



An Autumn Day in the Open
 Perhaps you are one of those who believe that the only way to spend a day out of doors is to make preparations for killing something before you go. On more than one occasion the Architect of this department has given expression of his fondness for rod and reel, and now and then he likes to get out into the stubble and the marsh and get a mess of prairie chickens, quails or ducks. He hates the "game butcher" worse than he hates snakes.

But even these delights pale before the glorious sport of a tramp through the woods, over the meadows, through the lowlands and among the stubble on a gloriously bright and crisp October day. With nothing in hand save a little package of lunch and a camera, a pocketful of the favorite mixture and the old pipe in mouth, the Architect set out one morning this week, prepared for a whole day's tramp. He was accompanied by a fellow workman of infinite wit and jest, and the pair of tramped far and wide over Nebraska's fertile fields. It was not a walking, however, for we took the street car to the furthest point, and then, waving the car crew a farewell we started over the fields towards Salt Creek of historic fame. Not the Salt creek of political history, however, but the Salt creek that flows close by the city of Lincoln. Years ago the antelope, the buffalo, the Indian and the early settler came to the present site of Lincoln, for upon the saline flats they found plenty of salt deposits. Indeed, the men who founded Lincoln had visions of a big salt industry in the years to come, but the vision never materialized. There is plenty of salt water to be found by boring, but there is salt in larger and cheaper quantities elsewhere, so Lincoln never achieved distinction as a center for the salt industry. But, just the same, it is great fun to wander along the banks of the Salt.

For many years the game laws of Nebraska have protected the squirrels and as a result the woods are full of them, and they seem to know date they are immune. That is, they were until last week. During the last ten years they have become so numerous as to prove a menace, and so during the months of October and November of this year hunters may kill them. But we have our opinion on a man who goes out to kill them for "sport" under the circumstances. There would be fully as much sport in sitting on the front porch and shooting friendly dogs as they trot by. The friendly little fellows sat upon the lower limbs and chattered at the two passing tramps, as if to say: "Hurry along, there. We know you are friendly, but just the same we'll feel safer in gathering our winter store after you have gone by." We scolded back at them, but the little fellows could out-chatter us, and we had to leave them in full mastery of the woods.

The weather has been so pleasant that the birds have postponed their migration, and as a result the woods are yet full of them. The crimson flare of the woodpecker gleamed here and there through the trees, and his loud tattoo made the woods ring. Now and then a saucy little wren flashed by, and ever and anon the music of Bob White's whistle rang across the fields. But Bob White is a wary creature in this section, and only once did we get sight of

him—and then he had it all figured out that he was beyond gunshot. The woods creatures long ago became convinced that every two-legged animal entering the woods was a dangerous creature, and they failed to sense the fact that the two trampers came with friendly intent. Jolly Cottontail, with her coat already changing to white in anticipation of the snows to come, jumped out of grass and brush heaps and went scurrying away when the trampers approached. Sometimes she waited until a heavy shoe came within a nit of touching her and then she'd jump straight ahead, startling the trumper and making his heart beat triple time for a second or two. Molly Cottontail and her big cousin, J. Rabbit, live in seeming harmony, although J. Rabbit is fast disappearing before the onward march of civilization and the barb wire fence.

Over in the meadow west of the asylum we ran across a gopher settlement, and scores of the cunning but pestiferous little fellows were seen gliding through the brown grass. When they reached their holes they sat up, grinned knowingly, gave a sharp little yelp and then turned a somersault backwards, seemingly, and disappeared into the ground. We have heard hunters declare that the gopher and the prairie dog could dodge a bullet. But that may be because these sprightly little animals almost always manage to dodge back into their holes after the bullet hits them. Just over the hill and on the edge of the meadow by the big road, we discovered a colony of red ants—a big and busy colony, too. And a half-hour was spent watching these industrious citizens as they toiled away in preparation for the winter. It's great fun watching ants. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise," quoted the companion. And then the Architect tried to retell the old ant story he studied in one of McGuffey's old readers some thirty or thirty-five years ago. We tried to tell those ants what fun they were missing by not taking a day off and tramping it, but they paid no attention to us and went right ahead with their work. That's one thing we don't like about ants—they set such a bad example.

We found a melon field, too. It was within a dozen rods of a house, and not a thing between to hinder the view. We stood in the road and discussed the ethics of the whole matter and finally decided upon our course. We climbed to the top of the fence and yelled at the top of our voices, and in response a woman appeared at the side door of the house. We pointed to the melons and then to ourselves, and the woman nodded assent and went back into the house. We fell off the fence, alighting on the melon side, and in another moment each trumper had a juicy melon under his arm. Back over the fence, and then down on the ground by the side of the road. Remembering that Governor "Bob" Taylor said that the only way to carve a watermelon was to "bust 'er," we followed directions, and the crimson core, chilled by the autumn nights, was exposed to view—exposed for a brief moment. Then it disappeared.

We ate our lunches with our feet hanging over the edge of a little bridge spanning a rivulet, and then we stretched out in the sun and paid tribute to My Lady Nicotine. After

an hour's halt we cut across the fields towards the salt marshes, and finding them we watched the jack-snipe and the mudhens and an occasional wild duck disporting themselves. A big bunch of Canada geese took to the water about two gunshots off, and splashed and fed around for an hour before they started off on their long journey. The fellow who originated the saying, "silly as a goose," didn't mean wild geese. They are about the knowingest creatures alive.

Skirting the salt marshes we got over to Oak creek, and there we saw the muskrats. They always saw us first and managed to get a goodly distance away. They watched us with their piercing little eyes, and the second we made a move—zip! All that a muskrat leaves behind when he dives is a little ripple on the surface of the water. The fun comes in trying to guess where the muskrat will come to the surface. If you guess right once in a score of times you are lucky.

Two accidents marred the pleasure of the day. The comrade stepped into a hole and in the resultant jar he bit off the stem of his favorite pipe, and the Architect leaned against a fence and broke his eyeglasses, which hung on a little hook attached to his vest. But the comrade said there was enough of the stem left to last until he got back to a pipe shop, and the Architect doesn't use his glasses save when he reads or writes. So we laughed off the accidents and kept on going.

The long shadows were falling when the trampers struck the car line, and it was pitch dark when the Architect arrived at home. Hungry! He was prepared to eat the tablecloth if necessary—but it wasn't. The Little Woman has learned all the kinks of the Architect's appetite, and she was ready for it. A smoking hot supper, a long pull at the old pipe, a hasty scanning of the evening paper, and then bed.

My, isn't it glorious to go to bed with that glad tired feeling—not the exhaustion of a day of grinding toil, but the fatigue that leaves the brain clear, the lungs full of pure air and the heart full of peace towards all mankind.

Some day this week—or next, if it doesn't turn off too cold—just cast off all care and worry and hike out into the open. Tramp twenty or thirty miles, commune with the birds and the beasts; pay your devotion to old Mother Nature, and add your happy thanksgivings that you are alive to the song and the chatter of God's little creatures in the woods and meadows. It will make a new being of you.

THE PROPHET
 God made me not to stand alone
 And hide His message in my heart.
 He bids me seek my fellow men
 Not pining, whining, stand apart.
 He bids me teach whate'er I'm taught
 Give forth whate'er He's given me,
 Take part in life, work on in joy,
 And help the triumph that's to be.
 No walls can cage my spirit in,
 Each day it walks forth glad and free;
 No bonds can check my hands' glad toil,
 God brings a thousand tasks to me.
 My message doth not hold me lone
 It doth not bid me different be—
 It bids me change the other side
 And make my fellowmen like me.
 Like me! Nay, free from all my faults;
 And there their message sounds to me.
 We are each other's prophets, and
 Work for a glorious unity.
 —R. M. Smith.
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