

# RAW LAND

KATE SMITH

## PART II

**J**UNE 20—This has been the first summery seeming day. The warmth of the sun drew a rattler from his hiding place to enjoy it at full length in the hot sand. Unfortunately, he chose to lie directly in the path down the hill that leads to the stage. I was escorting a friend, who was returning to civilization, when we came upon him. He never batted an eye as she walked in front of him, nor did she. But she did not see him. I was just behind her and stopped up suddenly at sight of his tail. It was beastly unfair of me. I picked up a large stone and landed it squarely upon his forequarters, having aimed at his death-dealing head. That is always the way. We go a thousand times near danger and danger lets us go unharmed. Then we hunt danger out, molest it, are hurt by it, and place it on a list of fearful things to be destroyed at sight. As with every one of his kind I have seen—and that is a good many—he at once gave a warning rattle, square beast that he is, and then started fast as he could away from his danger. Not till I pursued and hit him again did he turn and try to strike. I finished my cruel, but I thought necessary, work and left him in a twist against a giant sage where he had tried to hide. I marked the sage by tying my handkerchief to a flower stalk and went on to the stage, meaning to stop when I came back to be sure he was dead, not merely hurt. I met some men a few yards on and told them he was there for fear he just might crawl into their unseeing path. When I came back they had pulled him out of the sage and taken his rattles. Later I saw them going away again and they asked if I wished the trophy. Not I. They told me an excited tale of how he was not nearly dead and had struck at them repeatedly. I have my doubts as to his not being nearly dead, though his jaws probably did work on. They wanted an adventure to tell. I could

never have been unkind enough to take those rattles even had I wanted them.

June 21—Today I saw the first little cock quail running about alone. Nor was he disconsolate like one unwillingly left alone. To be sure, after a time he mounted the top of a lone small oak and sounded his call long, loud, and much.

June 22—No! The lady quail was not homekeeping. Poor thing! Presently she came in answer to his insistent call, came limping. I tried to throw some grain to her, but, of course, great, unaccustomed, fearsome animal that I am, only sent them flying away. However, I have scattered a beautiful meal in two places near my window, and I know I shall catch them at it, for they come close to the house when they do not see me spying upon them.

June 25—Today has been the day of a great fight. Out under the tree I saw an ant staggering along as usual under a load as big as himself. Half the time he seemed to be pulled backward by it. I dropped down to see what he had, and discovered the cause of his uncertain movements. It was a tousling sporty fight that would have pleased a Reno enthusiast. Two red-headed, gray-ended ants, one just the least bit smaller than the other, were locked in a death grip. The smaller one's jaws were set on one jaw of the larger one, which was pulling and wooling it about in a seeming effort to jerk loose. Their hind legs clutched frantically about, seizing upon bits of leaf, of root, of bark, to which they clung, rolling over and over with it, then letting go to straighten out and begin again, never once loosening their grip on each other. At last, each one got a foot brace on a small rock, and there they lay for minutes, antennae groping, but otherwise perfectly still. Members of their tribe came, took a look with their feelers, and, wisely deciding it was none of their business, went on their jerky way. Presently they were at it again. Over and over they rolled, the big one flinging the other over its shoulder with a ju-jitsu ease and abandon that looked bad for the little one. He was game, though. But who is not where his life seems at stake, or a leg, or two, or six? Back and forth across a three-foot arena they wres-

tled, coming to occasional clinches where they found solid foothold, then pulling loose and beginning the ju-jitsu movement again. I trust it was not interference with the divine plan, but I wanted to see the finish, so I walled them in with a little circle of stones. What difference could it make—six feet or six inches to fight over? I had other affairs that needed watching betimes and their methods lacked diversity. I bet on the little one. He had a mighty grip. Oh, silly, silly ones! I can never understand ants. Over and over they rolled in what I thought the death struggle, bits of mold, leaf, and bark flying. The tiny whirlwind subsided. They were apart, and each fighter began his jerking, perpetual search, out over my ramparts and away, with never a trace of ill-will. They did not even brush themselves off. Humph!

June 26—How generous the mimulus is! Here it is, nearly midsummer dryness, and in the most forbidding-to-flower places she nods gayly, clinging to rocky banks, knee deep in sandy places, all over open fields, her yellow, in all shades, from nearly white through maize and pure yellow to nearly red, appears, a joyous and joy-giving dash of color. I like the common name—monkey flower. And the tall and slender pink, her flaming tip swaying gracefully. Is it any wonder her friend, the hummer, caresses her so often?

July 1—The ground squirrel, thief, skulk, coward, audacious one, rat with a bushy tail! Nothing is safe from him! He climbs and digs, goes over and under and through! He digs up all seeds that are big enough for him to set his teeth in. He trims every leaf off everything that grows. Four times already has he spoiled the garden. I planted it for mother's pleasure, not for my profit, so it is she he has robbed. She hates him and I shall have to punish him.

July 2—Where are the quail? I hear them call, but I have seen only three in as many days. One lonely cock I stirred out of a brush heap and he pattered swiftly and silently out of sight again. Nor can I find a nest.

July 4—The only flag in the valley today flies over the cottage of a happy-go-busy Austro-Hungarian pair of Americans. They live in their ground-level kitchen with a

sand-scoured floor, reserving the rest of the house for sleeping; and I've not discovered what. She wears gold earrings that dangle; they keep a herd of goats and speak German; and today they stay home to sell wine. Everyone else is going somewhere in celebration, even though he hates the where, but they celebrate by flying the flag, the only one all up and down the countryside. They work hard, are cheerful, make good, honest wine, and keep the law in its selling. They belong under the flag.

July 8—From the hammock I look toward the high mountains. A shimmering blue veil of heat and mist softens their sharpest, craggiest places and makes them appear remote. They have almost a gentle look and certainly an air of mystery profound. They are bare of trees save for an occasional serrated giant that lodges against the pale blue of the sky. Just now, at midday, they, too, are softened and might be black steeples, or derricks, or smudges, rising above the peaks and clefts where they cling. Low bushes hide all but the slanting roof of my neighbor's cottage. Like blown bits of paper, swallows rise swiftly over his house. They show black against the gray and blue of the mountains. Round and about they skim, joying in their wings. One just now tested his wings in rising flight against the wind. He flapped mightily, then came down with a skimming long glide that looked great fun. It reminded me of trudges up endless hills in heavy snow, dragging a sled for the joyous swift descent. Back and forth they circle, rising, falling, sometimes darting under the eaves where cleats have been nailed by my good-hearted neighbor for their little mud houses. I am glad for all reasons they are on his house instead of mine. But certainly they seem to speak security, peace, happiness, in their circling play. Musing over them, my fancy saw today the distant steady approach of a slender bird, long of leg and white of look, bringing a precious, noisy burden. Saw it sail with outstretched wings and rigid trailing legs, pause for a moment over the house top, then fly with its burden under the porchway. The women folks have been fashioning such dainty garments, working a

wealth of love and welcome into each dainty piece. She talks and coos to the homekeeping swallows, who turn their gay-colored heads and look at her wisely and, I think, with understanding. High overhead hang three lazy black shadows, circling slowly, hardly moving. What do they suggest, those buzzards? I do not hate them, I do not like them. But they belong.

July 9—All suddenly the green and white have gone. Its passing was swift. Gradually it crept across the hills until for nearly a week a sea of white-topped greasewood billowed on every side. High above the waves the Spanish dagger reared its white-trimmed masts. The wilderness half of my acres slopes up enough to command an outlook to all sides. Every afternoon during this reign of green and white I have made my way through to the high ground to watch it undulate from side to side of the valley and away to the east and west. My scientist friends tell me it is not greasewood, but they do not tell me what it is, only what it is not. Common folks hereabout call it greasewood, so greasewood it is to me. Yesterday the white look of the valley began to fade; today it is gone. Brown, a soft, hiding color, has covered it all. Ground squirrel thieves have scampered up and down the tall stem of the Spanish dagger, cutting away the fragrant white bells, leaving them stark and bare.

A king snake glittered into the garden patch today. He is made of gutta percha, gaily painted black and faint yellow in crosswise stripes, then touched with scarlet between the stripes. It was a sad day for us to meet. I came upon him suddenly as I was a-hoeing. He wriggled in bright folds into a bit of sage and lay quite still only a foot or so away. Knowing his way of swallowing whole rattlers longer even than himself I wished him to live. Now, to mother, a snake is a snake. A small head with no poison pockets pouching means nothing. Snakes bite. She knows they do—all of them. As I stirred at the glittering one gently with my hoe, telling him to leave while yet there was time, mother's interested little face came to the window, asking what I had

there. I answered indifferently. "Oh, a little creature." But she sensed the snake and needs must be told. "Kill it," she commanded. "Don't let it get away. I'll never have another minute without fear if you don't." In vain I talked of his harmless disposition and valuable habits, meanwhile stirring at him and admonishing him to run fast and far. He folded and unfolded himself brightly and, like a true fatalist, accepted what came. When mother's horrified face made the blow fall, he shielded his tapering head under fold after fold of his rubbery body. All limp and broken, except as to tail, I carried him far from the house and buried him under a spadeful of dust. Then only could mother go quietly back to her sewing. The pity of it! To have such fear of a harmless, helpful outdoor thing!

July 10—Today I heard the first quail call for a week. It was low, broken and brief. Another week or so and they should come forth with patriarchal air, a tiny colony behind them. It will be a timorous leader, though.

July 14.—Mid-July but not midsummer yet, even in California, where summer begins in May and ends with the coming of late September rain. The Californian loves the season of dry, changing colors, the season of browns. In fact, one may not claim the title who still longs for a green July. In the valley just now gray is king. The white sage—false name—covers all the wide-open spaces and fills in between the greasewood. All the delicate pastel shades are in its clustered spikes. I came upon a clump at sunset that looked too fair to be real. The light upon and beyond it clothed it with somewhat of the mystery that veils the mountains. Fairly under a spell of delight, I went nearer to see why it looked opalescent. Above the green-gray of the leaves rose flower stalks higher than my head, with stems of the red-purple now fashionable for blond, stout forties. Over this reddishness a shimmering bloom like that on a plum. The flowers pale-blue and lavender. There you have it—red, purple, gray, green, blue, lavender, and a few yellow browns, all on one stalk. Beside this colorful one, a sister less florid, all pale green-gray and blues that were nearly

white. Somewhat greener gray than the sage, the milkweed seems to need its thick stem to hold up nut-sweet flower heads which affect touches of the same reddish purple. Grayer than either—so gray, in fact, that against a new growth of greasewood they seem to have no green at all—is the yellow-flowered tarweed. One especially gray, one not yet in bloom, has twining among it the slender-stemmed pink, its scarlet blossoms a rarely beautiful dash of color against the gray. In the sandy open spots a gray-green buckwheat, its red and yellow flowers of pinhead size, looks to my ignorance a plant of only branching stem and flower, no leaf.

But all my near and dear gray garden is fated. Ground-breaking has begun, which is heart-breaking to me. Nothing but the urgent interest of family and friends and the feeling that I owe some accounting for my days in the wilderness would ever make me transform and ruin it. Early this morning two of my quail brought their hearty, numerous family under my window for review. Not that they guessed my presence. But plowed and harrowed, no milkweed to hide behind nor sage to dodge under, I know they will go elsewhere. Two lithe, six-foot young men in their early twenties are picking stones from the ground. Just now they dug out a great boulder and together swung it to the top of the wagon load. Lean, strong and easy, they were beautiful in action. Then they climbed on and drove to the line where the wall is to be. How red they were, and perspiring, and dust-grimed. But they laughed as they worked. Nearly all of life before them and full of hope in its promise, they are of the two favored classes; the other, the old who, with nearly all of life behind them, have content in its fulfillment. Speaking of the quail family, this seems to be vacation time for father quail. He is quite in evidence again, calling from bush tops and trees, but no longer do I see devoted couples running about, either father alone or the family as today. My belief is that the babies fly from the shell, they are at it so soon, cunning two-inch puff balls.

July 16—Heat must be faith, for it removes mountains. This very hot day the mountains have closed in upon me



till they edge my happy acres, and, with their familiarity, have lost their mystery and charm. They are harsh, hard, and hot, solid, very bulky and low. Heat removes green also. The lower slopes turned yellow over night where before they were velvety green. The hills have moved in, but wisely have they kept their greens, blues, and purples. After three days of three times daily marching up and down the hill to the stage my tomato plants have come, a sorry, wilted thousand, kept in the freight room by a stupid clerk because the bill had not come with them. Of course, he is not brilliant; if he were, he would be managing the road instead of selling tickets in his shirt sleeves and helping amateur farmers to failure in their plantings and wrath in their hearts. Little mother, temporarily my housemate, looked at me with Sunday-keeping determination in her eyes when they were brought up, so I hastened to say that I would water them down today and begin planting at daylight tomorrow.

July 18—Yesterday as the sun came level with the earth I was dressed for the field, for a thousand tomato plants waited and an acre of light, dry ground was lined with furrows. Little mother joined me under the tree and we held a consultation over the drooping plants. Then, with a pair of scissors and an unfailing knowledge of what's best to do, she sat down to prune away the withered tops and sprouts. I carried away with me the first several dozens, and from a tap put in for the purpose started the water nosing and gurgling down the first furrow. About six feet apart I dropped the plants; then, the furrow full of water, I sent the flow into the next one and began the planting. Over the roots I drew the black wet soil and pressed it firmly. Back and forth to the tree I went for more plants. The sun was high overhead and hot—*hot*. Hundreds of sheared plants stood in sturdy rows. I looked at those yet under the tree. Another day could make them no worse, poor drooping things that hated the baggage room, and I, too, was hot, very hot, and drooping. A few hours' rest from the sun, and then again I set plants in wet rows and covered the roots down well. Darkness drove me, weary, to bed, but dawn found me again



## RAW LAND

in the field, and today, by a Christian rising hour, more than 850 tomato plants grew in my garden. So closely have we pruned them that from the window they show only faintly green rows.

July 20—Already the tomato plants have sent out tiny new green leaves. The field shows quite green from the window, to mother's delight. Fewer than a dozen have died. What sturdy weeds they are! I like their pungent odor.

July 22—Last night the farm deserved a chronicle. It had wrung from me two long hot days at the rake. But my bones were full of pain! My heart cursed tomatoes and the madness that made me plant them in hopes of winter pin money. As my arms grew leaden, my hands cramped, reaching out and pulling in, reaching out and pulling in. I had visions of a September glutted market. While my hands blistered I saw tomatoes rotting, the ground red where I was raking away roots and weeds and leveling off the ditches. As I sizzled in the sun I saw an early frost wilt down the last leaf and rob me of my riches. But the last row level and trim, the whole acre showing a good growing green and neat as a garden, I strutted to the house and proudly fetched mother to see. She heaped praises for the look of it all enough to satisfy even me. How she loves a vegetable in the growing! With all her fondness for flowers, she never seems to get the satisfaction from any flower that vegetables give her. She says they seem sensate to her. I can never quite decide whether this fondness is an expression of the practical side of her nature or a reversion to her young days, a love for the things which were a part of a happy childhood on the farm.

When the rake grew so heavy I could not go on without resting, I leaned on it and loved the colors off down the valley. It was hazy bright, which means great diversity as one looks over mountains, hills, raw land, vineyard, cypress group, and fresh young blue gum.

This evening I carried water to the imprisoned small eucalyptus trees and found two drooping. We had four days of heat, and, foolishly, I took everybody's advice and did

not water them. *Never*—no more advice from anybody! So far the tomato venture is a success in that respect. No one of the interested ones has felt the need of telling me all about it.

Up in the raw land I startled a heavy dove, which rose with a creaking sound, as though its wings needed oiling. It lumbered but a short distance and settled, creaking. Then, as I came on, rose again. The third time it flew far away. I do not care for its noises. I often hear them sounding their double notes in melancholy away back and forth across the valley.

July 24—I miss the flight of my neighbor's swallows. It seems they became unwelcome guests because of the mites they harbor. He had to send them right about. And they looked so innocent—a thing of delight. Whereas the buzzards, watchful and sinister to see, are birds of good standing.

The other bird came one hottest day, and a pink little girl now beats the air with tiny crumpled fist as you disturb the covers to see her puckered face. Her mother's brown eyes are very soft with love. They are beautiful, kindly people. The wee maid was favored of the gods when they sent her to this new home.

Bert brought a much desired olla to the ranch that same day, and for a surprise had some ice cream packed into it. There was a dish all around. The olla, dressed in a gunny sack, the better to keep it wet and cool, stands under the tree. We make frequent pilgrimages to it these very warm days.

July 25—The plowed ground nearest the house is to be my nursery. I went out casually yesterday to rake it into shape for seed planting, thinking to do it in an hour. I spent two, and as dark came on made a bonfire of the roots and weeds I had cleared away. This afternoon, armed with spadefork and mattock, I went below the surface and dripped with the exertion of pulling out more roots and stones. But the seeds are in, enough for two acres.

No more city flowers for me out here. Yesterday I gathered four large bundles of wild flower seeds and put

them away to dry out. I mean to get a full collection and scatter them about the house so that as the wilderness disappears I may still have its beauty. I have plans in mind for sage-brush borders, greasewood and Spanish dagger clumps, patches of scarlet larkspur and canterbury bells, beds of the delicate ones that come in rotation. The early flowers are gone completely now, of course, but the brilliant pink centaury, sky-blue lobelia, and many small white and pale yellow plants that have grown so hardily in the hot sand, are being carefully treasured for next year.

August 1—A chain of murders lies at my door, yet I sleep soundly with no fear of the hand of the sheriff on my arm. I exult in my crimes. The ground squirrel dug up my corn five times, ate the leaves off my beans, trimmed off the finest flowers near my house. Into a neatly spliced raisin I placed a few grains of strychnine and set them to guard the garden. He had learned—wizard that he is—that fresh turned earth meant a feast for him, so of late he has not waited for as tender bits of green to show him where a seed lay buried, but as soon as my back was well turned has gone along the row and deftly uncovered corn, bean or pea the first day of its planting. I planted the raisins. In an hour or two I noticed the ground was disturbed. But not for some hours did I learn truly his fate. This is the way I found out. Along came the neighbor's lanky, yelping, demonstrative cur pup, found a dead squirrel, ate of it, went home to die and be thrown into the brush. I was at work in the tomato patch when he lumbered up, barking and jumping upon me, breaking over plants and making himself generally disagreeable. Urged by a well aimed clod, he retired to prowl about the house and then go home. A few hours later, when the girl brought my daily pint of fresh milk, she told me excitedly of Bismarck's unexpected, swift death. We decided then that it indicated poison, though not till an hour later, when I found the mangled squirrel, did I trace the deed to my own hand. Ground squirrel, cur pup, perhaps coyote, maybe buzzard. But who cares? I gladly miss both thievery and yelping. As I read this hard-hearted exultation

I realize that country hardness is taking the place of the soft sympathies I brought out. I quake with terror to think what a Jack Hardcastle I will become, seeing only crops and hens and cows as worth while.

August 10—The dog days are here. There has always been a nasty tang to that phrase, like a stuffy smell that goes past your nose to stick on your palate. Sweat and listlessness, rank weeds and drooping plants, moulting and snake bites—these are what dog days are made of. And dogs, hot, droopy, cross, stinking dogs that snap at your ankles if they can find energy. For a week I have hated life and I like to blame it on the dog days. In my heart I know better. To-day has been cool and I have worked like a fiend—planting, hoeing, watering. Confound those tomato seeds! Only a little dozen lie in the long smooth bed I got aches over making! I think the ground grew so dry during four days I spent in town playing that they shriveled in their shells. I fear they are of the pitiful ones in the hall of the unborn who must wait there for eternity. The upper fellows are lusty, though. They have taken their season of neglect lightly and seemingly enjoy a gay, busy existence the better for it. Last night, as I swung under the stars, all alone in the great windy hall of the night, I could be almost as glad as my weedy tomatoes, feeling within myself the power to grow on and be strong. A star shone so brightly in at the window it woke me.

August 11—The crimson larkspur has the daintiest cup for its seeds. A three-part chalice it is, capped till the seeds are dry. Then the upper edges curve outward, showing the wind and the sky the treasure that it holds. And me! For I turned the clustered chalices and shook the precious contents into a paper sack, carefully allowing some to spill by the wayside for another season's glory. My ceiling is quite lined with sacks of drying seeds.

August 12—The quail are all through the brush in great flocks. Their tracks, one set so primly in front of the other, are everywhere. But they seldom call now except very early or once in awhile at dusk, when otherwise they seem quarrel-

ing and chuckling at each other in the tree where they roost. I wonder if they shove with their elbows. Down the road there is a great field of sage. It seems that the land was once cleared, then neglected, and the sage has reclaimed it. The red in the sage has run through the flower stalks like wine. From the upper part of my land—the still raw part—I can see the red-purple patch where it lies between a green vineyard and a gray rocky wash. The greasewood flowers have turned a biscuit brown. It is hot and everywhere very dusty. I have worn curvy paths about my place and in and out. I dug about the tomato plants to see whether they needed irrigation. It is moist under the surface, although they have gone two weeks now without water. The ground holds its moisture well for so light a soil. One bumptious plant is in bloom. From the window a green farm lies where it was beautiful gray.

August 16—Silly seeds, and sillier me! After sprinkling and scratching, and sprinkling and hoeing, I gave up and ran off to the city! Bless me, when I came back to plant more seeds, were those first ones not struggling, sickly and yellow, up in the line where the dozen first ones that came seasonably and sanely up are in full leaf. I put no faith in yellow nor in anæmic plants, so the nursery holds three more long rows of seeds. And here I shall stay a month if need be to see them up and doing.

August 17—Cold! I woke to a gray morning, a misty world of wonder, with hills and mountains blotted out, and only a few dark, formless things looming, swirled about with gray. By noon the wind came up the valley and folded the mist back before it, leaving only a haze over all and a feeling of fall in the air. There are lovely bugs in this world. Yesterday I chanced on half a dozen as I sat in the grass by the roadside waiting for the stage. The first was a big fellow, with a black slim body that was iridescent like a peacock's tail. His legs were long and black and he flew noisily and with certainty on orange colored wings. Two others must be cousins. I mistook the first one for a prickly seed as he lay in a weed patch, till he began to crawl. He looks to me like

a spider with black legs and a body covered with fuzz just the color of dried weed stalks. His cousin is like him, but his fuzz is scarlet. Another had two apple green wings that folded to look like a quarter-inch tent, and had black and pink markings. And yet another red and black one reminded me of "stink-bugs" known in childhood, still hateful because of the odor when crushed. There is a large glossy black bug that walks slowly about the world with the ease of a rheumatic old man. When you touch his varnished body he has a most amusing way of pushing his head against the ground, which tilts his body into a fine attitude for spanking. He is a funny fellow.

August 19—Busy times down on the farm! A field rat, with wide, large ears, suicided in my water tub last night, with his eyes open and whiskers pointing. I buried him with decent honors and a spadeful of earth in a grave that the water had dug. Found and squashed three large green tomato worms. They must have been glad to die, for their skins were too tight for any comfortable living. When I came back from the store a slithery red racer—I don't like them—more than a yard long was out by the steps gulping down a young lizard, who was going in tail first, without a squeak, and still wearing the benign look of his kind as his head and last hand vanished. It looks uncomfortable to eat food without chewing. I saw a lizard swallow a fat worm a third as long as himself in a series of swallows that looked choking and hasty to me. And he and this snake kept on swallowing after there was no sign but a kicking along the under side to show that a dinner had been sent down. And to have one's dinner clawing about and protesting afterward would not be restful, to say the least.

August 25—Back-to-the-land metamorphoses! I grow fearless, hard, practical. My new tomato seeds are up, thick as the hair on a dog's back. I threw a stone at a brown bird that was chirping and chewing down along them to-day! A brown bird that has been an intimate friend of mine! He was taking mean advantage of my hospitality and the bread crumbs he scoldingly receives. When a flock of two dozen

young quail, tenants and heretofore greatly admired proteges, started chattering across my nursery right under the scare-birds, and stopped to peck, I nearly jumped through the screen at them. But they *did* whirr as they scattered. Last night I forgot to lock my door. My heart-thumping fears of the country seem gone. At times a vague uneasiness remains, but it, too, seems slipping, though I still keep my six-shooter handy. I am ready, even anxious, to sacrifice the sumach I have loved and the scrub-oaks that stand in the way of young trees. In a fine rage I uprooted a thistle that grew rank in my garden. But I am not wholly lost, for I loved its blossom even as I did so. But Dr. Jekyll, beware how you pamper Edward Hyde!

August 26. Morning! The world is full of splendor! It is as though I saw it for the first time, saw it with the fresh wondering eyes of a new created being come into it without the pangs of birth! It is still early and the colors are sharp and distinct like those on a ground glass. Nothing can compare with the blues that lie in every fold of the mountains. They are intense and only in the folds, not all over in a veil, so that they make the mountains look uncommonly rugged and of almost prismatic beauty. It is all freshness, exceedingly clear, rare freshness, without a suggestion of dewiness. I have never seen a desert or semi-desert valley retain such depth and variety of color in late summer as this one does. Off down the valley are clumps of reddish purple, of yellow, of brown, of green gray, of blue, of amethyst. The stillness and the look of the sun promise great heat at noon. Even then under the tree it will be cool and delightful.

Yesterday, the wind had a most serious curvature of the spine. It was violent up the valley with writhing pillars of dust to mark its twists and contortions. Round and round it whirled all day, gathering up eddies of leaves, making them dance madly, often hurling them against the screen. I took down my bath-room to prevent its flapping to death. In the afternoon, it clouded over in an agonized effort to rain. The sky was heavily overcast, so with the wind and the clouds for companions I betook me to my garden. There were at least a



dozen tomatoes, green and hearty-looking, showing already. And at least two dozen tomato worms, also green and very hearty-looking, were showing already. I would like to know where the fat, greedy, horned things come from. What would they have done for a living if I had not planted here? They are never on any other sort of garden stuff. Would they, too, have stayed in Maeterlinck's hall of the unborn? They are dirty, resentful beasts. Or maybe it is only because they are packed so full that when you touch them with a stick they spurt at you dark green juice. They are nasty. But that is another sign of the hardening and annealing process that is taking place in my sensibilities. The first one I disposed of by taking him off with a long stick carefully, then bearing him down into the dust with my head turned aside. Yesterday I knocked them off boldly, swiftly, in a business-like way with the hoe, gave a chop and went on. For I hoed ten rows, plant by plant, and I had no time for skinful squirmers. I do not intend to irrigate at all. They seem to be desert plants and happy without water, though it is five weeks since they had any.

August 27. Night! The moon is round and full. The black shadows that it casts are no deeper than the longing that it brings. I am filled with wordless wishes, with yearning so great it seems the spirit resident will break its house and go in quest of happiness. Yet where, or how? Whippoorwills are voicing their melancholy, softly, sweetly, but much too sadly. Over against the hill, coyotes howl in sharp complaint. They are vigorous in their protest against the sadness of spirit which the moon has brought. They have stirred the dogs all up and down the valley from senseless indifferent yapping to full bark. But cheerful sounds are beginning. In the distance, I hear a whistling boy; nearer, the gay laugh of a girl, and girlish happy voices. And then the tree frog, never dismal, always persistently cheerful. What an optimist he is. Mr. Scientific and I enjoy this outdoors so differently. I once felt uneasiness in his presence and regret over my grave deficiencies. But dear me, his pleasure in my world is no greater than my own,—only different. In

fact, I'm not certain but that the delight of ignorance in the color of a flower, the wind-flirting leaf, the call of a bird, is a rarer, finer thing than the interest that comes with analysis, that can know no content till the fairest flower lies in bits, its little insides all torn for tabulation. I would know more. Oh, much, much more, about all these wonders, and am delighted when he tells me outdoor open secrets. Of the trap laid by the beguiling milkweed for the honey-thief bee. How she lures him with her scent and color, then holds him by a luckless leg till he dies. My sympathies are all with the bee. Never do I pass through a patch of milkweed now, but that I give two looks, one at the lovely heavy heads that droop in sheer beauty and sweetness, and one for any hapless prisoner. Many a noisy fellow have I pulled loose, wondering as I did so whether my clumsy hands strained a leg, perhaps dislocated a wee joint. Many buzzing about the Circe have been plainly annoyed, as the voluntarily tempted ever are, by my officious efforts, and have made me understand they thought it none of my business. They would hover if they pleased. But the rescued have been hasty in their leaving. With the proper sense of a reformer, I have not expected gratitude, nor been discouraged.

Of the waddling horned toad who, in moments of danger, shoots blood from his eyes. The neighbor's lank, long-tailed cur pup seized one the other day in his senseless mouth, but dropped it hastily and spent the next number of minutes licking his jaws with an air of deep disgust. Lucky little horny creature with red blood to spare in a crisis! Many a man has none to spare and what he has turns cold!

Of the seeds of the blue sage. How they can be made into a most nourishing gruel, so that Indians can travel for a whole day with only a teaspoonful to support them. Of the bitter tonic that can be made from the gay little centaury. Of the soap stored away in the root of the amole. I found one the other afternoon, a delicate seven-branches affair with purple stem and fragile flowers that closed in the night after a brief life with no morning in it, only an afternoon. But when he seizes the choicest flower in a cluster of prize beau-

ties, tears it in bits, claps its fragments into a note-book, I almost resent his being here in my wilderness. When I was a little, pig-tailed girl, one of my choicest treasures was a kaleidoscope. It was made of pasteboard and had only a tiny half-inch peephole. But I never tired of looking at the wonders that resolved themselves as I twisted and turned it, tracing and locating the particles that had fallen into new lines, marveling at the beauty and intricacy of the patterns, finding joy in the transformations that wrought this beauty out of such simple things. And I never felt anything but uneasiness when I gave it into the hands of my boy friend who was of an investigating turn of mind. He never failed to look at it with pleasure, nor to suggest with eagerness that we take it apart and see how it was made. Nor could he understand why I loved the mystery, why I hated to see it fall apart in commonplace particles, why the knowledge gained would not pay for the beauty and wonder lost. There we were then, the scientist and I, very much as we are today. Loveliness and wonder still have me in their grip. It would be no fair exchange to give them over for exactitudes.

*(To be concluded in the November Forum.)*

## AMERICANISM

ROGER B. WOOD,

United States Federal Attorney

**A** MERICANISM will have a place in the history of the United States from this time. The progress of the nation will depend, to some extent at least, upon the intensity of its Americanism. The time has come when all who dwell within the confines of the United States, be they rich or poor, high or low, white or black, of whatever nationality and of whatever political creed or religion, must not only obey the letter of our laws, but must respect the spirit of the laws and of our institutions. In the recent past we