

THE SPIRIT OF THE ENCHANTED VALLEY OF GREEN TIMBER

A PROSE POEM

It was after much wandering down the *Long Room of the Land* that I came at last, one red sundown in the *Moon of Yellow Leaves*, to the great valley of the St. Croix. Here it was I found the enchanted river.

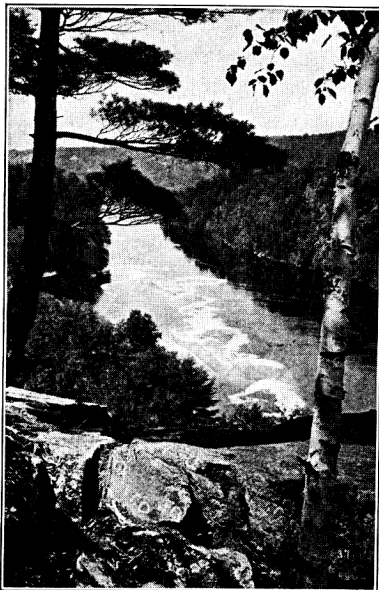
Deep down in my heart I had always known that some day the river of my dreams would cross trails with me and it would be given to me to have the delight of breaking paddle ripples along its drowsy length. The enchanted river was a stream of the green timber country and its hills were crowned with white pine. Whispering cedars lifted their blue-dark tops along the water's edge and the gleam of white birch shone here and there, while vague and mysterious streamlets burst through. Maples and red oak burned crimson against the hillsides of my river.

The valley of my dreams was rich in colors and forest whisperings. There was much woods magic and mystery and always the *Spirit of Green Timber* with its *Good Medicine* along its happy length. All this, and more, I found when the *Long Trail* brought me that Autumn sundown into the *Green Timber Country* and I saw far below me the magic St. Croix winding and shining its length out of the hazy hills. Thus it was I found my dream river.

There are many flowing waters in the big land of America, but none are more beautiful than the St. Croix. Called by the Red Men *The Great River*. The St. Croix rises deep in the Wisconsin country, forming a boundary line between Wisconsin and Minnesota the greater part of its course, and joining the Mississippi below St. Paul, is a cold water stream rising in cool clear lakes, and fed throughout its length by a thousand singing streams that rise moss-banked, fern-hidden in deep ravines. Touching few towns and keeping to the hills, the St. Croix remains today much as it was when the first French explorers paddled its waters. The glacier gods planned and laid out its channel and the many years to come will find few changes in the long valley.

Peter Stonerod, the master forest man, once said to me, "The St. Croix is a glimpse of Heaven—a river paradise." "Yes," I answered, "canoe heaven." And so it is. The canoeist will find the St. Croix the magic stream. On its waters he will find his river dreams come true. Though there are far reaches of drowsy waters, he will find these break now and again into swift white waters that will speed the heart-beat of any boatman.

The old Chinese poets have told us that their beloved Hwang Ho rises in the *Sea of Stars*. Only a beautiful and majestic stream could give birth to so fine a thought. During the many years I paddled the St. Croix waters



before I rounded the last upstream bend, I was happy in letting my fancy picture what mystery lay hidden there. I would let my heart believe the St. Croix had its rise in a sacred place. I pictured the great lodges of the *Red Gods* rising among the dark pines and spruce. I would let myself believe the *Thunder Birds* held council there and called down from the blue-dark of the cedars. I would have it that *Big Medicine* songs were rehearsed there for the shining waters to croon on their far trail to the *Great Salt Waters*.

Always and ever when I drift in my canoe along the far clean reaches of the St. Croix, my heart recalls a far-away—a long ago, for only yesterday this was happy Indian country. This was *Sioux Land* and *Chippewa Land*. Many fierce battles were fought in the great Valley of the St. Croix between the warring tribes—and so always thoughts of

far yesterdays—the Spirit of the Red Man—come to me. In the singing *Chinwahk*, the pine, I hear again the dawn love call of an Indian flute wavering across the calm waters. In the angry roar of the *Khabykong*, the *White Rapids*, I hear again the wild cry of conflict when Sioux and Chippewa fought for this rich domain. And so, though this is the *Lost Land* to the Indian, as long as the river shall bend through the hills to the *Big Shining Waters*, always for me will the *Dawn Wind* in the pines and the *Crying White Waters* sing of a Far-Away—a Long Ago.

The many little thoughts that came to me while a dweller in the Valley of the St. Croix, I gathered together, after a time, and sent away to Boston town—little forest leaves gathered in the Enchanted Valley. And after a time they came back to me in cool covers of forest green cloth with a gold title on the cover reading *Green Timber*. Just a little book of forest whisperings that has reached out and brought a message of cheer, now and then, to lonely hearts in the land of Far Away. Let me read you a page from the little book—a word picture of the *Happy Valley* and a message, as it were, from *Green Timber*.

"High winds of Saturday had died down by Sunday morning to little friendly whirly woods winds. Leaves here and there are falling into the loom of Autumn, rustling into the magic weave of the forest carpet with its mystic designs and harmonious tones—far stretches of dull oak red, miles of moonlight gold where the poplars come down to the river, sudden splashes of startling designs in leaf green with a glad border of red at the edge of the bluff where the gumacs weave their gaudy war bonnets into the great scheme.

Great gardens of wild asters parade down the hill to meet the proud cardinal flowers at the lip of the slough.

A robin regiment chirruped out today taking with light hearts the *Long Flight Trail*. Perchance our hearts will race the red breasts to the Gulf.

There is a farewell tone in the wind song through the high tops of the ridge pine. Pastures are turning brown and the heavy woodland foliage is taking on a duller shade. There is a faint sting of smoke in the air and we think of forest fires burning beyond the *Antowine*.

A new, plaintive note comes with the songs of the birds gathering to say goodbye to the *Happy Valley* before the long flight. The wren houses are deserted. From the dike the far Wisconsin hills fade away in a dreamy Autumn haze. Squirrels are barking, perchance at the Red Gods, for the nut crop is indeed lean. Leaves are drifting down from the elm and the boxwood and under the oaks acorns strew the ground. The days are lazy and warm and yet our thoughts drift ahead to the great white silence of winter, and we study the muskrat houses in the lakes and the corn husks of the field in an endeavor to learn by these ancient signs how severe the winter will be. The nights are taking on a chilliness and the workman returning home is welcomed by the glow of lamp light in the cot window shining out along the walk where the wilting hollyhocks await the killing frost. Stubble fields here and there have been plowed. Corn is being cut and shocked. The faint echo of the shot gun drifts down from the burning brush heaps signaling on the sky line—corn fields beaded with pumpkins. Crows are holding noisy council in soft maple tree-tops beyond the Little Lake. River bass are rising to the fly and great stories are told around the evening camp fires when the birch logs sink to rich beds of coals. Wild grape and plum hunters are bringing in rich loot—while along the fence lines the hazelnut thickets prove the great lure to the children and squirrels. Last season's mackinaw is

brought down from the attic and hunting coats are lopsided—heavy with No. 12's. Goldenrod covers the roadside with a rare carpet of old gold, while the dust in the open road is feathery and as soft as the velvets in the homes of the rich. Cat-tails peep over the tops of the cut grass in the marshes. Cardinal flowers flame red amidst the deep green of spice bark slough. The harvesters are drifting down the drowsy waters with their rich cargoes of roots and barks for the sick folks in the far places. The man in the hut at the edge of the slough has shingled his roof with hazelnuts.

September on the St. Croix, with the magic of the painted forest—with its flight of wild ducks whistling away to the northern rice beds and its whirr and drum of partridges—the time of *Northern Lights*, the *Harvest Moon* and *Indian Summer*."

* * * * "In the early hour of morning a flashing bluebird matches the sheen of his wing against the stately larkspur growing against the gray wall in the old garden—wings of heaven, petals of earth. To the delighted senses is revealed for an instant the *Spirit of Summer*. And so I catch now and then a fleeting glimpse of the *Spirit of the Hills* of the *Happy Valley*—in the hour of shining leaves when the oriole is bringing in the day on the wings of his song, as I walk along the friendly aisles through the green timber; and again in that mystic hour at the edge of dusk when the hills have surrendered their lines to the velvet mist and blend into one grand harmony—when the last swallows bend their flight to wing-tip a parting kiss on the face of the *Drowsy Waters*."

The songs of this cycle do not appear in the little book, but were whispered into my listening heart by the *Spirit of Green Timber*. The composer has caught and told in his way what I cannot tell in words. So the poet and the musician blending their hearts have given you songs that carry the heart beat of the *Enchanted Valley of Green Timber*.
CHARLES O. ROOS.



REMARKS

Gratitude is due to Charles O. Roos for his inspiring lyrics, to Howard H. Hanson for valuable suggestions, and to Preston Ware Orem for his untiring interest in my work.

Indian melodies have been employed sparingly to aid in creating atmosphere and in token of the original inspiration of this work.

THURLOW LIEURANCE.