

THE GLADNESS OF NATURE

To those favored ones who know Nature and love her she is as a second mother. He who has learned to understand the animals, the birds, and the flowers of meadow and grove, becomes, as it were, their brother. With all these wild creatures he has this in common, that he, too, is a child of Old Mother Nature. He sees the beauty of the world about him and the joy to be found in the study of Nature in her thousand living images; to him, she is at all seasons of the year a source of gladness.

In spring, how sweet to see the rushing waters, formed by the melting snow and the April rains, flow down from the hillside, through the valleys and out to the sea. Then the waters begin to subside; the brook babbles over the pebbles and logs and, winding its way through sedges and marsh-grass, emerges into the pond. Here the young shoots of the bulrush and the sprouts of the water-lilies are peeping through to the light; the wapato plants are shooting their arrow-shaped leaves up to greet the May sun. White and blue violets and then the pink and pearly mayflowers appear. The frogs' chorus pipes forth from the water's edge at twilight, and hundreds of pollywogs swim about in the pond during the day. A muskrat paddles about the pond, gathering dead reeds for his home under the old stump. From the branches of a large willow-tree a robin swells his bright, red breast and pours his blithe music over all. And hidden by the budding leaves there is a nest and four blue eggs. Far up the stream a wild-duck is quacking. She, too, has a nest of eggs to hatch, and something must have disturbed her. She is quiet now, however, and there is no sound but the joyous song of the bird in the tree. Oh! "the world's running over with joy."

A few weeks later the strawberries come in the old pasture, and the cows graze in the meadow. Then the air is filled with swallows and beautiful butterflies. A dragon-fly darts about in the air, the bees are buzzing around the dandelions and willows, and a scarlet-tufted woodpecker drums away on an old apple tree. The apple-blossoms are here and gone. The days are warmer now, and the corn grows fast in the field. The clover is ripe, and haying's begun.

But now the evenings become cooler, and it is the harvest time. With the first frost, the leaves on the maples turn brown, yellow, and red. The pumpkins are ripe, and the Thanksgiving turkey gobbles in the barnyard. In the evenings, numerous flocks of geese, and grackles, and land plover pass overhead. The river is covered with flocks of brant and sea-ducks. Then one morning they all leave as suddenly as they came, and in a few days the harbor is frozen over, and winter is here.

In the woods the frost snaps in the hardwood trees. The low brushes are covered with snow, and from the limbs of the spruce and fir trees hang great numbers of icicles which the frost has woven. The snow-birds fly about the spruces, feeding on the buds that cling to the upper twigs. A jay flies across a small clearing, screeching abuse at an innocent squirrel, who sits on a moss-covered stump eating a beech-nut obtained from his store inside a log nearby. When the moon is up, the sharp barking of a fox from far within the woods is heard, striking fear into the brush rabbits that frisk about in the moonlight.

But the weeks slip by, and again comes the spring rains and the "rushing of waters"; then the babbling of brooks by the wayside. The roads become dry. The grass springs up round the roadside fences. The spring flowers bloom by the pond, and the same robin, returned from the south, sings cheerily over all.

—W.A.R., '31



Pride, of all others the most dangerous fault,
Proceeds from want of sense, or want of thought.

—Roscommon

Home is the resort of love, of joy, of peace and plenty,
where, supporting and supported, polish'd friends and
dear relations mingle unto bliss.—*Thomson*