

# John Burroughs In His Cabin Home

## Sympathetic Character Study of the "Woodland Genius."

By Clifton Johnson.

Those wooded wilds, and the dense grow on him to live among them. As a result he finally bought several acres of swamp land in a hollow high among the hills and entered with enthusiasm on the task of draining the marsh, clearing out the brush and stumps and building himself a cabin.

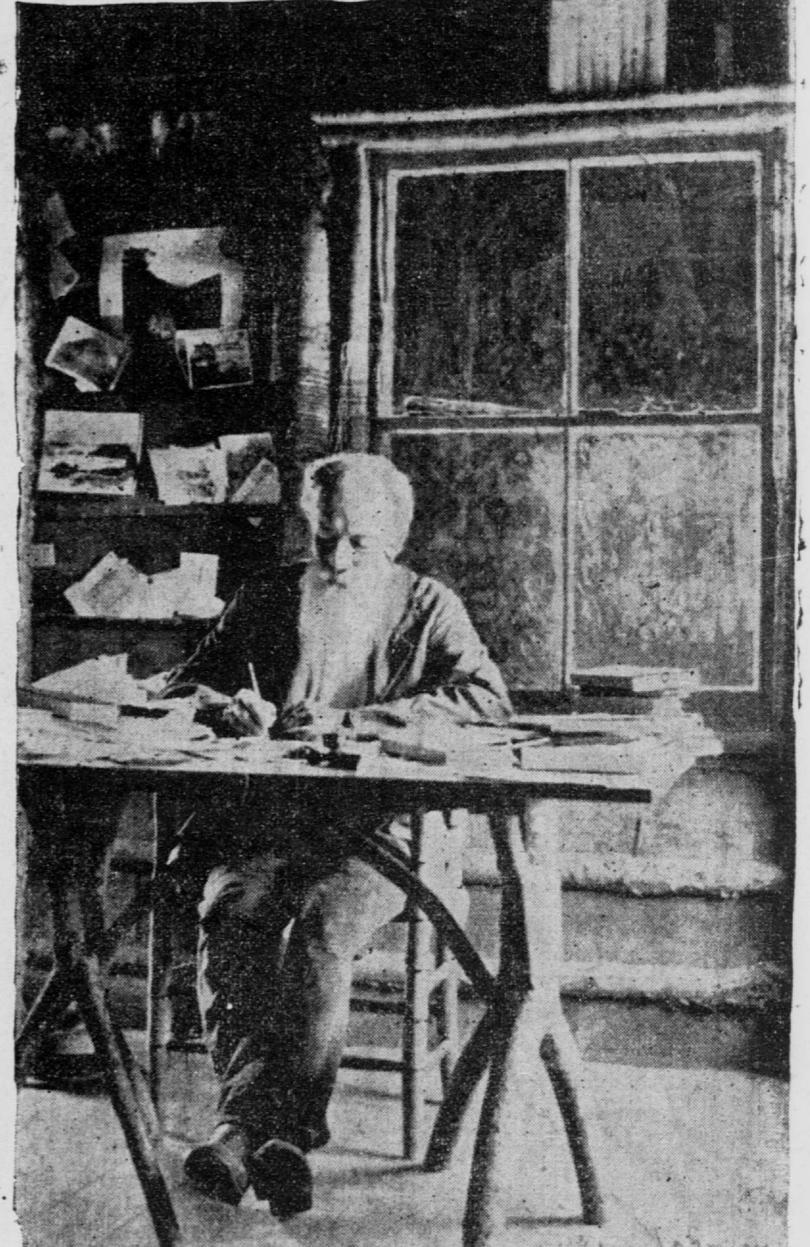
The spot is a mile and a half from the Riverby home and its only approach is by a circuitous and seldom-used wood road. Indeed, it is so sequestered that when strangers come to seek out the famous nature writer they sometimes get lost and wander for hours about the mountains before they find the lit-

tle glen where stands his cabin. Building "Slabsides."

This cabin is built on a ledge of rock at the borders of the swamp. It is a fair sized story and a half structure with one room below stairs and a loft above. Along one side is a broad piazza with shaggy cedar posts. The outer walls are of slabs, and this has led its owner to call it "Slabsides," a name not altogether liked by the author's friends. They find the title too rude, but Mr. Burroughs says "It's a rough and ready place and why shouldn't it have a rough and ready name? I can't stand anything that has

the least taint of sentimentality or affectation, and I think a coarse-fibered designation like 'Slabsides' will grow constantly more significant and pleasing, while one would tire of a name that was merely pretty."

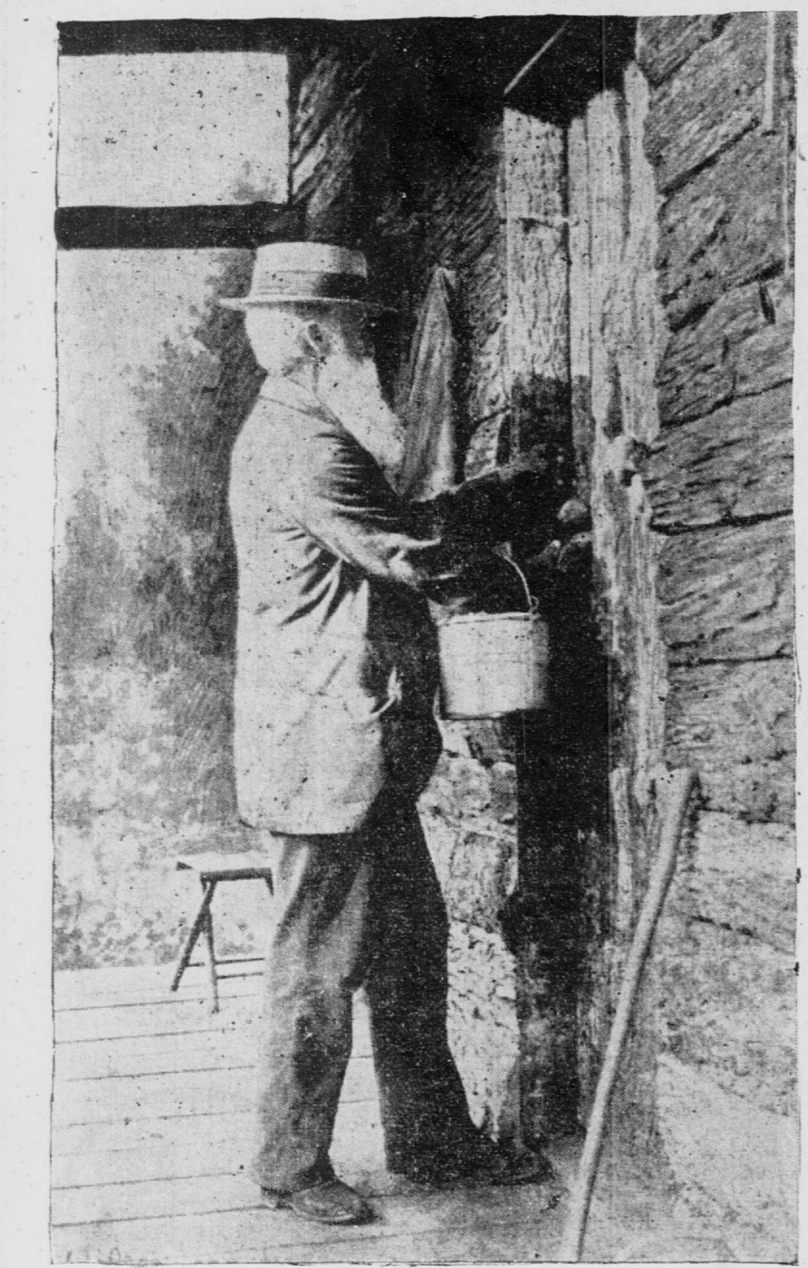
The interior of the cabin is hardly less rustic than its outer aspect. There are no carpets or rugs, the unheated joists of the floor above are exposed and have still their natural covering of bark, and much of the woodwork in the walls and in the furniture is of yellow birch saplings. It is all of Mr. Burroughs' planning and his personal labor has entered more or less into nearly everything.



John Burroughs at Work in His Cabin.  
The Greatest American Writer of Nature.  
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"Slabsides," John Burroughs' Cabin Home.  
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John Burroughs Locking His Cabin Door, Bent on a Trip Across the Fields.  
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**Special to the Sunday Call.**

**W**HEN John Burroughs began to write about nature thirty years ago the remarkable ability he possesses of making the subject interesting to the general reader was recognized at once. He was accorded the foremost place among American nature writers almost from the start, and this he has held ever since.

Authors who make the out of door world their theme have multiplied in recent years, but a quarter of a century ago Burroughs was nearly alone in his chosen domain. His work had and continues to have all the charm of original observation in new fields and the fresh, boyish enthusiasm of his descriptions is unequalled. He has been a pioneer blazing a path into the unknown. Many now follow in his footsteps, but the position of patriarch of the clan is his by common consent, and among his fellow craftsmen he is regarded with universal affection.

Mr. Burroughs' personal appearance is strikingly typical of his standing among authors of his class. He has something of a pioneer's simplicity of dress and manner, and he has the snowy hair and long white beard of the patriarch. If you see him about his home you would take him for a farmer—not one of the callous handed, dissipated sort who carry the odor and grime of their calling about with them, yet one who is used to real work, nevertheless. He has a fondness for the comfort of old clothes and easy shoes, and he is no stranger to manual labor, though most of his farming consists in planning and directing.

The farm is his chief support, not his literary work. He does not write for a living, but writes only when he feels moved to do so and because he loves the wild things of the woods and fields which he describes with such truth and insight. In his earlier life Mr. Burroughs was for a long time a school teacher, and later for several years held a Government position in Washington. But the country always called to him and he left the Hudson about half way between New York and Albany, and turned his back on city and town life forever. He has named his place "Riverby" after a strip of seventeen acres lying on the

## HAVE YOU THE SENSE OF TASTE? READ THIS.

**Curious Experiments to Prove That Our Sense of Taste Depends on Other Senses.**

**Special to the Sunday Call.**

**I**t would now seem from experiments which have been carried on in the University of Iowa that we do not taste many of the things which we eat at our daily meals. It is asserted confidently that we merely smell them. When we drink coffee or tea, for instance, we really do not taste them; it is the effect which they have on the olfactory nerve that we experience. If the nose is tightly closed in the ordinary man and he is blindfolded, he will not be able to distinguish coffee from water or a weak solution of quinine.

This has been proved by experiments made on many persons. Common coffee was said to be water, it was also said to be quinine. Water was said to be coffee. Tea was called coffee. Turkey was called pork. Raw apple was called grape juice. Malt extract was sherry wine. Lard was pronounced butter. In short, experienced persons were unable to distinguish many common foods and drinks when sensations of smell were removed, and the odd conclusion was reached that a person might even practice economy in eating by merely blindfolding the eyes and substituting lard, pork and beef for butter, turkey and venison, while if the further precaution was taken to close the nose, a very weak solution of quinine would pass for good coffee and vinegar for the most costly wine.

The experiments which led to these conclusions were carried on by Professor G. T. W. Patrick of the University of Iowa, who has just communicated some of the results of his work to the American Psychological Society. Professor Patrick was enabled to attain great accuracy in his work by the fact that one of the persons he experimented upon was an anosmic—that is, absolutely devoid of the sense of smell. He was enabled thus to determine which sensations were those of taste and which were smell. He experimented also on normal subjects and some of the results were surprising.

There are only four simple taste sensations, namely, sweet, bitter, sour and salt. It is said by some that there are only two, sweet and bitter. All other sensations which are commonly called tastes are complex results of sensations of smell, touch, temperature and sight. The means by which we distinguish almost all of our common foods and drinks is not the sense of taste so much as it is the sense of smell, touch, temperature and sight. All the fine differences by which we distinguish the various fruits, meats and drinks depend not upon taste at all, but upon closed, twenty experiments with coffee gave the following results: It was called "coffee" once, "bitter" eleven times, "quinine" four times, "tea" three times, and "milk" once.

Things we call "bad," while salt and sour add a certain piquancy, which is pleasing when not excessive.

A partial proof of these facts may be given by merely blindfolding the eyes and closing the nose and taking various kinds of foods and drinks into the mouth without swallowing them. It will then be found that it is quite impossible to distinguish many of the commonest foods and drinks.

It is always difficult to eliminate the sense of smell in normal subjects. Professor Patrick was able, however, by experimenting with a subject possessing no sense of smell whatever, and comparing the results with those obtained from normal subjects, to get more accurate results as to the more important part played by smell in distinguishing foods and drinks. It is, of course, generally known that what is popularly mistaken for the taste of coffee, tea and wine is only their aroma or odor. By these experiments, however, it was shown that coffee and tea have a distinct taste, which is simply bitter, and cannot be distinguished from a weak solution of quinine. A weak infusion of coffee or tea, however, cannot be distinguished from water. Even with normal subjects, with the eyes and nose closed, twenty experiments with coffee gave the following results: It was called "coffee" once, "bitter" eleven times, "quinine" four times, "tea" three times, and "milk" once.

**Burroughs at Home.**

The feature of all others that he takes pride in is the great stone chimney. It is warranted to draw well in all weathers and not to smoke in spite of its having a fireplace that in amplitude rivals those of the olden times. The fireplace was not made merely for the company of its blaze and its social warmth on chilly evenings. It is a domestic fireplace, built to cook by, and a black teakettle is almost always suspended from the iron crane and other kettles and pots repose about the borders of the hearth.

Slabsides is Mr. Burroughs' home all through the year, save in the coldest months. There he eats, sleeps and writes, and the solitude of the spot and the primitive living agree with him mentally and physically. He is in the midst of the woods. The rocks and the ridges hem him in and shut out all light and all sounds of the modern world of railroads, steamers and business hurly-burly. The softened roar of a waterfall steals to the ears from some distant ravine, the wind whistles in the leafage of the near trees, birds sing and twitter through the summer days and at night the whippoorwill calls from the neighboring rocks. In the spring the evenings are musical with the voices of the frogs and toads, and in the autumn the katydids made the air resound with their chirping, crows and hawks fly over the cabin and an occasional eagle hovers about the mountain top. Partidges come to the borders of the clearing and wild ducks frequent the creek in the hollow a half mile away.

Nature and its untamed progeny are close about always. Yet the cabin surroundings are not wholly uncivilized, for since the swamp has been drained Mr. Burroughs had made a garden of its rich mold, and there he raises famous celery, cabbage, potatoes, sweet corn and other vegetables.

**As a Housekeeper.**

Whoever comes to visit this latter-day hermit, whether friend or stranger, is sure of a hospitable reception. If meal-time approaches you are invited to stay to lunch. The larder is never empty and Mr. Burroughs is an expert in the preparation of a rustic dinner. Not far away a cold spring bubbles from the rocks and there, half immersed in its crystal basin, are certain tin pails containing fresh meats, milk, etc. In the kitchen cupboard are canned goods, prepared foods, honey and other eatables. Then there is the garden always at hand to draw from, and in a near nook is a henhouse, and the dock that makes the clearing its home furnishes the cabin table with eggs.

I do not think Mr. Burroughs loves housekeeping for its own sake, but he accepts the work for the pleasure of the accompanying freedom. Not much time is spent on cooking, dish-washing, bed-making and the like—only just enough to make the place presentable and keep it in a state of free and easy wholesomeness. The day as a whole is for farming, writing and meditation.

**A Day's Work With the Author.**

The first duty after the breakfast things are out of the way is to tramp down through the woods to the village in the valley to get the mail. At the same time Mr. Burroughs visits Riverby and gives directions for the day's work on the farm. If it is at the time of the grape harvest or if there are other important tasks in progress he may stay all day to help and superintend, but as a rule he soon returns to his beloved Slabsides.

The rest of the morning he spends in reading, writing and thinking, with some interruptions in the way of the necessary preparations for dinner. Afternoons he walks through the woods or walks in his celery swamp or perhaps makes a second visit to Riverby.

He always returns from the lowlands to his cottage among the rocks with a sense of relief. He is glad to get away from all connection with what smacks of hurry and business. To quote his own words, he has "an unalloyed satisfaction in the simpler, ruder things of life, and as soon as I step within the walls of Slabsides my cares slip away from me and I feel as if I had escaped from something that harassed me."

Nor can the visitor with healthful instincts help sharing this feeling to some extent. You come under the spell and think you, too, would like to build a Slabsides in some quiet forest dell. But, after all, the life would probably not fit another as it does John Burroughs. He is one of nature's children and he finds a happiness in being alone with nature that is granted to very few.

## STOUT BATTLE OF THE WRECKED NEW YORK FOR EXISTENCE.

**T**HE anniversary of the wreck of the New York (the first American sailing vessel ever built of American iron) will not soon be forgotten in Halfmoon Bay. A photograph of the scene taken on the 13th inst. shows what kind of material the ship was built of.

The elements have not made the inroads on the hull that would naturally be expected. Southeasters and northwesterers have raged around the remains of the unlucky vessel, the westerly swell that comes in from the ocean has pounded upon her sides, the elements all combined to destroy and yet save for the breach in her amidships, which occurred soon after she went ashore. The wreck shows few additional traces of what she has gone through.

The coast line from San Francisco to San Pedro is strewn with the bones of many a stout ship. Some of them went to pieces in a few hours, others stood the battering of the waves for a week or more, but one only (the New York) has defied the elements for over a year.

Shortly after the launching of the New York, and when that vessel, as the T. F. Oakes, was the pride of the American mercantile marine, the whaling bark Atlantic was wrecked below the Cliff House and thirty of her crew drowned. All that is left of the Atlantic to-day is a portion of her keel embedded in the sands of the ocean beach.

The Atlantic was fitted out for a season in the Arctic and nearly the entire crew was put aboard drunk. On a Friday she sailed and twelve hours later her remains were piled on the ocean beach. The help was washed overboard, one after the other and drowned in the breakers.

A month later there was another wreck within a short distance of the whaler Atlantic on the ocean beach. On January 14, 1887, the schooner Parallel sailed from this port for Astoria with a general cargo, a portion of which was wrecked on the beach. The crew lost no time in getting ashore, as they were afraid of the giant powder. Their fears proved to be well grounded, as the pounding of the vessel on the rocks exploded the powder, blowing the schooner into splinters and wrecking the Cliff House.

Coming down to later times the British ship Gosford was run ashore in Coto Harbor, near Point Conception, on November 22, 1862, in a vain attempt to save vessel and cargo. She was found out from San Francisco and on November 18 caught fire. In spite of the best efforts of the crew the fire gained the masonry and the ship was run in shore and scuttled. A number of attempts were made to raise her, but they all failed, and the bones of the Gosford are still bleaching in Coto Harbor.

In October, 1880, the Pacific Coast Steamship Company's steamer Newbern went on Point Vincent, ten miles south of Redondo, in a fog and became a total loss. Captain von Helms, now master of the steamer Turaco, was in command, and owing to his coolness and skill, all the passengers were saved. Three days after she went ashore the Newbern caught fire and now only a few charred remains of the hull mark the scene of that disaster.

In April, 1884, the Pacific Coast Steamship Company lost another steamer and in August, 1886, still another. A dense fog was responsible for both disasters. The April wreck was the steamer Los Angeles, Captain Leland, now master of the steamer Gipsy, was in command, and the vessel, carrying passengers and loaded with merchandise, was on her way from San Pedro to San Francisco. She went on the Little Moro rocks near Point Sur on April 22, and five people lost their lives. The passengers were not into lifeboats and onto life rafts, but a storm came up and five of them were drowned before help came.

The St. Paul was also on her way from San Pedro to San Francisco, in command of Captain Downing, now master of the steamer Excelsior. On August 8, in a dense fog, she ran on Point Pinos, at the entrance to Monterey Bay, and became a total wreck. No lives were lost.



The Wrecked New York as She Lies Upon the Beach at Halfmoon Bay After a Year's Buffeting by the Waves.  
From a Photograph Taken Specially for the Sunday Call.

On July 14, 1896, the Pacific Mail Company's steamer Columbia was totally lost on Point Pinos. She was in command of Captain Clark, and was the only steamer of the Oceanic Steamship Company's dock at Honolulu, and was on her way from Panama for San Francisco. There was a dense fog on the water at the time, and the first warning of danger was the crash of the vessel on the rocks.

Very little, if anything, remains of these vessels. In some instances only a few buried timbers remain to show that once a ship had come to her end there. Not so in the case of the ship New York, however. Though many a storm has raged since she was wrecked, a portion of her masts and some of her yards are still standing, while the hull from the companion way aft and from the foremost forward is intact, and to all appearances as sound as when the ship was launched. Amidships the seas have made clean breaches through the hull and nothing remains but the keel and keelsons.

The New York was formerly the American ship T. F. Oakes, and was built in 1883, being the first sailing vessel ever built in Iron in America. She was never a lucky ship, and it was in hopes that a change of name would do away with the hoodoo that induced her owners to rechristen her "New York." She was on her way here from Hongkong when she was lost.

Early in the morning of March 13, 1888, the people of Halfmoon Bay saw a ship standing inshore. The people aboard did not appear to know just exactly where they were, but finally the vessel was put about and stood out to sea. How it happened was never discovered, but the ship's course must have been changed again during a thick fog that came up, and that night at 8:30 o'clock the New York was hard and fast on the beach of Halfmoon Bay.

Captain Peabody, now master of the American ship Willacott, was in charge of the New York and he and his family had a narrow escape. The vessel had a valuable cargo, which was sold to some speculators for \$500. Most of the merchandise was salvaged, but the hull remains as a monument to somebody's blundering.

"People who handle the yardstick have but little idea of the years' study and experiments that were necessary to secure the standard yard measure," observed an official of the coast survey. "Bird, a famous scientist, made the first standard yard in 1760, but the English Government did not legalize it until 1824.

"Ten years afterward, when the House of Parliament in London was destroyed by fire, the standard yard was lost, and England was again without a standard yard of length. Sheepbanks next made a standard yard measure, which the English Government adopted, and so that it could not be again destroyed by fire, four authorized copies were made of it. One of these was deposited in the Royal Mint, another in the Royal Society, another in the observatory at Greenwich, and the fourth was imbedded in the walls of the new House of Parliament.

"The standard yard measures which are owned by the Government are copies of the original, one of which is owned by the coast survey. The United States Naval Observatory has one also.

"The delicacy of its construction may be gathered by the fact that a change of temperature of one-hundredth of a degree Fahrenheit has been found to produce a sensible effect on the length of the bar.

"The copies of the standard are made of bronze, for the reason that bronze is less affected by temperature than any distinct or single metal.

"The cost of the construction of the original standard yard measure involved the labor of Bird and his assistants for nearly six years. Sheepbanks was eleven years in producing the accurate copies which he made from Bird's original measurements."—Washington Star.