

veals the ripest, richest brown, as if to tell us that all these birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, have yet warmly hued feelings at their hearts.

It is so easy to love your neighbours when your neighbours are all trees; and it is so easy to live with trees. They are the most friendly things in God's good creation. To hold converse with pines, to whisper secrets with mountain ashes, to listen to the tales of old romance that beeches have to tell, to walk in eloquent silence with self-contained firs is to learn what real companionship is. And then, too, trees, unlike so many humans, always improve on acquaintance. No matter how much you like them at the start you are sure to like them much better further on, and best of all when you have known them for years and enjoyed intercourse with them in all seasons, staunch, loyal friends that they are.

Trees have as much individuality as human beings to those who love and learn them. Not even two spruces are alike. There is some kink or curve, or bend of bough to single each one out from its fellows. Some trees love to grow sociably together, branches intertwining, like girls with their arms about each other, whispering interminably of their secrets. There are more exclusive groups of four or five, and there are hermits of trees who like to stand apart in solitary majesty and hold commune only with the winds of heaven. Yet these trees are often the best worth knowing, and have all the charm that attaches to the strong and lonely and reserved. It is more of a triumph to win their confidence than that of easier trees.

Pines are the trees of myth and legend. They strike their roots deep into the traditions of an older world, but wind and star love their lofty tops. What music when old Aeolus draws his bow across the branches of

a pine! What a sense of two majesties meeting when a pearl white planet seems resting on its very crest! Have you ever witnessed a thunderstorm in a pine wood, especially when evening is drawing on? I have, once. And since then I think I have known what God's voice must have been speaking to Job out of the whirlwind.

We are not going to have a thunderstorm on our walk of this evening, but I verily believe a shower of rain is coming up. Have you noticed the veiled hush that has fallen over the woods lately, while we have been wandering from tree to tree? All the young breezes that were whispering and rustling so importantly a while ago have folded their wings and are motionless and soundless. Not a leaf rustles, not a shadow flickers. The maple leaves yonder turn wrong side out, until the tree looks as if it were growing pale from fear. And now a cool shade falls over the woods; the cloud has reached us; it is not a big cloud; there is crystalline, untroubled sky below and above it. 'Twill be but a passing shower, and the thick boughs of this fir copse are all the protection that we shall need. Creep under and sit at ease, on the dusky soil, compact of many dead and gone generations of fir needles, which no passing shower can moisten.

Ha, there is the rain now, with a rush and sweep of wind, really more noise than anything else! Yet the shower is a good, smart one while it lasts. It patters down sharply on the maples and dimples the faces of the wood pools. It dances along the lanes and byways and pelts the brook right merrily. It makes quite a fuss for the time being, this impertinent, important shower. But not a drop touches us through our staunch fir, and presently it is all over. The cloud is away and the low sun is shining out on the wet, glistening trees. Far away we see a hill still dim with rain, but below us the cup of the val-