

THE BEECH WOODS

ame decreased, the great hum died down, and presently the wonderful silence of the woods was again unbroken, except for the occasional rustle of an insect falling through the leaves.

The Neighbour wandered on to the home of the screech-owl, at a turn in the path where, in a beech stub, the pair of night watchers had their nest. A plaintive note came from near the home tree, and presently the soft whirr of passing wings and the vicious snap of a powerful beak uncomfortably near his ear told the Neighbour the little owl was not to be trifled with in his own domain. All that was to be seen or heard in the darkness was a dull flash, a whirr and a sharp snap, as the owl repeatedly dived at the intruder. To say the least, the suddenness and uncertainty of attack would be most disconcerting to any night marauder seeking its young or even wandering near the old beech stub.

Out of the ferns at the edge of the path there came a sudden flash of white and the soft patter of many padded feet went down a trail to the left. It was a