

Spring in the Forest

By M. BROOKER, Grassy Lake, Sask.

If you walk in the forest this spring, first clear out the path along the creek that has been there for many years, and your feet will be silent on the damp earth and moss there, and linked with the past, for many feet have trodden this way before. Every wild creature will follow the path when you have cleared the way. Wear drab clothing and your presence will not alarm nor interfere in any way with the busy forest denizens. There is the stillness, and you stop at once on entering the forest to listen to it. But it is not really still for there is sound, and where there is sound there is life.

A blue jay stops to look at you but he has nothing to say. He remembers perhaps, the bacon rind, soup bones, and tallow of last winter. There, is a squirrel. He jitters on the branch in his zeal to scold you roundly. Colour is all about you. Most of it in shades of green, yet not a new leaf is out. There are the evergreen trees and small plants. The soft green of wild lavender leaves, with their under sides of orange. Perhaps you like to call it wild lavender still, because your mother once told you it was wild lavender, and you would not change the memory of that walk in the forest with your mother.

The bunch berry leaves are of every shade of green, and most shades of red, some browns and russets. The creepers and wide bladed grasses are all fresh and green from their recent blanket of snow. That fluorescence up ahead, is moss and lichen and the flash of balsam fir needles in the late sun shafts. Poplar trunks are adorned with vari-coloured moss, and ornamented with tinted fungus cakes. Many other evergreens grace the forest floor.

A new sound joins the voice of many birds. It is water running over the beaver dam. You are nearing the pond. The little voices of croaking

frogs and singing frogs join in. Then there is movement and a beaver comes up clutching mud to his chest. He patties on his hind feet like a little dinosaur to the spot needing attention; deposits his armful and packs it firmly in place with his nose. You choose a crude chair made from criss crossed poplar trees that the beaver cut down last fall. There is a crashing that makes your heart miss a beat, and expecting to see at least a moose or two, three squirrels that seem to have lost their minds dash by. They run in an endless circle. Four blue jays are feeding on insects from the pond. Perhaps water beetles. Their skill in snatching from the water is almost equal to that of the kingfisher, who will not stay, because there are no fish in this pond. But who sets up a chatter of scorn and displeasure. A sweet thread of sound comes from the tree-tops. It is some kind of warbler who says — "See see Thhh." There are so many warblers singing from the canopy of branches it would take pages to mention them all. A deer puts on an act across the pond. He has caught wind of you, and although he looks directly at you, he does not see you.

Something is creeping up behind you. It is those daft Squirrels again. No, a newcomer. He has taken to stealth and will spring out and scare the whiskers off the others when the circle comes by again.

Mrs. C. P. Traill
1906

"Mothers of Canada, teach your children to know and to love the wild flowers springing in their path; to love the soil in which God's hand has planted them, and in all their after wanderings through the world their hearts will turn back with loving reverence to the land of their birth, to that dear country, endeared to them by the remembrance of the wild flowers which they plucked in the happy days of their childhood."