

THE BEECH WOODS

With the returning light as yet scarcely lifting the veil of darkness in the woods, the notes of hope and cheer became more frequent. For the feathered dwellers of these woods the night has its uncertainties, its sudden tragedies of storm or lurking death from winged or furred enemies. From thicket and from elevated perch more rejoicing songs broke upon the listening hours. This was the beginning of a new day and all things were refreshed and glad to be alive. In the growing light the gloom was dispelled and spirits rose, with all the various demands for action.

In the hollows of the creek a white mist hung, and dimly through it, like gray ghosts, tree trunks showed their many forms. Not a breath was stirring, and perfumes without number lay cradled in the air in unseen strata of variable depth. Here by a stump, where the sweet white violets grew, the air was heavy with their delicate perfume. The strong woody odour of the ferns floated in the hollows where they filled the spaces with luxuriant green. By the lane and on the strawberry-covered