no hint of a problem. Also, one of the few things I did expertly was row a boat, quietly, without splashing, to the satisfaction of the fussiest fisherman. So I decided to go.

~~The~~ ^{That} night and the moon and the lake were a beautiful dream. It was a challenge to row without making the slightest splash to preserve this ethereal setting. We remained out until about ten thirty, when I reminded my very quiet new friend that I had to be up at work in the morning so I would rather not be out too late.

Without a murmur, apparently contented with two fair-sized small mouth bass, he reeled in his line and took his flyrod apart. He kept the throttle low on the outboard on the way back to the car, and maintained silence for which I was grateful. This mystical outdoor scene couldn't stand human spoken words. Not, at least, between two strangers.

Driving back in the car he also maintained silence, though this I found awkward. When we entered the Forest, and passed the Ranger's house at the beginning of the East River Road I made an effort at conversation. It was one of those times when making an effort to talk is like tramping uphill in deep snow and there is no energy left for pushing out words. I soon found out why the strained atmosphere. My world was suddenly shattered.

"Do you mind if I hold your hand?" he asked.

I gulped. I yearned like mad to get out and walk back to the Ranger's house. But the car was moving right along and we were soon ⁱⁿ the deeper woods half way to the campsite, and I didn't dare open the door and jump out.

But I had to answer his question. "I...I don't enjoy holding hands," I blurted out. "It isn't a good idea. We are total strangers. And you are married."

"You saw my wife," he said simply. "All she lives for is clothes and fancy hair-dos. She is ruining that little girl of ours

Shenwood
 "making a conceited doll out of her. Why didn't I meet someone like you before I met her?"

He wouldn't have looked at me twice. I wasn't pretty the way the redhead must have been. Nor did I dress in a way which would have pleased him when he was young. He was guilty of ^{having} choosing a doll ^{for a life mate} but he would never admit it now.

We were rapidly approaching the turn into the campsite. It being ~~was~~ Friday and such a beautiful night surely some of the other campers had arrived.

Suddenly I was aware that he wasn't slowing for our turn-in. As we were about to pass by, thinking maybe he wasn't as familiar with the road as I, I spoke up, "Hey! Here we are!"

He slammed on the brakes, turned the car around practically on two wheels and headed ^a stright for a big tree at the edge of the camp road. He jammed on the brakes; we missed the tree by inches. I almost went through the windshield.

Without a word I got out of the car and walked down to my tent. There I stood, on the bank above the river, my arms folded, in the silvery moonlight sparkling off the tiver, mad as a wet cat. I was still shaking from the frightening experience, but more angry now than scared. I could see none of the other campers had arrived.

I heard the guy drive slowly down the raod. Soon he came over to speak to me, where I was leaning against a tree on the river bank, not daring to have him catch me in my tent.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "I did that deliberately. I thought that if we had an accident it would look good enough in court to win me a divor~~ce~~."

Sherman

"What if you had crippled me for life?" I asked with a world of scorn in my voice. "What if we both lay bleeding to death up there, and no help along that road until morning? Now get out of here. I never want to see you again!"

He stood there silently a moment, then bowed his head and walked away. It took me three hours to drift off to sleep. I awoke at dawn, and peeked out the screened window. He had truly folded his tent like an Arab and stolen away. There was now only empty space where his tent, trailer and car had been.

Whenever an annoying human incident occurs, and I find myself alone in the great outdoors, I become suddenly almost drowned in a great flood of love which washes over me for the maples, and the pines, the Solomon seals and the viburnums, the cinquefoil and the trefcils, for the alders and the dogwoods and the mosses and ferns, and the twittering birds, the chattering squirrels and the darting mayflies and dragonflies. All nature seems so good, in their properly appointed tracks in contrast to humans. All is suddenly right with the world. Nature cleanses me of human foibles. Though in this case I had to admit that I had civilization to thank for this guy's inhibitions.

That clear moonlit evening proved a rarity. Soon the rain was back again, and my shoes and suitcases were green with mould once more. Being away at the Museum all day didn't give me much chance to burn my wood stove long enough to keep the tent contents from getting damp. By the time evening arrived the mould had gotten ahead of me.

Twice in the next few days the river flooded to near bank level. One night, just before dark, when I was alone at my campsite ~~in~~

Sheerwood

in mid week, the river swelled to within two inches of the contour which kept my campsite dry. I wondered whether or not to go up to the Museum for the night, but decided, when the rain seemed to be letting up, to stick it out for the night.

About eleven o'clock suddenly came one of the hardest downpours I ever heard on my canvas roof. Alarmed, I decided to hike the two miles back to the Museum in the downpour rather than be flooded out in the dark. And dark it was. One of those black nights when you can't see your hand before your face. I ~~put on~~ got dressed, put on raincoat, rain hat and rubber boots, and started out of the tent with the flashlight. Under my arm inside the raincoat, was a bag of breakfast supplies. Then, of all nights for it to happen, the flash^hlight batteries went dead! I had intended the past couple of weeks to buy new batteries as these had been weakening, but I just didn't get across the river to the store.

Usually I find it easy to find my way with my feet at night, as I never wear stiff leather soles. As I wear sneakers when out in the woods, my feet had long since become accustomed to the feel of sticks, stones, grass, leaves. With my feet I can identify soil contours, path boundaries, plant stubs, a corns. But this night I was reluctant to start out in the blackness without a light. For all I knew, the depression between the campsite and the road up the slope might be filled with deep water from a backwash along low contours there. It was a simple matter to wade through even a deep puddle but I didn't want to risk getting caught in a current, with so many clothes on; it could sweep me out into the river, which I could tell from deep gulping and swishing sounds was racing by.

I decided to try out an idea I'd read somewhere. I went back

into the tent, fumbled around until I found a can of something, and easily found the can opener which was right where it should be. I opened the can, and dumping its contents into a pan I could tell from the odor it was beans. I rinsed the can out with water from an overflowing bucket just outside the tent. Fumbling around for anything that felt like a towel I dried the inside of the can. With the can opener I clumsily punched^{ed} several holes in its sides. I had to put a stone inside it to get leverage; but then I'd gotten a candle out and had lit it, so^I could see what I was doing. I dripped some of the melting wax into the bottom of the can and stood the candle up in the bottom center.

Outside the wind was roaring in the trees, and the rain pouring. I was getting nervous and wanted to be on my way, but I had to stop long enough to improvise a handle. With much finger-stumbling I ~~was~~ finally got a coat hanger to catch in one of the can holes and work reliably. Not having cut off the entire can top I now bent it down over the candle. It worked. Enough air getting in through the holes to keep the candle burning, I held my improvised lantern up to inspect it. It worked well enough to give me confidence to start out. I put some matches in my pocket and stepped out into the wind and rain. The light from the can-lantern held steady and made flickering light and shadows on the ground and bushes.

As I started toward the roadway up out of the campsite I could hear the roar of the waterfall coming down off of Lookout Mountain, but even worse were the gobble-you-up sounds the river was making not far from my tent. If I could get up onto the dirt road I could escape the river menace, but was the waterfall rushing over the road; had it ~~washed~~ washed out the road?

Herwood

The feeble gently flickering lantern gave enough light so I could see that there was only a narrow, elongated puddle where I had feared a backwash, so I quickly waded across it and hurried up the wooded slope to the river road, which was about forty feet above the stream at this point. It was a relief to get out of earshot of the gulping river. I sat down on a rustic bench which had recently been put there, trying to discipline myself to walk down the road past that roaring waterfall. Maybe it had undermined the road and I'd fall into a deep gully and be flushed down into the river. After all, there was no reason why I couldn't stay on that bench all night. I knew there was a large culvert under the road for the usually slow-trickling waterfall to run under. Maybe my light was bright enough to warn me in time if there were a landslide. If I washed out into the river nary a friend, or~~a~~ relative, not even a Park employee or a CCC boy would ever know what had become of me.

While I was sitting there, seriously considering spending the rest of the night on the banch, I was amazed to see car lights, so bright in the blackness, approaching from Riverton way. Certainly no one was out looking for trouble on a night like this. I took a chance and stood by the side of the road and waved the driver down. Lo and behold, it was the Head Ranger. He was more than glad to drive me to the Museum.

"I was worrying about you down there. I didn't know if you were asleep and I should wake you up. The river is already starting up over its banks."

As we drove past the waterfall, the brilliant headlights showed it to be in its proper fall and run-off space. I could see how ex-

Shewcock
cessive had been my imaginings. Its water was nowhere near the road, for the culvert lay in a small ravine far below.

The Ranger's wife, when we checked in there first in case of any emergency calls, refused to let me go up to the Museum. She bedded me down for the night on her very comfortable living room divan. It was amazing how the storm faded into insignificance now that I could no longer hear it, for now I was boxed in between insulated plaster walls and ceilings. This, of course, is why humans learned to build houses in the first place, once there were no longer enough caves to go around. To shut out the turbulence of the cosmos. But soon I began to feel I was missing something. I wanted to be back out in it, lest I miss some marvel.

Again the stormy weather passed and the sun was out again. My river dropped back to become once more a gentle, murmuring thing. It ushered young fish to my doorstep. It brought water birds. Again I could love its mossy rocks and mayfly larvae, water striders and inquisitive little minnows.

Many New England streams, which normally have a lazy current during the summer, are tinted brown or tan-yellow, according to the kind of diatoms or other algae which are prevalent in the water. The brown is not to be confused with muddiness. The stream remains transparent, like amber, and if you dip up a glassful of it, it looks as colorless as water from a faucet. The West Branch of the Farmington River is usually dark-brown-golden in color, but this summer it was mostly like pale gingerale from so much rain flushing it out.

By the next week-end the river and the waterfall off the mountain were almost back to normal. The French family who camped down at the point beyond my campsite came to enjoy the drier ^e wather and

Silverwood
the sunshine. They caught two good-sized small mouth bass in the river pool near the woodpile, and to my surprise they got a 42-inch eel one of the evenings they were there not far from my campsite. What memories that evoked!

But the rain was not to let up to allow enjoyment of these wildlings for long. On July 21st it rained all day again. The next day there was a steady downpour, and that evening, after a brief peek at the stars, a wild thunderstorm overrode the valley. By the 23rd I felt as if I were living in Noah's time, for it rained again that day.

On rainy days I usually do the things I hate to pin down to when the sun is bright. I write the letters I have been putting off. I do some much-delayed mending. But there were far more rainy days than clear ones this summer, so I was well caught up with such chores, and there wasn't a library in the area so I could catch up on book reading.

The river began to creep up again. The two trailer men appeared, fed up with the rain in the city. City rainy days are, gray dreary and gloomy. Out in the country, rain taps a cozy talking-sound on trees and leaves; it inspires a feeling of snugness and fellowship. Trees and shrubs and ground plants have a sort of yellow glow in subdued cloud-light, and remain forever artistic in design.

There were very few visitors to the Museum these rainy days. But I dutifully hiked up there every morning, to assign chores to the CCC boys, get a fire going in the fireplace to keep mould out of the building, and to work on new exhibits. By mid afternoon, everything ~~dripping~~ ^{trickling} with the dripping rain, I walked back to the campsite, preferring the intriguing interplay of birds, squirrels,

Shenwood
trees, river, wildflowers, fishes and ferns to the rigid walls
of the Museum when there were no visitors ^{with whom to} ~~be~~ congenial ~~xxxx~~.

The smell of dampness outdoors is always an alluring intoxicant to me. I would make a good swamp frog. The woods sometimes seem more fragrant when wet, filling the earth with an earthy humus odor; this is one of the most primitive of stimulants to the senses for anyone with a good nose. But I wondered what the Indians did in such a wet summer as this, for they came into the east not long after the glacier melted back and the climate was much damper than now. They must have had a time of it, keeping their tepees and longhouses dry.

On the 28th of July, after more rain, the Weather Bureau offered the explanation that a storm area which belonged to Bermuda had drifted our way and become blocked^k by stalled air masses; they were soon talking of torrential rains which belonged to the tropics. No one foresaw the culmination of it, still nearly two months away.

The first week of August was a pleasant surprise; the sun came out and stayed that way for several days. But a record-breaking heat wave, accompanied by the inevitable high humidity from the "steaming jungle" of the excessively wet woods and fields, settled in for a few days. This lasted for nine days, most unusual for New England where a heat wave usually breaks after three days. The cities were suffocating.

But temperatures always remain ten to fifteen degrees lower in the country, and even lower in woods^{spots} beside streams where wispy air convections are translated into cooling breezes over nearby land. I used to wish those gentle, rising airwaves were pastel-colored. What a beautiful sight that would be!

Sheppard

About this time I was seeing a bald eagle every afternoon around five o'clock, or as soon as I returned from the Museum. I never saw him at any other hours of the day when I was in camp. In late afternoon he flew in from upstream, passing over the center of the river and alighted on the top of a tree on the far tip of the island downstream. As far as I could determine, he spent the night there, for when dark came his white head stood out in the descending dusk. His hunting territory must have been upstream; maybe the fishing was better up there. He was seen in the area a year or two before I arrived, and he was still a round a couple of years after I left. I made no attempt to go near him as I didn't want to scare him off, for he didn't always appear on week-ends when there were many people milling around. I am sure he watched me moving around, but as I have often learned, a wild creature will often accept one or two humans who, to them, appear to be in "their" territory. And so I was in mine.

During the middle of August we had considerable more rain, including thunder storms five evenings in a row. The mosquitos were far worse than usual, for they'd had ideal conditions all summer for producing an abundance of individuals in many consecutive generations. Fortunately, for me, constant stream breezes kept them away. Campfire smoke in the evening, too, helped when I could find enough dry wood to build a fire, using wet pieces and handfuls of soggy leaves to make a smoke smudge. Of course my umbrella tent had an efficient netting door and window, so I could sleep without mosquitos buzzing in my ears.

Regardless of the rain there were still things to see along the roads and paths. On one large pine tree I saw the biggest,

Shenwood
fattest caterpillar of my life. He was a light green giant, made conspicuous by orange markings. The chubby legs reminded me of elephant legs. It was a marvel watching this creature eat. He would start at the tip of a pine needles and in less than thirty seconds eat it all up. Fortunately they weren't common, else they had the potential for ending our eastern white pines. A close search only produced four on that one tree.

It was early fall now. Time for the late-season, shorter-day plants to blossom. Now all around me were goldenrods, asters and ragweed; cardinal flowers were still in bloom and there were bottle gentians and turtlehead in bloom in some of the wet places. Joe-pye-weed was showing its soft raspberry color along the brook out back of the Museum, where it added a deep blush to the feathery-white snakeroot which gave a snowy touch to their swampy habitats. Boneset, that once-important medicinal herb, whose stems grow right through the leaves, was still in blossom though past its prime. The straw-like flower heads of pearly everlasting were almost ready to be gathered for winter bouquets. Fat, long green milkweed pods, products of earlier-blossoming flowers, were almost ready to split open and send their parachutes out into the air.

We had a record-breaking cold snap the night of the 5th of September; there was frost in the open areas around the Museum but not down by the river as the stream was large enough to modify the nearby temperature. There were only two brief rains in three weeks from the end of August until the rains returned again with a vengeance. This time the storm developed into a weather climax unknown in the region for more than a century. Actually, it began as gentle rain on Friday the ~~ix~~ 16th, but in the downpour the next

Sherwood
day I stood under the dripping trees outside my tent, looking at the old brown trailer. As the river had dropped back to almost normal, it was high on the bank above the river. Soon now, in October, Herb and Dave would tow it home to Hartford for the winter. Or, so I thought, But that was not to be.

School was in session again, and the rain having returned I knew there would be few people coming out to the Museum the rest of the year. I hoped, however, for a few people on bright sunny October week-ends, so I would stay with the Museum job until the fall foliage season was over.

Feeling sort of alone, as I stood there looking at the old brown trailer in the downpour, and tired of rain for the first time in my life, I decided to be a sissy and moved up to the Museum. It was getting colder nights now, too.

It took me four trips to carry food and clothing up there, though I knew that one of the Rangers would drive it all up if I asked. I got soggy wet, despite my rain gear, trekking back and forth along that road in the ceaseless rain. But I soon had all my wet clothes spread out to dry in front of the Museum fire, knowing no visitors would walk in at this late date in such weather.

Sunday it was still raining. I hadn't seen a human being in days. But I'd been given a lot of old magazines, and I settled down to some of my writing, so I kept occupied. Of course rain never stopped me from walking in the woods and along trails, where there was always something taking place in busy nature which I converted into my endless note-taking. The animals and bugs and birds had to keep right on with their daily chores, regardless of the weather. They couldn't go indoors as I could, other than to hide temporarily under a leaf or a log.

Sherwood

That Monday, in the fall of 1938, it was still raining, and again on Tuesday. I made a couple of trips to the campsite, to bring up anything I could use, and to get some exercise. About all that was left in my tent was the cot, ^{the axe,} ~~the~~ larger pans and buckets. Where was all the water coming from? Usually in the fall New England is dry enough to produce a forest fire season. I also walked across the bridge to the Pleasant Valley store and post office, where I obtained not only food supplies but newspapers and magazines, and almost as important where I found someone to talk to as my voice was becoming rusty from disuse.

Of course I could always hunt up a Ranger to talk to, or go in and visit the head Ranger's wife. But I preferred to be self reliant. I didn't want anyone to feel they had to entertain me. After all, if I were up the Amazon, or in deepest Africa, or in far Alaska, as I so often dreamed of being, I would have to depend upon my own wits, and company.

When I woke up Wednesday morning, that fateful September 23rd, in the cozy Museum room back of the fireplace, I could hardly believe it was still raining, yet a gray, rainy day seemed to have become a normal state of affairs. I began to wonder if there would be any fall colors to hang around for; the rain would soon knock all the leaves off the trees. I began worrying again about mold ^u in my tent. In this ceaseless dampness the floor could rot out. I thought maybe I should go down there for the day and keep a fire going in the stove for a few hours. I could bring some dry sticks down from the fireplace pile, and reading materials.

About ten thirty that morning, just as I walked into the Museum, carrying a small log in from the woodpile, and was about to leave for my campsite, I nearly jumped out of my skin by a telephone ring^g.

Showered
 It took me a few seconds to remember the fire-line phone, in my back room. ^{The line} ~~It~~ ran from from the Museum to the top of the mountain up in back, one of those potentially useful but seldom-used CCC projects, intended for use in forest fire emergencies. I had never heard it ring before. I wondered what on earth could be the matter, as I walked in to the ~~string~~ ringing phone with a weird feeling I would be talking to someone in outer space. There could be no forest fire in this weather.

As I picked up the receiver I felt I was ^a crazy to expect anyone to answer up on the mountain. But a man's voice spoke. It was the Head Ranger. "Would you mind getting word to my men?" he asked. "Tell someone a landslide has washed my car into a ditch, and to send a crew up the Greenwood Road to pull me out."

Just as I hung up the phone the Museum front door pushed open. I was almost as startled as when the phone rang. In walked the very man I was hoping to find. Before I could say a word, however, he said, "You'd better come down to your camp with me. We'll have to get your things out in a hurry. The river was up to your tent door when I left there a few minutes ago."

I gave him the Head Ranger's message. He thought that over for a minute. "Well," he said, "guess we'll have to help him out first because we might need both him and his car in a hurry for several emergencies. Looks like we have trouble ahead. No use in your walking down there in this downpour. I'll pick you up in the truck when I get back. That might be just as fast as your trying to walk down there to rescue anything. I'll send a crew up the Greenwood Road, then I'll come back for you."

I remembered the waterfall off the mountain. Maybe this time

Sherwood
it would really wash out the road, before we could get past it to rescue my tent. It's amazing the things you worry about when your head is full of emergency alarms.

The past five days had been almost stupidly quiet. From nothing, now too much was happening.

It was an hour and a half before the Ranger's assistant came for me. Off we drove, up the East River Road, both suspecting we were too late. I sure hated to lose my good umbrella tent. Again, the worry of the waterfall had been superfluous. It was still in its proper channel, but what a roar.

But what a sight greeted us at the campsite! The backwash which I had feared along the low contours between the road down and my camp had now happened. More than half of the whole camping area was flooded. It was difficult to recognize anything, as the river and the campground ~~site~~ ^{site} were one and the same. Herb and Dave's trailer, and my tent, looked as if they were standing out in the river.

We left the truck part way up the slope, having backed down in to be ready to pull out in a hurry. I waded to my tent in my sneakers, having left my boots in the truck as they would be a drag if they filled with water. The water was over my knees in the depression. When I finally stepped into the flooded tent I could feel a slight tug of the current pulling at it, for the water was one and a half feet deep up my legs.

"You stand in there astride, to hold down the tent floor, while I untie the guy ropes," my companion said. The tent stakes were out of sight, but he later told me he knew the ground would be soft so he just pulled on the tent corners and they came up.

Sherwood

I handed out the stove to him, and between us we got the cot out and hastily folded up. I knew he had other emergencies to ~~forget~~ to so rather than bother him with pots and pans I threw my large kettles and their covers out into the river. I glanced out the door long enough to see my big aluminum kettle, in which I had cooked baked beans in a pit ~~x~~ by the Fenton, and which had shown me super-chilled liquid for the first time in my life, sailing down the ~~swift~~ⁱ, over-full West Branch of the Fenton River. Half consciously I assumed I could find it later, caught in the debris by the bridge.

The tent floor began to rip just as we took down the umbrella framework. I had to jump out fast, as the current was pulling at the tent and could entrap me in it. We hurried to get the tent, the stove and the cot up to the truck before we became engulfed.

About four o'clock that afternoon I was walking on the high dry West River Road looking down at an amazing flood. The Head Ranger had insisted I get across the bridge just in case the bridge went out in the night. There were several houses in a little colony along there. We were all looking down at the roofs, and small barns, and chicken coops and other unbelievable objects floating rapidly downstream in a greatly swollen, rolling, fast-moving river.

I was suddenly conscious of something overhead. It had stopped raining now, for about two hours. I looked up and saw the oddest colored clouds I had ever seen, more what one would expect on a horizon during a fantastic sunset. Sunlight was showing through in patches. Not only were sunset colors overhead disconcerting, but even more confusing to me was the speed at which the clouds were traveling. The ^eRegional Forester, who lived on that side of the river, was taking color pictures of the river. I tried three

Shelwood
 or four times to persuade him to look at the sky, but he was too preoccupied with the ~~fantastic~~ ^{fascinating} scene in the river below to listen to any ~~damned~~ female who couldn't see where the action was.

With all those massive objects a ding like battering rams in the river I didn't see how either the Riverton bridge, or the one at Pleasant Valley which I had crossed to get over here, could remain in place long. So I, too, gave up looking at the fantastic sky to look at a fantastic river. The District Ranger was positive the Pleasant Valley bridge would hold, for it was new, of very modern design, replacing the old one which had washed out in 1936. I bet him a nickle that the bridge would go out in the night. "He accepted my bet and again stated firmly that the bridge would hold.

Early in the morning, when I was outside in the road up near Camp White, someone stepped over beside me and handed me a nickel. "River~~x~~ton, too?" I asked. The District Ranger nodded his head.

For the first time in my life I was stranded. Cut off from the civilization from which I had always tried so hard to get away. Of course I had plenty of company on this terrace, high above the river, and there was Camp White just a matter of feet away, with a train load of food on hand. So I had to admit it was ^{not} a stoical experience, such as in covered wagon days.

We soon learned that all the electric and phone lines were down. But we had a big godsend. The CCC boys of Camp White. If they had not been there, the story in that little valley could have been very different.

By the evening of the second day the boys had thrown up a temporary bridge at Riverton. The following morning, when I was about ready to leave for the Museum, via the Riverton bridge word

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reached us that the East River Road had washed out somewhere between Riverton and my old campsite. No one could get to the museum or the Ranger's Station.

With nothing better to do I took a walk down to see the wreck of the Pleasant Valley bridge. It lay partway downstream, swung over against the far bank, looking like the framework of an old-fashioned bi-plane. Even better engineering, and much more money, would have to go into the next bridge or it wouldn't be worth putting one across again.

We also learned that when a group of CCC boys tried to go up over Lookout Mountain road to get down to the Ranger Station so many big trees were down across the mountain road that the back way was impassable and would take awhile to be cleared. This was just before the advent of the power saw so all of the tree removal had to be done by hand, and some of the trees were very large.

Those of us who happened to be assembled in the road when we heard this news we stood looking at one another. "Trees down!" said the District Ranger. "Up on the mountain?" There wasn't any flood up there. Just down here in the bottom of the valley. That puzzle remained with us for another four days. For we still had no contact with the outside world.

It wasn't until the sixth day after the flood that phone and electricity had been reconnected. Most of the people in the little colony above the river had been cooking their meals in their fireplaces, and the chefs at Camp White were taking care of the dining hall demands of their charges by cooking on wood stoves. I telephoned Hartford right away, assuming my sister would be worried that maybe I ~~was~~ ^{and} my tent might have washed downstream for

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 our flood would have made the newspapers. A friend answered the phone. ~~xxx~~ "Isn't it awful," she moaned. "I guess we had the worst of the hurricane right here in Hartford. No, we weren't worried much about you. The papers said the hurricane didn't get that far west. Wasn't it awful?"

"Yes," I agreed. But I was still talking about our flood. I felt a bit miffed that she considered her storm worse than ours, that our spectacular flood, which washed buildings downstream and knocked out bridges, wasn't even worth mentioning. No one had been worried about me! And I was a little disappointed that this intelligent friend should indulge in such exaggeration as calling a storm a hurricane. My mother had a habit of calling every severe storm a tornado or a hurricane, but I didn't expect it from this friend.

A few hours later we all learned the truth. We were stunned. I have often wondered if those of us in Pleasant Valley and Riverton were the only people in Connecticut not to know about the hurricane until a week after it was over. We had all assumed this was just a repeat of 1936, with a little more rain accumulation.

But, we could have known the very day of the hurricane. A man who lived in one of the houses not far from Pleasant Valley bridge, up on the high river ~~x~~ road, who had been among our group out in the road watching the excitement that afternoon, had received in the mail ^{that day} ~~the day before~~ a brand new barometer he had bought. As he'd had a nail waiting for it on his porch he hung it up as soon as he unpacked it. He stood back to admire it. Then swore. It was defective! It read twenty-seven point something. He took the barometer down, gently shook it, and hung it up again. The

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reading might have been right, in September, in the Caribbean.

He took it down, rewrapped it and addressed it to the manufacturers, and wrote a blistering letter to them as this was no cheap barometer but their best. He mailed it back that day.

I have often wished I could have seen his face when he learned that the barometer was right. The manufacturer wrote back they were framing his letter for their office wall.

"Why," groaned the District Ranger, "didn't you MAKE me look at the sky and take a picture of those ^{speeding} clouds!" How could I have? I'd been a sky watcher since my childhood days when Talcott "t. dominated my western horizon. His world lay around his feet.

Now we all knew why those great trees on Lookout Mountain had been knocked down. That had been a puzzle all week. That small mountain was just tall enough, 1200 ft. to extend tree-tops up into the path of the hurricane winds, which apparently had lifted above the valley we were in. Now we counted our blessings, for at least the roofs of those houses on the ridge above the river could have joined the massive debris in the river.

For while I had been keeping a puzzled eye on the strange, fast-moving clouds but could get no one else to look at them, all of eastern Connecticut, Rhode Island and Long Island in New York had been living through a cataclysm unknown in the recorded history ~~of~~ of southern New England. To the 9.7 inches of rain which had fallen in the seven days prior to the hurricane, suddenly six more inches fell in a matter of a few hours, which was what brought the river up to my tent. But what was worse, of course, but which we had been spared in our valley, was the winds up to over a hundred miles an hour that had accompanied the rain. My friend's tragic voice and her words had been no exxageration. While we were actually

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enjoying an exciting spectacle there were many people in Connecticut, and especially on Long Island, who were convinced that the world had come to an end.

The stories now fill volumes. My sister, let out of work from Travelers early, spent a harrowing hour on a trolley car, which became stalled near a theatre where she could see the marquee go flying through the air. Then she noticed someone in a car outside the window, beckoning to her. It was a difficult decision to make. The trolley looked big and safe. But it was stalled. The cars out there were at least crawling along. She chose the car, and after traveling ^{at} a snail's pace all the way arrived home safely.

Herbie and Dave, as they told the story later, happened to be driving home in Hartford past a row of tall, slender lombardy poplars, which had intrigued me since childhood. Before their amazed eyes one poplar, ~~the~~ ^{then} another, went over like a row of soldiers taking turns at falling. Need I say, their old trailer tipped over and went out into the river, but it was chained to a sturdy tree so it didn't go downstream. But another thing happened there which none of us had anticipated; the stream bed had been so scoured out, taking with it the point on which the French family had been camping, and so much water and current had gotten into the low depression I had once feared falling into at night, that the whole campground area was completely rearranged by nature. It was no longer a suitable terrace for a campground.

Hurricanes were considered rare in New England; no one ever expected to see one. The last one had been one hundred and twenty-three years before, in 1815, the one recorded by John James Audubon who had been out chasing birds in it. There were earlier records,

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 in the 1600's and 1700's, but they were all too long ago for hand-me-down family stories. This 1938 hurricane was to hold the record for the worst damage until 1954; both did extensive damage as they occurred in highly developed areas. Other such storms outside of New England were worse in specific ways; the Galveston, Texas hurricane of 1900 killed about 6000 people, mostly from a sudden rise of coastal waters. The storm along the south Florida keys in 1935 killed many service men; it had the lowest barometric reading on record, 26.35. As the kinetic energy of a hurricane is 10 to the 10th power, a tornado being only 10 to the 4th, they dangerous storms, and, unlike a tornado, can last as long as 24 hours. The energy of a hurricane is equal to 500,000 atom bombs; the winds are usually over 200 miles per hour, and the storm extends up to 30,000 feet, the whole thing able to whip up ocean waves to 40 to 45 ft. That's the kind of sky we were down under on that river road in the People's Forest.

About 600 people died that day we were ^aatching chicken coops rushing downstream. The toll would have been higher had school still ^eben out, as thousands of summer cottages all along Long Island and the New England coast had been washed out to sea or up into steets and woods. Eventually I learned that nearly 2000 trees on the State College campus had been blown over, including most of those I had enjoyed looking at from my dormitory window.

There are coincidences, sometimes, in the affairs of men, which almost seem premeditated by nature. It was a ^{fortuitous} ~~coincidental~~ fact that the CCC and WPA were in place and at their best efficiency when the 1938 hurricane took place. A pool of trained, disciplined labor was available at that crucial time. But even they needed supplementary help, especially from those more experienced with forest ^{and electric wire} work. Expert logging crews came in from as far as Oregon; they gave guidance

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to CCC and WPA crews, or took on whole public forests as their own projects. There were also the forestry students of the schools of the northeast. They were put to work in the timber depots and at mills, scaling board feet and estimating lumber piles, for most of the downed trees were salvaged as they were removed from streets and lawns and sent to local mills, as well as trees from flattened forests.

As there was far too much lumber, and too many logs, for local mills or markets to absorb, the surplus was rescued by a Timber Salvage Administration set up by Washington. Forest and woodlot owners were paid about 80% of the value of the timber, and permitted to store it until it could be gradually fed to the market. Pines and other softwoods were stored as logs in ponds, about 30 such ponds being used in Connecticut. Hardwoods would rot in water, so were sawed and stacked. Our Professor M. had about 100,000 board feet of his own and neighboring woodlot owners stacked on some wild land along the Fenton, at Daleville, about a mile above my Fenton River camp site.

The portable power saw was not yet invented, which points up the value of the CCC and WPA labor pool. Without them a large percentage of the wood would have rotted in the forest. ~~XXX~~ Men didn't have to turn to artificial exercises in those days to develop muscle.

An ironic twist to this story is that within three years all that lumber, and pond-stored logs, were grabbed up by the demanding market of the second World War. In no time there was a shortage of lumber, which I was to experience myself a few years later when I tried to have a house built in western Connecticut.

But before that was to happen, every forester available was hired to handle the glut of wood. Even I received a telegram from a woman in Massachusetts with large timber holdings, requesting that

She would
 I come and supervise the salvage operations on her land. I declined, much as I would have loved the job, for I had already learned that loggers and lumberjacks don't want a woman telling them what to do; with two skirts bossing ~~them~~, well I didn't feel I was a good enough psychologist to handle it. Besides, my strongest ~~forte~~ was silviculture, selective cutting to produce a better forest, not managing the harvest of what amounted to clear-cutting.

As to damage to wildlife, there was little that could be done other than try to keep fire out. Such excessive forest-debris, from the tops and other slash of thousands of trees, did create unusual cover for the small wild creatures, and it brought down many nuts and seeds for eating. As the storm had happened in the fall, long past nesting season, no nests were destroyed. But because of the fire hazard, the hunting season was closed in 1938. What had happened to the private lives of millions of little creatures, like chipmunks, squirrels, woods mice, ground birds, and the bigger foxes and raccoons, no one was ever to know. Just looking at a down forest at that time one would expect every deer to break a leg. But the game species seemed to come through judging by records the next year or two. No doubt the increase in ground shelter had been to their advantage, although many no doubt were ^{as easily} ~~as~~ caught by predators as if they ^{were} ~~were~~ in traps.

The hurricane made its effects felt in the natural world for a long time. It was our Professor M. who discovered that salt damage to conifers occurred as far as 40 miles inland, the worst of it being within a five mile line along the coast. Pines, arbor vitae, hemlock and white spruce, and rhododendron, were soon to die, because of salt driven into their needle and leaf cells. Broadleaved trees had been about to drop their leaves anyway; but those which

X 1/2 in from stop

■ held on had the tissue between their veins punched out, only frames of leaves remaining.

Eventually I got back to the Museum via Riverton. There was no choice now but to pack up and go home. I left my torn and very wet tent to dry out in the big Forest barn, in among the machinery, knowing I would come back for it later. My treasured little wood stove I put down in a small dirt cellar hole below a trap door in the floor of my Museum bedroom, also to be retrieved later. My sister came for me, and as we had to travel the east road to Riverton we stopped down to see my campsite. I could tell by the debris hung up in the surrounding trees and bushes that the water had been six feet where my tent had stood. And there was Herb and Dave's old trailer, looking dead and decrepit, lying on its side out near the edge of the now receded stream.

I could hardly recognize the site. The huge tree under which had stood the French family's camp was lying stretched out from bank to the river. To my delight, if a bit of concern, under its roots, in a little pool of spring-fed water, as it was a considerable distance from the river edge, was a small brook trout. His white-edged fins flashed as he dove to hide from me under the roots; then he sidled back out a ways to have a look at me. I stood there, a long, long time, looking with deep soul empathy at him. A final last pal of my camping days for that year.