CONCERNING SAWDUST PILES, AND THE THINGS THAT VANISH WHEN THE LUMBER CAMP APPEARS: BY GRACE E. WARD

ROBINSON CRUSOE, at sight of the strange footprint upon his desert isle, could not have given a more violent start of surprise and consternation than we did when, driving to our favorite grove, we found a mushroom growth of little huts sprung up in the very heart of the pines.

"Why, what—what is the matter?" we gasped. "Are they going to cut down our woods?" Some way, we always spoke as if we personally bore the burden of taxation of all the hill-country.

A prodigiously fat woman whose right arm alone looked as if it might fell a pine tree, clad in a magenta wrapper that billowed over all space, squeezed through the door of the nearest hut and surveyed us. That settled it. We knew the worst. Just what the affinity is we know not, but the calico wrapper of a certain vivid magenta hue is the inevitable concomitant of the portable steam-mill.

"The boys hev jest set up the shanties," she vouchedsafed, "and we callerlates ter go ter sawin' the fust 'the week.'"

We groaned. That's what they all do. Every soul that owns a stick of timber "callerlates ter go ter sawin'," these days.

But we would not give up this our last picnic. We spread our table in the presence of our enemies and looked our last upon those tall, straight trunks whose far-off tufted crests bent in the breeze as if to say, "We, about to die, salute you."

Oh, the pity of it! It was such a wonderful place. There were long, dim aisles, high-vaulted. There were pine-roofed, laurel-banked paths whose low arch one entered with a sense of mystery and awe, and from whose premature dusk, in late afternoon, one emerged again into the sunny, fern-laughing pasture with a sense of having in some way cheated time and gained several hours of daylight.

And now it was going to be like those other mill-yards. There would be the loggers' camps with all the details of housekeeping delightfully open and above board. Blankets, pillows, kitchen utensils, clothing, are always in full evidence. The dinner is prepared on a range outside the door. Exclusiveness is unknown to the logger.

Soon, there would be the portable mill, the Chimera of the hill country, the monster that devours and scorches and departs. There would be the strident scream of the saw as it drives through a mag-
"They are going to cut down our woods."

"There were pine-roofed laurel-banked paths."
"there were long, dim aisles, high-vaulted."

"a mushroom growth of huts sprung up in the very heart of the pines."
CONCERNING SAW DUST PILES

Significant log, the towering sawdust heap, new and red, the piles of smooth lumber crowding mill-yard and roadside, the big, creaking teams loading and hauling, or drawn up in some convenient shade, with patient horses burrowing into their dinner-pails.

Indeed, we remember not infrequently having had to worm a tortuous course among seven huge lumber teams halted for the noon ing at close intervals, criss-cross over the road.

The lumber teamster is King of the Highway. His the right to gouge great gullies in the tortured road. His the exemption from turning out. You must give place to him, but really the obligation is from within. You look at the mammoth wheels, the overhanging load, the sweating flanks and heaving sides of the horses as they pause for a brief rest, the straining legs that gather strength for the next steep pitch, and you gladly go down even into the ditch to make room for them. You have your warning while they are yet afar, a monstrous tortoise just crawling over the brow of the hill, the pillar of dust cloud moving ever in advance, rising from great, shaggy hoofs.

Can you resist, as you edge past, a glance at the driver? I never can. Ten to one, he is but a boy, slight and wiry, and with that gnomelike type of face that ever belongs with the child that does an adult's work while still a child. Ten to one, if you address him, there will be found the self-contained presence, the laconic speech, the almost lethargic moderation that are his by descent from generations of ancestors who have all sat through a patient course to livelihood teaming lumber, in the certain knowledge that come shine, come shower, there could be no haste beyond what was over and over the same process, the labored strain up the long mile-hill, the unhitching and "doubling up" on the sharp, steep pitch, the generous halts at regular intervals, two loads a day.

What occupies their minds, these drivers, when for the hundredth time they follow the windings and flutings of that white streamer of road? You may search the face as you pass. It is non-committal. It will tell you nothing except that there is no hurry.

The mill-yard has a picturesqueness, to be sure, but it is ephemeral. If you would see how this spot will look, come to one that last year was even as this. It is haunted by the very genius of desolation. No thin spiral of pale blue smoke twists ceaselessly up, no teamsters shout to plodding horses, the sawdust pile stands gray and lifeless, and the sun beats down relentlessly upon a barren tract dotted with
CONCERNING SAW DUST PILES

charred stumps and blazing pink with a rank growth of willow-herb, the "fire-weed" of the natives. Strips of bark and chips of wood lie all around, passing into beautiful decay. Ghastly trunks of unfelled trees that the fire has run over rear to Heaven their stark, hideous arms, leprous white. No cheering "hullo," no kindly chaffing of drivers, only the shrill wail of a red-shouldered hawk, guiltily circling in tireless spirals through the blue.

And yet another. Ghostly white birches, the slender, helpless residuum, sagging lower and lower under the weight of last winter's snows, snarled with brush, bent almost double and in no wise able to lift up themselves, make a hopeless tangle of ugliness for several acres.

Nature, however, is very good to us, far better than we deserve. "They that know" can show you the place of the old landslide, long time a ragged, clay-colored scratch on the cheek of the mountain. It is beginning to grass over this year, and to nurse a few seedling pines. Why, it hardly shows at all. In the sandy stretch to the north, a pigmy grove of baby pines spreads a soft green fuzz over the valley. Temple Hill, once a smooth green lawn in effect, cropped close by young stock, is dotted with young conifers. The hill to the south is already dark with sapling pines. Oh, they are coming, the new woods, but they cannot come fast enough to offset the havoc of those who "calleralate ter go ter sawin'."

Some days, we meet a kindly sort of body stopping by the wayside to fasten a small, round, tin tag upon a tree. How we love him, that quiet man in the gray slouch hat. It is the tree warden, and such trees as he sets his mark upon are sealed unto the day of redemption. That little tag is the "This shall be mine, saith the State," and the axe of the woodman cannot prevail against it. And so a minimum of shade is secured to the highway, at least in Massachusetts.

Under the labors of the American Forestry Association, whose headquarters are at Washington, much real service is being rendered the hapless forests. It is the Good Samaritan of the nation, for surely no wayfarer upon the Jericho road ever more truly fell among thieves who robbed him and left him sore wounded, than have the splendid tracts of American timber.

The sum of two dollars admits one to membership and secures a subscription to the official organ of the Association, whose intensely interesting work is well worth following. Opportunities are also offered to such as have means and inclination to become benefactors on a larger scale.