

blue grouse drumming with its wings. Again it seems there must surely be a cart on one of those zig-zagging roads that take the slopes in long easy grades. A man might be willing to take oath that he heard the jolt of a wheel over a rock in a rut. He raises his head and listens. No! Nothing! Only the silence, and the roar of a creek that does not break it, muffled. Then again the jolt. Yes, a cart somewhere, he is sure. The sound not coming again, he decides that it has gone away from his neighbourhood on a stretch of grade. Then bump! bump! He comes to the conclusion that it is drawing closer again, climbing or descending on another reach of road zig-zagging near. But there is no cart. There is no road maybe. Old-timers explain that seeming ghostly or super-natural phenomenon in this way: in the roaring of a creek, they say, many sounds are made as one, but in the leafy echoes they are dissevered. What seems a gentle noise of wind running in the trees may suddenly puzzle a wanderer in the high woods as he notes that the tree-tops are motionless. It is the echo of the gentler rush of the water he hears, a leafy woodland echo. The sound as of a wheel jolted over a rock, they say, is the echo of boulders rolled, bumped, clicking, in the downward pour of a stream. Yet to some the high woods remain inexplicably haunted. To come to an old cabin falling into dust by the trail side, and be chattered to by a squirrel on the roof, or chirped to by a chipmunk frisking in and out of the glassless window space, is an experience too. Out of the subconscious come all manner of memories, or old reveries, on the theme of houses built and fallen into decay, left to the sun and rain, and the derision of the squirrels. They are symbols, these old trappers' or prospectors' cabins, deserted, with no name-plate on the fallen door.

There are trails that, frankly, this traveller would rather not travel after dark, not because of any wild beast, not because of the danger of stubbing a toe on a root and crashing down, but just because of the still trees, and the hush, and the roar of the everlasting streams pouring down out of the mountains. A candle stuck in an empty punctured can is very pleasant when overtaken by night in these places. (The name of such a lantern out west is, by the way, a "bug".) The radiance it sheds is very consoling to a man, a creature higher than the brutes, yet not with the presumable knowledge (and answers to haunting human questions) of the angels.



In the High Woods.

In full day there come moments in the mountains when one has to restrain ecstasy so as to save the wearing of the nerves—full day with coloured butterflies flaunting past, feathery wrought leaves and lonely blossoms, that sweet sad trill of the birds, the harsh jeer of the jay, the dart of his blue among the green. There are few who manage to see the bear-cubs boxing with mother bear looking on, or coyote pups rolling

over each other and jinking and frisking. Their little puppy yelps at such play may be heard sometimes; but the old mother, scenting men, stops the game. One more often hears the breaking of the branches by the antlers of a disturbed deer than picks out its body from the mottled light and shade of its surroundings.

There are sights in the mountains that make some people shudder and understand the apostle who, in his dream, saw some beasts or creatures as clean and others as unclean. A queer soiled white web, cone-shaped, round the end of a forked branch, a bag of gauze all wriggled over by a cluster of caterpillars, several of them in great agitation, whipping back and forth, others quiescent, affects most with repugnance. Yet that bit of life and work and instinct on a branch end is just one of the many miracles that make the whole miracle of life. We are apt to think that all life is for us, deer to be venison on the menu-card, bees for our honey, beavers for our wives' muffs. Up in the high woods it dawns that it is not so. Many thoughts dawn. But the robust air, and the exercise of travel, prevent our restless thoughts from wearing us out. We have other causes of attention, distractions from trying to piece together what it is all for; we have to set firm, re-adjust the sagging pack; ford a creek; find a camp-place, and wood for the fire. Thus we retain balance among the majesty and great beauty of the high woods, and their hush, a hush not broken, just dabbled over if one may phrase it so — exquisitely, poignantly — by the sweet sad trills of the birds.



Douglas Fir, near Tranquille River, B.C.