

Redruff



creeping hemlocks, a splendid pine. It was six feet through, and its first branches began at the tops of the other trees. Its top in summer-time was a famous resort for the bluejay and his bride. Here, far beyond the reach of shot, in warm spring days the jay would sing and dance before his mate, spread his bright blue plumes and warble the sweetest fairyland music, so sweet and soft that few hear it but the one for whom it is meant, and books know nothing at all about it.

This great pine had an especial interest for Redruff, now living near with his remaining young one, but its base, nor its far-away crown, concerned him. All around were low, creeping hemlocks, and among them the partridge-vine and the wintergreen grew, and the sweet black acorns could be scratched from under the snow. There was no better feeding-ground, for when that insatiable gunner came on them there it was easy to run low among the hemlock to the great pine, then rise with a derisive *whirr* behind its bulk, and keeping the huge trunk in line with the deadly gun, skim off in safety. A dozen times at least the pine had

