



Barbara
Newhall Follett

TRAVELS WITHOUT A DONKEY



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In the summer of 1932, eighteen year-old Barbara Follett and her "semi-platonic" friend Nickerson Rogers quit New York City and headed to Maine with the plan of following (or semi-following) the nascent Appalachian Trail from its northern terminus at Katahdin as far south as they could get before winter set in. To make matters tricky, the AT had not yet been cut in Maine, so bush-whacking and guesswork were in order. *Travels Without a Donkey* recounts their adventures from Katahdin to Lake Umbagog on the New Hampshire border. They then continued their walk over the White Mountains and down Vermont's Long Trail to western Massachusetts. They had been planning to hitch-hike to Tennessee to continue their AT adventure, but something changed their minds and they sailed to Majorca instead, spending the winter of 1932 and most of 1933 exploring southern Europe.

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Barbara Newhall Follett

Travels Without a Donkey



Barbara Follett below Katahdin near Chimney Pond. Probably 1931.

—It's spring, —Nick said.

In the very shadow of New York's skyline, one solitary white crocus had blossomed in a scrawny patch of grass.

—What shall we do about it? —he demanded.

—What does anybody in New York do about it? Grin and bear it.

—Come on, Bar, show a spark of life, old gal. I'm getting out of here this summer.

—But...

—Getting out. Leaving the office. Going into the north woods. Mountains. It's spring, child!

I looked at him to make sure he was serious. In these depressed times, one didn't leave good jobs in order to run away to the north woods. His brown eyes sparkled. But then, they always did. He was the one person in New York whose eyes always sparkled.

—All right, I wish you joy.

He fished in various pockets and finally produced a little square of white metal, with a monogram and the words: "Appalachian Trail – Maine to Georgia".

—That's what I'm going to do, —he explained—. I haven't had a walk for ages. Well, I'm going to have a real one now.

—Not from Maine to Georgia!

—Why not? It's only two thousand miles or so.

—It'll take all summer.

—Can you think of a pleasanter way to spend the summer?"

I looked at the solitary white crocus in the scrawny patch of grass. —No, —I said—. I can't.

Over lunch that day, he told me about this Appalachian Trail. It is a footpath, starting at Katahdin, that grand old mountain in Maine, and ending at Mount Oglethorpe way down in Georgia, after having crossed the highest and handsomest country of all the states between. Now, owing to the diligence and energy of walking clubs in various parts of the country, only a few miles of trail remains to be broken. But two years ago, when Nick told me about it over our luncheon, a large part of the trail, especially in Maine, was still theory — a dream, an ambition. Where it had become an actuality, it was marked with metal squares like the one he had shown me.

Quite a grand project, it sounded. I just sat staring and smiling, while he talked.

—Bar, —he began again—, I think I'd like you in shorts.

—Shorts!

—With your hair cut, flying in the wind your swell red hair.

—Cut my hair!

—Your freckles are out-of-doorsy. You belong out-doors.

—I haven't got freckles, —I protested.

—Yes you have very swell ones.

—I know I belong out-doors, —I agreed—. I get mountain-fever. Got it now something awful. I want to climb Wildcat.

—We will, —he said happily—. I didn't want to walk all the way to Georgia alone, anyway.

—Are you asking me to come with you?

—Of course! What else?

—But I can't.

—Nonsense. We start up north the first of July. You give 'em notice.

—But, Nicky.

—'But' isn't worthy of you, Bar. Not in spring.

* * *

Some friends had a camp on a New Hampshire lake. It was there that Nick met me, promptly on the first of July. He was sunburned and smiling, comfortable in old clothes. Without stopping a minute, he deposited me and my pack in a borrowed canoe.

We paddled vigorously into the sunlit late-magic to someone parched from too much New York. After a while I saw white beach ahead of us, and the green canoe scraped sand gently.

A small green island. A pine dipping graceful branches over a flat boulder that stood half in the rippling lake, half on land. A tiny stone fireplace on top of the boulder. Golden rippled reflections wavered on the sand at the lake's edge; silver ones shimmered on the under sides of the pine branches. The world smelt of sun, and bay leaves, and pine-needles. The brightness was almost unreal. The sun wrapped us in gleaming shawls of warmth.

We drew the canoe up. Nick parted the bay-bushes and revealed a little path, hardly more than would be made by a rabbit. Five or six yards back, on a knoll screened with bushes, was our house a brown tent, not more than six feet square.

—This is it, —Nick announced—. This is home.

I wanted nothing so much as to swim, although I soon found that muscles that had been in the city for two years had forgotten some of their rhythms. Then I sat, dripping, on the big boulder, long hair cascading down my back. I felt very white in this summer-time world where the human body ought to be brown.

Nick brandished a pair of scissors. —Off with it!”

I put up my arms in self-defense. “No — no!”

—Yes! Absolutely! You can't walk two thousand miles with that yard of hair, child. It'll get wound up in the blackberries. It'll collect whole hay-ricks. Bats will nest in it."

—But, Nicky, I like my hair. And I don't object to bats."

—I like it, too. But I don't like what you do to it tying your face to the back of your neck with it. I want to see it wave in the wind. That's really why I married you. And anyway, you can grow it again."

I wavered. —It would be more comfortable, of course ..."

Snip!

—Don't, Nicky —!"

—Too late now. Got to go on with it."

Snip! Snip!

The air was full of flying fragments. Reddish fluff covered the boulder. A great weight was vanishing from my head. What hair I had left began to stand on end in the joy of its freedom. For the first time in years, it was waving in the wind.

* * *

We sat peacefully in the sunshine, then, and did some organizing of equipment. For instance, the tent needed a mosquito curtain. There were almost bound to be a few malevolent bugs somewhere between Maine and Georgia.

The tent itself, of the Baker type, was ideal for our purpose. It could be rolled up small enough to fit across the top of the pack; it weighed only a trifle over six pounds. The flap was the whole front side of the tent. In fine weather you could throw this back over the roof and out of the way there you were, wide open to the skies. In rainy weather, you could stretch it horizontally six feet above the ground, so that you had a protected front yard, in which a fire could be built and kept dry. The simplest house in the world! And what more did anyone need, in the summer time?

The rest of our outfit was correspondingly simple. Two very light-weight sleeping-bags, adequate for summer weather; a light but man-sized ax; the minimum cooking-kit; some food bags to hold such things as flour, sugar, cereal, cocoa; a very few clothes...

* * *

A marvellous stillness pervaded the air. Even the breeze was basking in the sun; and the lake stretched itself, cat-like, content, almost purring. It sparkled with brightness that had been melting into it all day. Waves continued to sigh in rhythm—a sleepy stirring at the dazzling threshold of sand.

—When do we start, Nicky? To tell the truth, I could stay right here very happily all summer.

—Well, my hunch would be to stay here till we get you toughened up a bit, and the worst of the sunburn over. Swim-tear around-muscles working again. Say a couple of weeks. Then Katahdin—how about it? I admit I want to get to Katahdin.

—Swell.

—And in the mean time—, —he went on—, we can experiment with cooking. We've got some things to learn, too: how to cram the most nutrition into the least space and weight; whether it's worth while to carry powdered eggs; how much sugar to allow per day—things like that.

—Why don't we study up on the nutrition that grows wild?, —I suggested—. Mushrooms, for instance. And there must be all kinds of stuff that would make swell spinach. I read somewhere that you can eat cat-tail roots. Cat-tail salad—that's a delightful thought!

—The only thing that worries me—, —he said—, is whether we can carry on

our backs even the minimum junk. What would you think of getting a donkey? Not an expensive one—a sort of second-hand one, you understand. He'd be companionable, and useful, and no trouble to keep, in the summer.

—Can't you see us?—, —I chuckled—. We might write a story about it. 'With a Donkey from Maine to Georgia'—something on that line.

D'you think he'd last that far? What's the average mileage of a donkey—second-hand?

—Couldn't say.

We were quiet, while a small gray sandpiper, with an edging of white dots around his wings, went quaintly teetering down the beach.

—Another thought, —I said—. And this one doesn't belong to the nutrition department, or the transportation department. It's more the philosophy of the thing.

—I'm all ears.

—I think we want to forget about Georgia. After all, Georgia will stay put. What we want to do is explore the country. Not stick too rigidly to this Appalachian Trail, if we happen to feel like wandering off the edges of it.

—Right—, —he agreed—. We aren't out to make records or cover lots of ground. We can get to Georgia next summer—or the next; in fact, we don't ever have to get there, when you come right down to it.

—Getting to Georgia is a nice idea, —I said—. But the real aim of the expedition is to stay out-doors and try our best not to take the city with us, but—well, Kipling put it pretty well—“melt in the landscape”.

* * *

Boy Scout parties may intrude into the lordly calm of Katahdin's Great Basin, where Chimney Pond lies shining; but even they cannot really harm the aloof mystery of the mountain—they can only scratch it slightly. The country is not nearly so wild as when Thoreau explored it, or when Indians gazed at the mountain from far off with trembling reverence and fear—still, it is wild. Bear and moose and big cat prowl about in it; there are long wildernesses of tangled, untracked swamp and forest; some of the trails on the mountain itself are faint and unmarked; and one still has to walk a good seven or eight miles to get in to Chimney Pond.

This Great Basin, except for one break, is encircled by a straight-sided wall of mountain, from Pamola Peak on the east clear around through south and west to the long downward slant of Hamlin Ridge on the north. Straight above the Pond

the jagged Knife-Edge looms, top edge of the wall, joining Pamola to the Monument, highest of Katahdin's peaks. The headwall is gray, with patches of dark green where the most warped and stubborn little firs in the world cling. After a rain, this whole great headwall will be laced by a network of slender silver waterfalls.

For a week or so Nick and I had lived in one of the shelters at Chimney Pond. We had listened to the stories of Roy Dudley, who has been "guidin'" and running that camp for years. He is personally acquainted with an arrogant devil-spirit, Pamola, who boasts wings and claws, and guards a darksome lair in a secluded cave high on the storm-swept peak which bears his name. This old fellow causes Roy Dudley plenty of trouble. He resents intrusion into his lofty solitudes, and from time to time he hurls enormous windfalls in tangles across carefully cleared trails. He no longer can turn Roy round and round and get him mixed up in the fog; but he persists in gorging himself on bull moose every now and then, and sometimes comes late at night humbly begging for bicarbonate of soda. Another curious habit of his is that of sailing about Chimney Pond by moonlight on a raft of crowbars.

Roy knows a few likely stories, too. While he tells these and the others, Mrs. Dudley sits by the stove, deftly knitting thick red and gray socks. Her curly white hair falls to her shoulders; her girlish face is browned; and her eyes are clear bright blue. Every now and then she smiles ever so little; then you must be on the look-out: Roy is "stringing" you...

We had climbed Pamola Peak, making our way cautiously over and around great boulders. We had crept across the Knife-Edge, in places so narrow you can straddle it. One one side, a sheer drop into Chimney Pond; on the other, a sheer drop into tangled Maine wilderness. Surrounded by wind, we had stood on the Monument itself, and far and wide the country was dappled with ponds and clouds, hard to tell apart. And we had ventured into the wild Northwest Basin, battling fierce underbrush, sliding down steep banks, and finally taking a very short swim in the coldest little pond in the world.

But now it was time to shoulder our packs, say goodbye to Katahdin and the Dudleys, and start our tramp toward Georgia! Down the Appalachian Trail which here in Maine existed only in theory and as a dream.

* * *

—Have a cranberry, —Nick said—. I want to sit down and think this thing out some more. It's worrying me.

—Don't let it. We'll get on all right.

—Yes, but I haven't even got a decent map of that country. I don't know that there is one.

He waved his arm off toward the southwest. We were sitting in a cranberry patch on one of Katahdin's enormous high plateaus. It dipped off toward a blue wilderness sprinkled with ponds and big haphazard lakes gleaming in the afternoon sun. Perhaps a temperamental giant had once stood here, carelessly flinging quicksilver until the countryside was strewn with shimmering pools of it.

Nick had pulled out a battered sketch given him by Mr. Dudley, and was for the hundredth time anxiously studying it. I looked over his shoulder at a jumble of six-and eight-syllable Indian names —unpronounceable concatenations which constituted nearly all we knew about this country to the southwest.

—We want to get to Moosehead Lake, —he said—. That's the whopping big one you can see just a bit of, way off.

Silver arms and bays, very faint in a distant haze, shone beckoningly across the unknown.

—I think it's exciting, —I said—, taking off into nowhere.

—Exciting, all right, —he agreed—. But I feel sort of —well, responsible. We may hit old tote roads, or we may not. We may have to bushwhack for miles.

—I don't mind bush-whacking.

—Strenuous—with a pack Through raspberries, maybe.

—We can eat the raspberries —and as for the thorns— my dungarees.

—Swamps, maybe, —he went on.

—Well, where we can't wade we'll swim.

—Strenuous—with a pack Suppose we get stuck in the mud? And suppose we under-estimate about provisions, and get stuck with miles of swamps and raspberries between us and sugar?

—You're a nice cheerful person, I must say.

—And how the hell are we going to get across the wide roaring Penobscot River? The old dam above the Sourdnhunk has gone out, they tell me.

—Wait a minute! Why do we have to get across the Penobscot so soon? Aren't we going up it to Ripogenus Dam anyway?

—Well, Roy says that on the other side we'll hit a little tote road in decent shape, and that this side would be awful. He knows —he's trapped around here for years.

—Might build a raft, —I suggested hopefully.

—It's probably too swift to pole a raft across —if I could build one, that is.

—And even supposing we do escape all these various disasters, —I put in—, the bears will get us, anyway.

—You're right, —that's another possibility.

—Let's go home to the island in the sun, —I said.

—Much more sensible, —he agreed—. But who the hell wants to be sensible?
... Come on, child, let's get going. We can easily enough get to York's Camp on Dacey Pond, and that's a beginning.

—Shall we stay there tonight?

—No, I thought we'd stay in a—well, you'll see. Let's go—sun's going down.

This upper end of the Hunt Trail was rough. It fell off very steep, with nothing underfoot but edges and pinnacles and uncomfortable crannies. We scrambled over huge rocks, and squeezed cautiously through crevices between them. Two or three times we had to take off our packs and push, haul, or lift them through. Sometimes they got stuck—worse still, sometimes we did.

We were not yet used to those packs of ours. Eventually, we thought, when we got in training, we'd slide lightly over the countryside, all unconscious of the seventy pounds of worldly possessions which between us we were carrying on our backs. That time seemed distant; but already we had a feeling of triumph because of our complete self-sufficiency and independence: we could go anywhere and stay as long as it pleased us. All very gipsy-like; only right now we were a trifle more tired than first-class gipsies ought to be.

—Perhaps we should have brought along that second-hand donkey, after all, —I suggested.

The trail dipped into woods, and remained very steep. We climbed down ladders formed by tangled roots. After a while we came out into a green clearing, velvety with moss, and here we found a sort of cave, a crude shelter made by one enormous rock leaning against another.

—Well, here we are, —said Nick—. This is it. Our first night out on the A. T. in a cave. Romantic enough, isn't it?"

We set to work, he getting firewood, I cutting fir boughs for a bed. We hauled out the food bags and cooked supper over a small crackling fire. Clouds were drifting in; it rained a little; the sunset came through rose-colored mist. But when we curled up for the night stars were to be seen through rifts in the clouds. They seemed friendly.

* * *

The morning was clear and warm. We got up rather after dawn —too late for gipsies; we must do better, —said Nick— built a fire, and cooked a large pot of corn meal mush with raisins, after which the trackless and mapless wilderness we felt ahead of us diminished a good deal in size and consequence. Who was afraid when the sun was so bright?

We struck the Millinocket Tote Road at Katahdin Stream, which came rollicking over rocks and sand-bars, whirling joyously in deep pools, sliding around green bends. It was too clear and cool to be resisted; off went packs and clothes, and in we plunged. Ripe cherries and raspberries overhung the stream. We feasted on them; we sat on a little sand island and observed the private lives of very small minnows and trout. Wonderful blazing dragonflies, all black velvet and gold plate, cracked by. We marveled at the verdure and luxuriance of this Maine countryside in the summer time. It was hard to reconcile with our first forebodings. Nothing difficult or even strenuous about this —standing knee-deep in a sparkling brook and eating berries on its banks!

After lunch we went at a good pace to York's Camp. Katahdin loomed gray-green and forbidding across Daicey Pond. Along the Sourdnahunk River there was an old tote road, and the going was easy and peaceful through evergreen woods —a contrast to the mountain's rocky trails. The big brook itself was entertaining, with swirling pot-holes, swift glides down smooth rocks, boiling rapids.

—What's the matter with this?, —I teased—. Bring on your swamps and mud-holes!

—All very fine, my dear girl, but how are we going to get across the Penobscot?

—Oh, we'll worry about that when we get to it. Don't cross bridges.

—That's just it. There isn't any bridge.

—Well, is the problem imminent?

It was. And what's more, that wide river was going at a tremendous clip. Piles of dark water hurried along, breaking now and then into rapids, humping up in eddies. Much too deep to ford; much too swift to pole across on a raft. And no sign of humanity at all. And it was almost evening.

—No use, —I said—. We'll only get headaches puzzling about it. Let's make camp and go to sleep.

The river rushed darksomenly past our front door all night.

And in the morning, when we peered out of our front door, there was the river.

—Looks desperate, —Nick said cheerfully—. But let's have breakfast, anyway.

A little path led along the river on the side of a steep bank. We brushed under low-drooping spruce and hemlock branches; and after half a mile or so came out into a clearing where several ruined gray buildings of an ancient lumber camp looked out desolately from raspberry bushes.

—Here's where the old dam used to be, I guess, —Nick mumbled.

We heard noises now from one of the buildings, and found an old man holding his breakfast fire in a rusty stove.

—Good morning!, —we hailed.

He looked up sharply, and stared at us suspiciously for a few seconds. Then, slowly, his face relaxed and broke into a smile.

—Oh!, —he exclaimed—. You folks wants t'git 'cross t'river, mebbe?

His understanding and perception seemed so remarkable that we merely nodded and said nothing. But the old fellow apparently thought it a fine joke. He chuckled gleefully and recited, in a high singsong: "I be t'watchman of t'old dam, I be. Dam's out, but here I be —me 'n'my old boat— jest in case any folks wants t'git 'cross t'river. Charge 'em for it —dollar 'piece. Not that there's many folks, mind you —but jest in case... and so you wants t'git 'cross t'river —well, well!""

He chuckled again, and rubbed his hands together; then went on about getting breakfast as if we weren't there, serene in his confidence that, since we couldn't get across in any other way, we must necessarily wait for him. Only once he stopped in the middle of a cup of black tea, and asked, with friendly curiosity: Where you folks start from anyways.

We told him about Katahdin.

He shook his head with sage disdain. —Ah, Katahdin!, —he repeated. Then, mumbling—: Awful pile o'rocks.

We filed down to the gravel beach where a battered old boat lay half full of water. After much straining we tipped her over; then put our packs in, and shoved off. The river was not so swift at this point. We rowed, Nick at one long oar, the old man at the other. Safe across, we gave him his two dollars.

—And if you folks ever wants t'git back 'cross t'river, —he said solemnly—, here I be —jest in case... me 'n'my old boat. Jest sing out —here I be.

—Will you give us back the two dollars if we come back across the river? —Nick could not help asking.

We spent the day tramping up the river to Ripogenus Dam; and the little road of which Roy had spoken was in fair shape, mostly. The woods were fresh and green and alive; and there were deer tracks in the mud. About sundown, when we

were pretty weary, we pulled into Ripogenus; and the keeper of the dam let us sleep in a shack which, during the winter, served as schoolhouse for the four or five local children.

Next day, a friendly gravel-truck driver offered us a ride part of the way to that Moosehead Lake which had gleamed to us from so unattainably far away as we stood on Katahdin. This wasn't sticking to the proposed route of the Appalachian Trail, but it seemed like a good idea. Our shoulders were pretty lame by now.

—Oh, they'll toughen up all right in another day or so, —Nick assured me—. But in the mean time, let's try a gravel truck.

* * *

We stood on the shore of Moosehead Lake, where we were getting ready to make camp. —This feels like home, —Nick suddenly said—. Here's where we stay a while.

The lake is an endless jungle of islands and long peninsulas, deep bays and coves. The huge square rock they call Mt. Kineo seems at first to be a northern boundary, but north of it are miles more of those alluring silver arms and fingers of water, winding, weaving among the hills.

—We ought to have a canoe, —I said—. It would be marvellous to explore the shore and the little islands.

Nick was staring out toward a peninsula that bristled with tall Norway pines, and a green island that stood in the mouth of the bay. —I don't see why we can't have one, —he answered quietly.

—Buy an old second-hand one, you mean?"

—Sure. We'll go down to Greenville —only six miles or so. Got to have grub, anyhow, and we'll hunt up canoes. And if we get one, we'll paddle her back here to camp."

—And sell her after we get through exploring?"

He thought a while, then dug a map of Maine out of a pack pocket, and studied it. —I wonder—. You know, I think I've got an idea. Maybe the Kennebec River's canoeable. I'll find out. If it is, we'll run down it to Indian Pond, and from there to The Forks. —He followed the course of the Kennebec with one forefinger.

—So the A. T. becomes a waterway, —I said.

—Sure. Give our legs a rest —use our arms for a change.

* * *

Greenville was pretty depressing, just as any town is depressing after woods and hills, freedom and sunshine. But a couple of ice-cream cones fortified us; and we went to attend to the nautical business. A shrewd-looking old chap named Allen had canoes for sale. First he tackled us about a spick-and-span red-painted affair for forty-five dollars; but, seeing that we didn't bite, he decided he had made a mistake. After thinking it over for a minute, he introduced us to the most marvellous canoe in the world. She was a strong and heavy eighteen-foot Oldtown, battered and patched and scraped and dented. She had no bow seat. Seven of her ribs were broken, and a couple of planks besides —apparently the thwarts were all that kept her gunwales from buckling together. She had the look of a very battle-scarred veteran who should be carefully put away to rest. We eyed her doubtfully, as she lay drawn up on the sand.

—Do you think she'd stand for hobnailed boots? —Nick queried.

For answer, Allen, who was wearing heavy hobnailed boots, jumped violently into the canoe and walked heavily up and down her bottom. We held our breath in horror. We though we understood about canoes. We had always been taught that they were delicate and must be treated with respect.

—How about all those broken ribs? —we tried.

The old chap burst into a scornful laugh. —I tell you, —he began, round this country a guide that knows anything won't think o' takin' a canoe down a river unless she has at least four or five broken ribs. That softens her up, gives her a good flexible bottom, don't you see, and she don't get hung up on the rocks. That's why we shellac the bottoms o' canoes round here, 'stead o' paintin' 'em. If you have paint on your bottom and hit a rock, it'll scrape through the paint and tear the canvas; but if you have shellac, she jest slides over, jest as nice... Yes, sirree, a flexible bottom's what you want. And the canvas on this canoe is sound as if she was new. She won't leak a drop."

He went on in an amazing stream of patter, expounding what was to us a new philosophy of canoeing.

—She won't leak, eh?

—Not a drop, —he said.

It seemed very unlikely. But in the end we bought her and her trappings —two enormous paddles, vastly heavier than the spruce ones we were used to; a setting-pole at least fifteen feet long to help us down-river; and an old stool to serve as bow seat. We put aboard some supplies we had bought at the local grocery, and started off, by sea, for our campground on the beach.

The canoe behaved astoundingly. She gathered momentum slowly, but once it was gathered there was no stopping her. She forged through the water with an immense, powerful swing. We were used to light sixteen-footers. Already our arms were aching from the weight of these tremendous paddles; and then and there we decided that we had never known anything about canoeing.

—I feel more like a man than I've ever felt before, —said Nick from the stern —. She's immense.

At that moment a sporty motor-boat roared past. The people aboard her had to yell their conversation, and we distinctly heard someone say: "See that canoe? Well, those are the boys that are going down the Appalachian Trail".

—*You* feel like a man, do you? —I retorted to Nick

Our arms ached and ached. —How many more of these long points do we have to go round? —I inquired—. And how are we going to recognize our own bay when we get to it?

—I haven't the remotest notion.

—Well, I hope we don't have to paddle two or three miles into every bay, to see if our camp is at the end of it, and then two or three miles out again, when it

isn't!

—I'll consult the map, —said Nick. We paused, in mid-sea, as it were, to compare hills and peninsulas with the brown contour lines of a topographic map. —I think it's pretty amusing, myself, —he said. Navigating homeward over unknown oceans. We ought to have a sextant. What do you suppose the compass variation is? He was holding his compass in the palm of his hand, and lining up his chart with it... —Plenty more long points, —he said finally—. Courage, child!

We dug in our paddles again. The wind was coming up, and there were hard choppy waves, through which we forged solidly. All of a sudden Nick gave a curious sort of cry. I whirled about. With a horror-struck stare, he was watching the pack in the middle of the canoe. As I looked, too, I saw that it was quivering, from the canoe's sharp impacts with the waves. And then, before our very eyes, that pack lifted —heaved upward a little, and settled back again.

—Wh-what ... ?

—It's the 'flexible bottom!'—Nick fairly shouted—. —Don't you see? She just lifts her belly and lets the waves slide under! It's the darnedest thing I ever saw!

—Is it dangerous?

—I don't know. Looks pretty bad. Wait and see.

—What else can I do?, —I asked, and dug in again. But the old girl herself appeared not the least bit perturbed. She slid on solidly, leaking never a drop; except for that lifting and settling of her bottom, every now and then, she seemed as stable as some flat-bottomed tub of a row-boat. We wondered if the whole thing was a nightmare.

* * *

Moosehead is a romantic lake. Because it is so very big, the summer camps are not obtrusive and can be escaped. The shores are beautifully wooded with fine old spruce, hemlock, and pine; and every once in a while a stretch of grayish sand made us yearn to stop and swim. At times we would hear a weird, quavering cry, dismal and lonely over the ripples—a big black and white loon diving and gliding along the shore. Sometimes two or three of them would converse mournfully. But the loons belonged there, and we were not surprised to see them. What did surprise me, on this big lake ninety miles from the sea, were flocks of seagulls, who sat around on top of the waves, plunged for fish, flew and shrieked overhead very realistically, and acted quite at home.

We explored. The canoe took us everywhere, steadily, solidly, unflinching. Some nights we did not even pitch our tent, but simply stretched out on a fir bed under the open sky. Every morning, when mist was rising from the lake and the early sun made it gleam faintly golden, we wriggled out of our sleeping-bags and plunged into that cold soft water. Every day at high noon we would pull up in a quiet place and stretch out naked in the sun. Life was a long continuous being out-of-doors—which was just as we wanted it to be.

We had fun making culinary experiments; and here at Moosehead Lake was inaugurated the never-ending quest for an ideal pancake. We tried all possible combinations and proportions of flour, graham flour, corn meal, oat meal, sugar, baking powder, powdered milk, and powdered egg. Every morning we had a different kind of pancake, and they were all interesting. Gradually we evolved something almost cake-like, which could be eaten with no embellishments, and would stay fluffy till noon, when we ate a stack of them cold, along with the berries we picked.

One night, as we were about to settle into our sleeping-bags, it seemed that the lake was too beautiful to abandon in an abyss of sleep. A magic sliding sheet of moonlight covered it. Islands and headlands were soft velvety black. The wind was gentle, and rather warm. It was a tropical night.

—What shall we do about it? —Nick questioned. We can't just—he yawned slightly—go to bed, can we?

—How about climbing Kineo? The lake would look heavenly from Kineo tonight.

—That would be pretty romantic, I should think.

We slid the canoe out. The water was a strange, magical substance—quickgold. We dipped our paddles into semi-solid golden pools, which shattered, rippled, and dripped off the blades. Somewhere, in the midst of all this enchantment, a loon wailed.

It was a rather long paddle from the island to the foot of Kineo, and we had done a fair day's paddling already. By the time we had beached the canoe, and started out to find the trail up the mountain, we were yawning desperately, and

our feet were incoherent—the white road swayed beneath them, and we were treading insubstantially upon air which misbehaved.

It was dark in the woods as we plodded up that trail. Now and then we stumbled or stepped into an unexpected hollow. We kept on yawning. The romance of the thing was pretty much lost upon us, and getting more lost every minute. We were ashamed of ourselves: it was such a grand night, and climbing Kineo by moonlight ought to be exciting... we tried to take a firm grip upon ourselves, but it was useless... After a long time we came to a look-out place near the top. A confused version of a marvellous silver octopus of a lake spread out among black velvet hills... We sat down in the grass, and sighed. Then we leaned a little against each other. Slowly we sank into that moon-silvered grass, and instantly fell asleep.

* * *

Dawn was breaking as we paddled back for breakfast to our un-slept-in camp on the island. Afterwards we started for the east outlet of the Kennebec. But we found this the wrong outlet. A guide at the dam told us this was a mighty tough river. Only real old-timers ever ran it; he himself had once run the four miles to Indian Pond in one wild quarter-hour. The river drops nearly a hundred feet in those four miles, he said. And as for the Kennebec below Indian Pond—oh, no one even attempted it. He was horrified at the very idea. Go to pieces just like that! He snapped his fingers... But we could get to Indian Pond all right by the west outlet, an altogether nicer-mannered little river, which took its time and used twelve or fifteen miles to get where this one got in four. In fact, on the west outlet there was only one place where we might have trouble—a corner called the Devil's Elbow.

—So there, —said Nick—, go our pleasant hopes of canoeing all the way down to The Forks. Shall we sell the canoe here, or try for Indian Pond?

—We can't part with her yet, —I protested—. Why, we're just getting used to her.

—I had another idea, —Nick went on—. I think Indian Pond's on a railroad; and it isn't such a far cry from there to the Rangeley Lakes—five lakes in a string. We might ship the canoe to ourselves and pick her up at the Rangeleys, and explore them.

—Sounds good. We might even be glad to see the old girl, —I said.

—But this business of running to Indian Pond has got me kind of worried, —he said—. I ought to warn you. I don't know the first thing about river canoeing. I

haven't the remotest notion of how to handle this magnificent setting-pole.

—Well, that old fellow said it was a quiet little river.

—Mm, the Devil's Elbow doesn't sound any too nice.

Of course in the end we set off for the west outlet, where we hove our belongings over a small dam, and had a wonderful feast of raspberries.

That guide was right: it was a nice quiet-looking river—hardly more than a big brook. We could see that it started with a swirl just below the dam, but immediately flattened out and became peaceful. I climbed aboard, and crouched low in the bow, and the next moment there was a hair-raising quiet plunge—a rapid descending glide—and we came into deadwater with a rush, hardly knowing what had happened. That was the beginning.

We paddled through long stretches of shallow deadwater, and we had begun to wonder whether the river would ever show another spark of life, when, coming around a bend, we found ourselves in a slight current, with the thick grasses on the bottom all straining downstream; and then we heard an ominous rumble a little way off, increasing to a roar. Then the gleam of white water, with black jagged rocks sticking through it, the river seething and hissing. It was impossible to tell which was rock and which masses of water eddying high. We tried to hesitate on the brink, but there was no hesitating—down it all went, pell-mell. We hit a big, round rock full on; and Nick in the stern saw to his horror and despair an enormous bulge traveling rapidly down the bottom of the canoe toward him—much faster than it can be written—making a frightful racket of scraping and tearing on the canvas. When it got to the middle of the canoe, he saw the pack lift up several inches and then settle down again. And then, almost under his very feet, he heard a plank smash, and saw four ribs snap, one after another prrrttt!—only much louder—the splintered ends sticking right up in the air. This was obviously the end, he thought—no boat built could stand it. In a minute water would be spurting in the whole length of her gashed bottom. But to his amazement, she ran down healthily into the quieter water below the rapids, and she seemed sound and tight as ever. He kept on going through the forms of guiding her, although he didn't believe in it.

—I guess Allen was right about the flexible bottom, —he said, and his voice quavered.

Again and again we lived through this performance of coming around a bend—the preliminary rumble, the frightful rush of water, our headlong mad descent, slamming against rocks with loud crackings and tearings and destruction. After four or five of these places, we began to have a notion of how to avoid some of the rocks. And when we came to what we immediately recognized as the Devil's Elbow, where a mighty volume of water plunged down between two grim black jags, and went around a corner at the same time, Nick steered through faultlessly. However, at the next place we crashed some more. We were getting used to it by

now, but we still didn't understand what was holding the old bones together.

We thanked heaven for stretches of deadwater between these rapids. During them we could rest and think, and look at the deer, of which there were many. They peered at us out of undergrowth by the river's edge, then galloped away with magnificent bounds. Once we came into a sort of pond with shallow, marshy shores, and here a big buck was swimming, browsing contentedly among water-lily pads, pulling them up by the roots. We stalked him, by sea, as quietly as we could; but when we were within fifty feet of him he decided he'd better get ashore, which he did in a hurry —then bounded off through the swamp, long-stemmed lily pads still dangling from his jaws.

Indian Pond was not so far away now. We were anxious to make camp and turn the canoe bottom-up to survey the damage. The river fell into that pond in a dickens of a hurry, and down we went so fast that a fleeting glimpse of a big sporting-camp on the shore was superimposed on a green island farther on. We struck out for that island as fast as weary arms would let us, took the packs out, and, lifting Old Bones tenderly, turned her upside down. She didn't fall to pieces.

We bent eagerly over her. And again we could not believe our eyes. The shellac, by which old Allen set so much store, was scratched in many places. The canvas itself was laid bare in one spot the size of a postage stamp. Old Bones was complete, whole, unharmed. Better than ever, because of course, with seven or eight more broken ribs, her bottom was still more flexible.

* * *

—Well, this is ‘the bush’, all right, —said Nick, next morning.

It was. The trail had started out well from Indian Pond, where we had put on our hobnailed boots and left Bones in the freight station. We had inquired about this trail, and heard that it was in fair shape right through to The Forks. “Might have one or two rough places, you know, but nothing to trouble you any.

So now we stood where the trail had petered out and abandoned us, in a shoulder-high jungle of raspberry bushes and half-rotten, charred windfalls lying in a tangle.

—I don’t see that short shorts have much use here, —I said.

We climbed into our dungarees and rolled our shirt-sleeves down. Then we fought raspberries and other undergrowth for a long time.

—Strenuous! —Nick said. He was wringing wet—. I move we stop and, well, we can’t sit down, but we can eat raspberries. And you never saw raspberries any bigger and better than these —that’s one consolation.

—Pretty gloomy country, though. I hate the remains of forest fires. Do you know how much of this there is?

He shook his head. “Obviously, a few miles of it can hold us up for days. D’you see a trace of trail anywhere?”

—No, but I see an old broken-down telephone line, which is probably where the trail would be if there were one.

—We’ll follow it if we can, —he decided—. Funny, to get our bush-whacking here, where we didn’t expect it, and none at all in that wild stretch just after Katahdin.

—Oh, well, life’s like that.

We took turns breaking trail. Little by little we pounded ahead, shielding our faces, wrestling, battering, climbing over and under the wreckage left by fire.

—We aren’t going to make The Forks tomorrow, that’s a cinch, —I said.

—No, we aren’t —and food’s kinder low, old girl.

—Lots of raspberries.

—Can’t live on raspberries, and work like this. Sugar’s almost gone. And that’s the most uncomfortable thing to be without —wait and see.

The next three miles or so took us the rest of the day. And then, just as the first shadows of dark came, we found ourselves at the edge of an oasis which somehow the fire had missed —tall green firs and spruces on a steep bank high above the river, which roared and gleamed wickedly white below.

—It’s a fine place to camp, —said Nick

A tiny narrow path led down through ferns and young trees. It was doubtless made by deer going to drink, and we liked the idea of sharing it with them. We built our fire on a gravel beach, and watched the river surge past.

—We’re marooned, —said Nick—. A green island with river on one side and raspberries on all the others.

—Think we'd better whack our way back to Indian Pond?

—Well, I'd thought of it. But as a matter of fact, I'd like to try a little more, if you're game for it tomorrow. This stuff may not last, and I'm curious about it.

—I'm with you.

He looked at me gratefully. "You're as good as any gipsy going, —he said—. And lots cleaner than most.

* * *

More raspberries, more desolate and tangled country. But a little less difficult. A few comparatively open spaces. Blueberries, big as Concord grapes. And then, like people walking out of a desert into a cool greenness, we came to the edge of woods —evergreen woods, glades of moss. But still no trail. We scrambled along the tops of ledges high above the river, with blueberries and spruces and gray reindeer moss growing on them.

Nightfall found us still more than half a day's walk from The Forks; and we had to build our supper fire in the rain. As for supplies, in the morning we saw the last of the cocoa boil up, without sugar, and the last of the flour go into a small batch of pancakes. I was heating the little frying-pan, when I remembered something else.

—We haven't any grease, —I said.

—No bacon fat?

—Not a scrap.

—Well...? There must be something greasy around somewhere.

We examined sky, trees...

—Boot grease! —I exclaimed.

—Haven't any.

—Ought to, then... Well, never mind. I'll use a little salt. But they'll stick

—I have it! —said Nick. He fished in a pack pocket, and held up a small stump of candle! —. Rub that around on the pan, —he suggested.

It worked...

We walked through a greenish drizzle of rain, waded across a troublesomely big tributary of the Kennebec, climbed over some more ledges, rich with moss of every conceivable green and gray, and the bright crimson and yellow-brown of sphagnum. Snowberries, with their tiny dark leaves and frost-white berries, grew in thick mats on the moss. We stopped in the rain and ate lunch, our last crumb or two of chocolate.

At last a path promised easier going. It led us into an old lumber camp where

we ravaged a blackberry patch. Then we pushed on, still through misty rain, downhill and uphill, across swamps and fields and often among big trees. The trail got better. It developed into what had once been a lumber road —narrow and bumpy, to be sure, but perhaps once passable for a strong cart with a strong-minded driver. This we followed down into a cow pasture. Ahead of us now were a couple of houses —The Forks.

At this moment we were confronted by the blank back side of a large signboard on a tree. Curious, we passed it and turned to see what it was all about. It said in large black letters: CAUTION. NARROW ROAD.

* * *

Since it was raining and we pretty tired, we decided to be snooty tonight and sleep in town. A large white farmhouse announced rooms, and we went inquiring. An old farmer, very thin and tall, with scant gray hair and blue eyes, came to the door and asked us in. Yes, they had rooms. He called in a quavery voice: "Hattie! Hattie! Here's some boys wants a room for the night". We went into a warm, deliciously warm kitchen, and there was Hattie, with her white hair piled high on her head, and her inquisitive, half-startled smile. All this, the warmth and homeliness of the kitchen, the vague scents of hay and of apples, and the two old folks, were the essence of one part of New England, just as quiet woods and hills were the essence of another part.

Hattie was very much interested in what we were doing. She wanted to know the details of our life out-of-doors. Her voice was gentle, a little cracked and weary, but there was a ring of wisdom and understanding in it.

—I see, —she said—, you just go where you want to, sleep when you want to...

Gaily she mocked her husband because he had taken me for a boy. "Why, I could tell right away you warn't no boy, —she said.

The old man wanted to know where we had come from; and when we told him about our trip through from Indian Pond, he shook his head cynically and murmured: "Aye, a bit o' fussy doon, that! Real fussy doon". We wanted his advice, as that of one to whom all this country was an open book, on the best way of getting up Dead River. He had logged hereabouts all his life. He pawed over our maps, marked them for us obligingly, but it was plain he felt scorn for these civilized trappings.

—You folks got a lot o' maps, —he half protested. And then he admitted grudgingly—: Most of 'em's pretty near right, too.

* * *

There was scarcely any "fussy doon" at all along Dead River. A little shadow-flecked road; a deserted lumber camp the first night; next day the little road again. At noon we took a bath in a swirling rocky pool, along with some very young trout. The second night we camped beside a basin deep enough to swim in. The current was about as swift as we were, and we laughed at the sensation of swimming vigorously and staying in the same place, like fish that poise on flickering fins, heads upstream. The river slid under our naked bellies.

Dead River Dam, at about noon the third day. We ate lunch, and surveyed the country with mistrust. Above the dam were six long miles of deadwater, with

frightful tangled marsh on each side.

—What did old Kennedy say we should do here?

—He said we could find a trail over those hills—but that seems pretty roundabout. I think I've got a better idea.

—Another of your inspirations?

He pointed to a curious object on the muddy bank: three logs nailed together with a plank across them at each end, lashed with rotten rope. “Remains of a raft, —he observed—. We'll fix it up and paddle up this confounded deadwater!

We looked around, and gathered together some more planks and a few rusty spikes; and with these unpromising materials Nick contrived a very creditable raft. His performance was so deft and rapid that it had a touch of the black arts, and I eyed the craft with some suspicion.

—Handsome creature. What'll we call her?

—‘Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,’ —he chanted—, ‘Rowing home to haven...’.

—But she can't be a quinquireme, —I protested—, with two paddles.

—Never mind —that's what we'll call her. Make us feel as if we had lots of power aboard.

We stood around and admired the quinquireme for a while; then put the duffle aboard, got aboard ourselves —she wobbled— and shoved off from the bank —she wobbled— paddling hard with some planks.

—She wobbles, —I protested.

—Never mind about that, —said Nick—. Paddle. See ‘if we can make her move.

We couldn't. “We'll wear ourselves out before we get her any six miles, —I mourned.

—Maybe poles would work better. We could get some traction on the bottom then.

Poles did work better. The bank, grayish mud, sloped off steep, so we were able to keep close to it without getting stuck too often. I stood forrad, Nick aft, and we pulled and shoved strenuously; but no matter how hard we labored, the quinquireme would not be hurried. Come nightfall we were still far from the end of the deadwater, so there was nothing for it but to camp. We pick'd a place where the bank was fairly high—a little above the swamp level.

—Sing me to sleep, lullaby of the mosquitoes, —Nick intoned drowsily, as vagrant airplanes howled outside the blacknetting—. Lord, I'm weary.

—Maybe it would have been less strenuous to go round over the hills, after all, —I suggested—. But not so much fun.

—Course not.

* * *

Early next evening, after a morning of poling and an afternoon of bush-whacking, we pulled into the town called Dead River Post Office.

It was just that—a post office. Half a mile or so down the road was a farm. Two miles the other way, another farm. That was the town.

We walked into the post office, and it seemed that the floor gave way giddily beneath our hobnailed boots. We slid a little, and regained balance. We wondered if being in the woods so long had somehow unfitted us for floors; then we saw that this floor sloped decidedly nor'-nor'-east.

The postmaster, having seen us go in, had come from his house next door and was busy unlocking the office. He fumbled with his keys, seemed unused to them. The office was festooned with cobwebs.

—You folks been hikin', I s'pose?

We told him we had come down from Katahdin.

—My, that be some ways, that be, —the old fellow commented, nodding his head.

—We've a great liking for the woods and hills, —we confided.

A smile brightened his wrinkled face. “Wal, I've a likin' for 'em meself, —he told us—. You know, one time I lived way down south in Floridy. Ever been to Floridy, you folks? Wal, there ain't a mountain in sight bigger 'n an ant-heap. Many's the time I've waked up in the mornin' wishin' I could look into the side of a mountain. There's somethin' about mountains —and the big trees. I been loggin' hereabouts most o'my life.

—You know Jim Kennedy at The Forks, 'don't you? —we asked—. If you're Sam Parsons, he wanted to be remembered to you.

—Sam Parsons I be. Let's see, now... Jim Kennedy... sure, I remember! I used to log with Jim and all the rest o'them boys, years back Sure!

We said we'd like a couple of stamps —added apologetically that we hated to bother him, but we'd been in the woods a pretty long time now, and had some letters to get off. He nodded, and seemed to sympathize, but the whole problem evidently baffled him. He bent down out of sight behind the window of his little cage. We waited. We heard papers rattling; we ventured to look in. Sam Parsons was in the midst of a dusty wreckage of folders, cards, slips of different colors —all the post office paraphernalia in chaotic disorder.

—Wonder where I could have put them blessed things! —He unlocked drawers, peered into dim corners.

We were worried now —afraid we were imposing on him, asking altogether too much. Oh, never mind, —we said hastily. He reappeared from the depths.

—Sorry, folks, I can't think.. guess I must be all sold out o'stamps.

We asked him if there was any chance of buying a little food somewhere hereabouts. he stood considering.

—Well, I guess my wife would sell you a few things —nothing fancy, you

know.

—Oh, all we want is a little corn meal and some sugar, —we assured him.

We bought these from a smiling, rosy-cheeked woman who consulted us conscientiously as to what we thought a pound of sugar ought to cost.

In the end we pitched our tent in Sam Parsons' apple orchard, and for supper brewed our largest pot full of apple-sauce. The next day we did the same. We could not bring ourselves to leave while there were still so many apples lying on the ground; so we rested our weary muscles, and mended our weary clothes, and ate apple-sauce all day.

* * *

Whenever we could, we camped on islands. Even if they consist of once rock, one bush, and one turtle sitting in the sun, there is always glamour about them. Which explains why we headed promptly for one as soon as we had collected Old Bones from the station at Oquossoc, and got her headed outward on the first of the Rangeley Lakes. This island was quite large, and had good spruce woods on it, also what looked like an abandoned house. And it had a beach to land on... But was it a beach? We drew closer... It was artificial! Someone had cleared away all the rocks from a short strip of shore, and piled them high on either side, leaving a low sandy stretch. This was hemmed in not only by the piles, which must have amounted to tons and tons of rocks, but also by two enormous tree-trunks, one on either side —trunks such as only a whole gang of laborers could have put in place.

We wondered...

A neat path led back into the woods. Beside it was a curious shed, long and narrow and high, as if meant to house a motor-launch. The trouble was, no motor-launch could possibly have gone through the narrow doorway. We studied the shed some more. Wide planks stood upright against a strange, rounded roof. As we started, this roof gradually took on a familiar look; and suddenly it dawned upon us that it was simply a big dory upside-down!

A few yards further, we stopped to stare at another marvel. The front end of a motor-boat, which had been vertically sawed in half across the middle, stood upside-down on stilts two or three feet high. For no reason at all, apparently. It was just there.

Nick drew in his breath sharply, and passed a hand over his eyes, as if something was wrong with them. Neither of us said anything, but the farther we went, the more we doubted our senses. We saw the ruin of what had been a solid little house, with a pleasant lawn and birch trees around it; and we saw an unfinished three-sided log shelter like those in the White Mountains —but these were ordinary enough. We also saw an enormous hole in the ground with several huge beams laid across the top of it —beams such as only a good deal of power could have put there. We saw a block of stone about four feet square and two feet thick, set off from the ground on two chunks of stove wood. We found a deep passage into the ground, partly filled with sawdust. Ice might once have been kept there. We found a pile of old bed-springs. We found cages and chicken-coops. We found paths through shrubbery; and flowers, now uncared for —poppies, pansies, marigolds, peonies, red and white roses. We found cisterns —a deep iron tank sunk into the ground; and another one built of stones. Any number of strange holes, serving no apparent purpose. Rock-piles, corresponding with the holes. Old iron boiler tanks.

—What do you make of it? —I asked.

—It looks to me, —said Nick—, as if at least ten persons, of gigantic strength and completely crazy, had been turned loose here and allowed to carry on for

some years.

This idea was anything but reassuring. We explored cautiously toward the other end of the island, and found the remains of another garden. We were pretty scared now, so that ordinary currant bushes, carefully potted, had an air of mystery. There were also gooseberries, grape vines, raspberries. And a blackberry patch. But not a real one. This was going too far. This was Alice-in-Wonderland stuff. Enormous arching tentacles reached up and outward... thorns half an inch long... berries, just beginning to ripen, each berry as big as or bigger than a crab-apple.

It was like some fantastic, frightening dream, peopled with shapes and shadows—ludicrous, grotesquely distorted.

We fetched our canvas water-bucket. I crept in around the outer fringes of that blackberry patch, a fit habitation for the Macbeth witches, or any other witches. Plunk, plunk—keplunk! I dropped the berries into the bucket. We tasted one, each taking a large bite out of it... sweet and juicy, and tasted like a blackberry. Plunk, plunk! In ten minutes that bucket was full.

Slowly the palpitating of our hearts grew less, as we began to adapt ourselves to these incongruous surroundings. We built a fire and ate supper on a dock affair—another of those giant tree-trunks on the shore—and we watched the moon rise, full, pale gold, while we ate enormous quantities of blackberries with Klim and brown sugar. No monsters descended or ascended. Life went calmly on. We cut the usual fir boughs, and spread them on the floor of the unfinished log shelter. A quiet talk, a long sleep. In the morning another bucket of blackberries, and a swim. Then we piled our belongings into Bones, and pushed off from that perhaps enchanted shore, leaving Mysterious Island wrapped in its sinister yet comic mystery.

* * *

The old canoe was full of grub. Nothing to worry about, then; nothing to do but paddle. When we came to a good place, we stopped and swam. It was a peaceful, swinging life, full of sunshine, without special adventure. It needed no adventure beyond itself.

Mooselookmeguntic narrowed and merged into Molly chunkamunk—a silver-gray lake when we came to it in late afternoon. And another island was ours that night—a very little island, just big enough for our tent, two spruces and a fir on a moss carpet, a fringe of rocks and a few blueberry bushes around the shore. It was not in the least mysterious, but very lovely in the lake's silver solitude.

We awoke to look out into mist rising densely off the water. Brush sticking through that mist looked witch-like, black and bare in a soft white infinity. A faint splashing, and a string of brown ducks slid by, just outside our front door. They were the sole inhabitants of this white world. They quacked, twisting their necks from side to side. They sculled along gracefully, the water edged with silver at the base of their slender necks. Now and then the vigorous kick of a yellow foot would send a ripple over into the hollow of a smoothly feathered back—a big drop would glisten there silvery and ephemeral, and roll off like quicksilver. They trailed out into the mist, little brown ghosts.

The last of the blackberries for breakfast, on top of our oatmeal. And then we glided on, past more good green woods, with occasional big fish-hawks perched on overhanging branches; now and then a fish leaping—a flash of silver scaled in swift sunlight; a loon crying his heart-broken cry along marshy shores. We swam—arched elbows and the slip of silver past brown shoulders. A seagull gliding—a shaft of white light.

Came a dam—Lower Dam—we hoisted Bones out of water, and carried her tenderly, with aching arms—heavy old gal!—up one bank and down another and set her into Welookbanticook, the next lake. And glided on.

Another sleep, and, next day, another dam. This was a more extensive affair. Bones would somehow have to be transported three miles overland before she could be put into Umbagog, the last of the Rangeley chain. There were a few houses at this Middle Dam, and one of them was a sporting camp, a semi-stylish place, with deer's antlers on the walls, and a shiny desk in one corner. Some fat old men sat in rockers on the porch. The proprietor was evoked. He was also old and fat; worse still, he was grumpy. He didn't like us; he didn't like the weather; he obviously hadn't had a good breakfast. Five dollars his price, and he couldn't be bothered talking about it, and the sooner we got out of there the better for everybody concerned.

We got out, and eventually struck a bargain with a jovial, rosy-cheeked guide who said he would take us over to Umbagog, bag, baggage, and canoe, for three dollars.

His auto was one of the old Stars. To this he hitched a wobbly trailer only half

as long as the canoe, and to this he lashed half of Bones over and under and around, with yards of rope. They piled the luggage and me into the back seat; Nick got in front, and with many squeaks and creakings the caravan set out.

—How's the road? —Nick inquired.

—Oh, it's a dandy little road, —our guide told us proudly.

We pulled over a grassy bank, and were confronted by a gate. Nick hopped out and unfastened it, and it rolled smoothly open on a cart-wheel. We passed through on to what seemed a very fair specimen of a narrow country lane.

—Keep an eye on the canoe, won't you? —Nick warned me.

I peered through the small back window. Bones seemed to be following us smoothly enough.

Nick was interested to know how the old fellow had got his Star in to Middle Dam. No roads went to it, as far as he knew. By barge from South Arm, a landing-place across the lake, seemed the most likely way.

—Oh, no! There's a road.

—Where is that? —Nick asked.

—Through the woods from over by the Magalloway.

—What sort of a road is it? —Nick inquired.

—Wal, it's good enough. I got my car in seven years ago. 'Bout six miles, it is. Took four men and six horses to get me here; three-day job, it was.

We went over a little bounce. I peeked back anxiously just as the trailer also hit the bounce. As the trailer went up, the stern half of the canoe, overhanging behind, sagged abruptly downward, only to spring up again as the trailer went down. Bones waggled both ends limply a minute, and then subsided.

—Say, Nick

But he was lost in conversation. He was curious to know whether it was possible to run in a canoe the stretch of river between these two lakes. We had at first considered doing it.

—Wal, you might. —The old guide was frank to admit the possibility—. One party tried it three years ago. They smashed up —went all to pieces.

This “dandy little road” we were on became narrower and ruttier, though I could see that it was a paved highway compared to the one through the woods from over by the Magalloway. Grass grew in the middle, and we scraped the brush on each side. I didn't like the way Bones was reacting, as if she had neither ribs nor planks —which, of course, was not far from the truth. I noticed now that she was lashed so tight that the rope drew her sides together a little —there was a sort of pucker in each gunwale —and the back edge of the trailer made a ridge across her bottom, like a mole tunnel. She waved her free hind end up and down, bending in the middle of her back. I expected at any moment to see her snap clean in two.

—Nicky, listen.

We hit something in the road that must have been nearly the size of Katahdin. There was a back-breaking jar and crash; and car, trailer, canoe, and ourselves rode up in the air and down. My head hit the roof and I saw many stars. When I could see anything else, I looked back, fully expecting to see half a canoe on the trailer; but Bones was riding along at ease and whole, wagging from her middle, quite unperturbed. Such things were nothing to her. I know now that she was undefeatable, and bore a charmed life.

With horrible jarrings and crackings, we pulled up by the shore of Umbagog. The old guide unlashed Bones, and her gunwales resumed their normal curve. He and Nick lifted her down, and the mole-ridge in her bottom vanished. We put the packs in her, and the carton of grub, and our hobnailed boots.

—Got a good bow-man there? —the guide smiled.

—Sure have.

—Thought it was the young brother, first.

—Well, it is, in a way ... Here you are —thanks a lot.

And we were gliding down along the east shore of Umbagog in mid-afternoon sunlight, as serenely as if Middle Dam had been only a wild interlude in a peaceful dream. Except for a slight headache... There were birch trees in the dream. Their reflections were a sinuous tangle of shifting black and white shadows in silky water.

* * *

A long, narrow arm of water, with a beach at the end of it —Tyler Cove. We pitched the tent on a hillock just back of the beach, then swam. It was not until we were cooking supper afterwards that we noticed the beginning of a majestic parade of thunderheads in the western sky. They were far away and hardly real. We went on cooking, unconcerned, over a dream of a little fire of white cedar. The thunderheads surged up, black with marvellous curled edges of light. They came fast, wind with them. The sky was slate-gray and tense around them; the lake reflected it. Gray waves edged with foam struck gloomily at the sand.

—Good Lord! That storm's coming a mile a minute. Let's get the grub under cover —quick!

Over went the good old canoe, her solid back to the wind; and under her protecting wings went our carton of grub. Those thunderheads were shutting out the whole world, now; and they were pretty noisy about it —gashed and split and torn to black rags by spears of lightning... We looked up from our job just in time to see an immense sheet of rain sweep the bay, eclipsing everything, and as we turned and ran for our little tent above the beach, the first drops struck like hailstones.

We buckled down the front flap at a sharp angle, and tested the lines. They seemed firm enough, although the tent shook and quivered as the trees to which it was moored thrashed in the wind. We had a dismal vision of that tent spreading sudden wings and taking flight in the middle of the storm, leaving us exposed to furious skies...

Storm? Where was it now, anyway? After that first flurry, wind and rain had both gone strangely still. They were hanging around somewhere, waiting and listening. Sly devils, leering out from behind cosmic tree-trunks, watching. It was very dark, an unnatural dark that rumbled and growled and was shot with fire. The storm was holding off, in ambush. We were frightened, and wished it would come and get done with it, and demolish us, if it was going to. Not so good to lie in our sleeping-bags just waiting to be demolished, and listen to the rumbling of celestial innards.

I recoiled from the floor of the tent as if it had exploded. A slight movement under me —a crackle that sounded, against my ear-drum, loud as a forest fire.

—Whatever is the matter with you? —asked Nick

I wiped my forehead. The air was lifeless and hot. Some damn bug —I said —. Crawling around under the tent —almost in my ear. How can I sleep with my head on a clawing beetle?

I shifted ground, and tried again. Sleep? With that impending cataclysm thrashing around overhead? Besides, it was worth listening to! A livid blue-green flare lit up the forest, and out of it, as if evoked by lightning, came the deep-voiced melancholy cry of an owl, like a lost spirit without a body drifting among the trees. A crash of thunder buried the owl. But then, out of tense silence, a

ghostly echo—an answer from far—away hills.

I shivered, and could have bristled like a cat. “Lord, what a chorus it is! Storm growling, bass; trees listening, sotto voce; and owls...

—Wait till the loons hop on it, mezzo-soprano, —said Nick

They did. A long, quavering wail rose out of the lake—a wail, or was it a laugh?—insane, heart-broken; and its answer, two notes lower, a little farther off. A shaft of fire speared them, but their ghosts went on talking.

—This is almost too much for anybody, —I said—. I wish it would rain—or something.

A mosquito overhead was louder than an airplane. He tormented one ear, while the subterranean scratchings went on below the other. The chorus was growing. Somewhere a dog howled desolately, as if he had just had the disappointment of his life. And the owls went on, and the thunder, and the trees, and every now and then the loons. A big bull-frog joined, and croaked raucously from the beach: “Awk! Awk!”. And sly and wary movements and rustlings were all around us.

And then, just outside, one of the most disheartening sounds the woods know how to make—the jarring snap, half snarl and half grunt, of whatever breed of toad it is to whom that noise is a natural method of expression.

It was too much, even for Nick. He snapped on the flashlight, and shot a piece of night with it, but caught only a little porcupine ambling about outside the front flap.

—Imagine anything, even a toad, having the heart to do that on a night like this! —he mumbled—. It went off again, with a horrid rasp.

—He would park right by us, too.

The owl again, the dog, the loons, and the toad. The porky rustling. Lightning... thunder... owl. Witches were abroad. The forest was an unearthly pandemonium.

* * *

Sunshine next morning seemed unreal and a mistake. We eyed it mistrustfully, and stepped into it without confidence. But it warmed us. It made fairies dance on the lake. The lake was enticing, and so we swam again. It was iridescent, over ripples of sand. We forgot to put our clothes on, and then it occurred to us that now was a good time to repair them again.

Voices, talking and laughing, at the other end of the beach. A slender man and his small daughter, both in bathing suits, came out of the woods, carrying pails and shovels, and a fish-net. I slipped into shorts and shirt, and strolled down the beach.

The man was absorbing sun on top of a big boulder, while the little girl, net in hand, paddled around after small minnows that chased up and down across a golden pattern of ripple reflections. I climbed to the top of a neighboring boulder, and said good morning.

—Why, good morning! —he exclaimed—. Are you the guardian mermaid, or naiad or dryad, of this beach?

—I don't know. Do mermaids live in tents? I rather doubt it. Oh, that's your tent, is it?

—Yes, and that —I waved my arm down the beach—, is my husband. He's diligently sewing, but I can't be bothered —when the sun is shining. We've come down from Katahdin.

—On foot?

—Partly —but partly in Bones. Bones is that overturned object you behold on the beach.

—Some might call it a canoe, —he suggested.

—I'm not committing myself. She has a very flexible bottom, —I explained.

His smile was pleasing, but just a little crooked, a little wistful. “Your husband, —he remarked—, looks like Robinson Crusoe.

I looked at Nick impersonally for the first time in many weeks. I saw a solid figure, well-muscled and well-browned, sitting cross-legged on the sand, bent over his sewing. And I noticed especially the majestic red and black beard behind which he had been gradually disappearing for some time.

—Doesn't he, though? —I agreed—. But he's really rather nice.

—Because he does the family sewing? —my friend queried.

—That's part of it, —I granted—. I loathe sewing.

—You know, I'd like to hear about that trip of yours —all the way from Katahdin. You must be stout pioneers.

—Come on down, —I urged—, and meet Sir Robin.

We all sat in the sun and talked, while the brown-haired small daughter ran busily up and down. And it turned out that Mr. Jackson understood us. He was a New York insurance man on a vacation; he looked as though he had been chained to an office desk most of his life; and yet, mysteriously, he was one of us. He

understood the joy of open places. He knew about packs and boots, tents and campfires, fir beds and stars, rough trails and dawn over mountain peaks. He nodded his head with quiet appreciation. His pleasing brown eyes were lit with vicarious excitement and pleasure, which changed to a look of intense desire, and then a stare of longing. The story came to an end—or rather, it got to Tyler Cove, and stopped there to bask in the sun.

But not for long. “Listen here, Mr. and Mrs. Crusoe. You’re shifting camp tonight. Come on over and pitch in my back pasture. All the apples you want. I don’t want to lose you. You make me feel young and sentimental again. Besides, I want my wife to know you—and her cake and coffee are of the best.

* * *

Mrs. Jackson came out on to the front porch to greet us. She was soft and round. She had a soft round rosy face, with too many chins, and gray hair of the wrong length that hung down straight. She looked older than Charlie by many years.

—Meet Mr. and Mrs. Crusoe, —said Charlie.

She giggled. “Charlie says you’re going to sleep in the pasture tonight, —she began—. But won’t you come and sleep in the house instead? We have plenty of room, and you’ll be so much more comfortable.

I thanked her, but said we’d stick to the pasture —we really slept better outdoors. She looked at us in friendly vacancy, but Charlie’s warm brown eyes registered comprehension.

—They’re Romany Rye, Maggie, —he explained—. Don’t you see? They don’t give a hoot for your nice clean comfortable bed. All they want is their stars. —And he smiled again—. But they’ll have some cake and coffee, —he suggested—. Why don’t you run and get it ready? From what they’ve been telling me, it’s a dickens of a while since they’ve had anything resembling chocolate cake.

We sat around a cosy table in the dining-room, and there was a most magnificent cake. Maggie asked questions. She wanted to know what we did when it rained, what we ate and how we cooked it, if the bugs didn’t bother us, and how we could stand all the funny noises in the woods at night. Charlie sat by in silence. When she had asked everything she could think of, she rested her elbows on the table, and began to talk about herself—to confide a long story.

—Charlie and I used to go on camping trips, too, —she said—. When we were first married. Didn’t we, Charlie? It’s so long ago that I hardly remember it now, but we’ve still got a lot of old junk in the attic somewhere —pots and pans, tents, sleeping-bags—you never saw such a lot of useless old junk. We didn’t go so

strenuous as you people, because my health was never good. And then one time when we went, it just rained and rained, all the time. We stayed in the tent, waiting for it to clear up, and I got the fidgets, and the mosquitoes were something fierce. And I said then that that was the last time I'd go—I was done with it. And —she recounted with pride— I never did go again, either. Did I, Charlie? And then the baby came. Charlie wanted to go but he couldn't budge me. —She giggled playfully—. I just had to have my hot baths and my gas stove. He wanted to go with an old college classmate of his, but I don't think a man should leave his family when he has such a short vacation anyway —do you? So we put all the old things away in the attic, and there I guess they'll stay. —The fact satisfied her tremendously. She smiled with confidence.

So that was it!

I glanced toward Charlie's slender face. Oh, no they won't! —he contradicted quietly—. They'll go with me and Joy, when she's old enough... a year or two more... Won't they, pal? —he asked the little girl beside him.

—And what do you expect me to do then? —Mrs. Jackson queried grimly. There was a swift play of eyes...

It was sunset. "We must get along, —said Nick—, and make camp. Fir boughs to get in... Thanks ever so..."

Charlie followed us out on to the cow trail to the back pasture. He was very quiet. We shook hands and said goodnight. Suddenly he waved his arm expansively toward house, woodshed, pond and dam and flower garden. In his sweeping gesture he included Maggie —he included the whole of his life, except perhaps his little daughter. God, how I envy you! —he exclaimed—. I'd swap the whole of my outfit for yours —any day.

* * *

Canoe for sale! It was hard making up our minds to part with the old faithful. She had served us well. But now we were leaving behind us Maine and its network of lakes and rivers. Soon we would be crossing into New Hampshire, the next section of the Appalachian Trail. Soon we would be in familiar country that was much loved by both of us the White Mountains.

So we peddled Bones. We put our possessions in her and nosed her along the shore of Umbagog. Whenever we passed a summer cottage, or a fisherman, or a solitary camper, or a sporting camp, we asked if they wanted a canoe—a good canoe, with a very flexible bottom.

For a long time nobody wanted to pay more than ten dollars for Bones, although we insisted that her bottom was one in a million. Her value, we thought, should have increased since we had bought her. This did not seem to be the case.

One elderly farmer wanted us to exchange her for a cow, but we couldn't quite see the use of that. Now, if it had been a donkey... But a cow on the peaks of the White Mountains was a weird thought.

At last, somebody offered twelve dollars. Without further ado, we stepped out of the canoe and put on our packs, collected our money, and passed through to the road, foot-free. That was that!

It was raining slightly—a misty silent rain. The woods liked it. Leaves and needles were pearly with tiny drops, and moss was very green. We walked along slowly, humming.

—What's the date?—Nick asked me suddenly.

—Good Lord, how should I know?

We reasoned quietly with this problem, and came to the conclusion that it was the first half of September.

—Which means,—Nick said—, that the summer's getting on.

—We can't walk south fast enough to keep up with the summer, can we?

—No, but we can stay out a good deal longer. Till November, say.

—And then...?

—Well, then we've got to go back to work, haven't we?

—You do think of the morbidest possibilities, Nicky. All the way from Katahdin you've shown absolute genius for it. Eaten by bears, stuck in the mud, starved to death—and now—back to work.

—Well, what else can we do?

—Anything! Keep going to Georgia on snowshoes. Or, perhaps better, buy a sack of beans and some corn meal, and shack it out for the winter.

—Would you, Bar? Strenuous!

—Course I would. The crunch of hobnails. The soft whispers of mist.

—And next summer,—I continued—, we'll proceed on our interrupted way toward Georgia—Appalachian Trail.

—You know,—Nick said—, we haven't got money enough to buy salt enough

to put on a small sparrow's tail.

—You forget we've just collected twelve good dollars. At least, I hope they're good.

He thought it over. "You're right, —he announced—. We'd better stay out if we possibly can—not let the machines and mothballs get us —the way they've got the Jacksons.

—We've melted too much into the landscape, —I said—. We'll never again be able to unmelt.

—Well, you like it, don't you? Aren't you glad you decided to come with me?

—I couldn't do anything else, —I admitted—. You know, I'm even glad you cut my hair off.

—It's waving in the wind very pleasantly, —he said.

—I almost think you married me just for the fun of cutting it off.

—Well, that was part of it, of course, —he conceded—. But then, I didn't want to walk all the way to Georgia alone. And incidentally —I liked you a little, child.

—Oh!

We came around a green bend, and I stooped to pick up a small object in the road.

—What've you got there?

I held it up —a battered nickel.

—That settles it! —I said—. You see how luck is with us.

—We'll get to Georgia yet—, —said Nick—. Even without a donkey.



BARBARA NEWHALL FOLLETT (March 4, 1914 in Hanover, New Hampshire). Her father was Wilson Follett, an English teacher at Dartmouth College at the time, who became a well-known editor and writer of the book, *Follett's Modern American Usage*, still published today. Her mother was Helen Thomas Follett, a writer in her own right who later in life published two travel books..

A turning point for Barbara was her fascination with her father's typewriter. «*Tell me a story about it*», she demanded, and after her father explained how it worked, she began furiously producing her thoughts onto paper.

When she was four years old, she met an elderly Swedish gentleman who restored antiques, Mr. Oberg. Her stuffed toy rabbit had lost an eye, and Mr. Oberg paused in his work on two ancient clocks to repair her rabbit. Barbara was so impressed that not long afterward she composed her first important correspondence, a story in Mr. Oberg's honor, and signed it with her full name:

Twelve clocks were on a shelf all ticking away. They wanted to take a walk, so they jumped down and started. A little dog saw them and pushed one over, then another, and finally all. They were broken into pieces. Then Mr. Oberg came along and said: "Oh my!" and put the pieces into a basket and took them home. He mended them; and now they are as good as new.

Believing Barbara would receive a better education at home rather than public or private school, the Folletts decided to design their own homeschool curriculum for Barbara, primarily created by Helen Follett.

When she was five years old, she was writing quite long stories, including a tale called *The Life of the Spinning Wheel, the Rocking-Horse, and the Rabbit*, which was unusually imaginative with a full-bodied vocabulary. The story is reproduced in the book, *Barbara, the Unconscious Biography of a Child Genius*, a much later book published in 1966 based on Barbara's letters and stories.

In 1922, at age seven, Barbara, who played the violin, was composing striking poetry based on her music:

*When I go to orchestra rehearsals,
there are often several passages for the
Triangle and Tambourine
together
When they are together,
they sound like a big piece of metal
that has broken in thousandths
and is falling to the ground.*

When she was eight years old, she began work on *The House Without Windows* as a gift for her mother. After the first manuscript was destroyed in a fire, it was recreated over a period of a few years, finally completed when she was eleven, and published in 1927 when she was twelve to great acclaim.

After publication of her novel, Barbara became fascinated with the sea and convinced her parents the next summer to allow her to accompany the crew of a ship, the Frederick H., a three-masted schooner bound for Nova Scotia. Though she was supposed to be a passenger, she insisted on doing chores as a deck-hand. After returning home, she turned her adventure into a novel, *The Voyage of the Norman D.*, which was accepted for publication in 1928 when she was thirteen years old. Barbara was famous.

During this time, her father was spending more and more time in New York, and shortly after her latest novel was published, she received the news that her father was leaving the family for another woman. This devastated Barbara, who was

very close to her father.

During the next few years, she and her mother travelled to several countries with Helen hoping to publish a travelogue of their adventures. This was not immediately successful, and they were forced to return to the United States. Barbara for some time was left with friends in Los Angeles, a place she “loathed,” particularly when she began attending school. She ran away to San Francisco, but was reported as a runaway, and was picked up by authorities. The case made national headlines.

All of this was especially tragic timing, as 1929 brought the beginning of the Great Depression and after returning and being reunited in New York, Helen Follett and Barbara found themselves very tight for money. Barbara was forced at age sixteen to get a job in New York as a typist after taking a course in shorthand and business typing, *«a decidedly more tawdry use of its magic»*, as she described it.

In June, she wrote to a friend: *«My dreams are going through their death flurries, I thought they were all safely buried, but sometimes they stir in their grave, making my heartstrings tuinge. I mean no particular dream, you understand, but the whole radiant flock of them together—with their rainbow wings, indescent, bright, soaring, glorious, sublime. They are dying before the steel javelins and arrows of a world of Time and Money»*.

By 1934, she had written two more books, *Lost Island*, a novel, and *Travels Without a Donkey*, a travelogue. But they were never published.

Around this time, she met a man named Nickerson Rogers, an outdoorsman who shared her love of nature. They soon eloped and had adventures backpacking through Europe. They settled down in Brookline, Massachusetts where they were relatively secure and happy, at least for some time. Barbara took dance classes during the summers at Mills College, which she loved.

In 1939, she believed Rogers was seeing another woman. She wrote to a friend: *«There is someone else... I had it coming to me, I know»*.

Later in the same letter, she wrote: *«I think I've persuaded him to give me my chance. He is a very kind person, really, and hates to hurt people. He hated to write that letter, that's why it sounded so awful. I think that, if I can really prove that I'm different, maybe things will work out. He still doesn't quite believe it, as he says, that a leopard can change its spots! He thinks that in a month things will be all wrong again. So I say, at least let me have that month! I think I'll get it, and I think I can win if I've got the strength»*.

A later letter showed that Barbara was hopeful things could be salvaged: *«I had had the feeling up till then that he definitely did not want to [make a go of things]. So*

imagine my amazement, my almost hysterical delight, when he said yes, he wanted to make a go of it».

But the good feelings were not to last: *«I don't know what to say now. On the surface, things are terribly, terribly calm, and wrong —just as wrong as they can be. I am trying —we both are trying. I still think there is a chance that the outcome will be a happy one; but I would have to think that anyway in order to live; so you can draw any conclusions you like from that!».*

That was Barbara's last letter to her friend, or to anyone else as far as is known. On Thursday, December 7, 1939, Barbara and Nick quarreled, and she left their Brookline apartment that evening with \$30 and a notebook.

She was never heard from again.

Nick, after she didn't return, reported her missing two weeks later. The bureau of Missing Persons sent out a five-state alarm, but to no avail. Some believed she had run away, perhaps to her friend in California, but no evidence or communication from her has ever surfaced.

Barbara Newhall Follett, brilliant and once famous, simply disappeared.