

**PEPACTON**

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Pepacton by John Burroughs

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**JOHN BURROUGHS**

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# PEPACTON

BY

JOHN BURROUGHS



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## PREFACE

I HAVE all the more pleasure in calling my book after the title of the first chapter, "Pepacton," because this is the Indian name of my native stream. In its watershed I was born and passed my youth, and here on its banks my kindred sleep. Here, also, I have gathered much of the harvest, poor though it be, that I have put in this and in previous volumes of my writings.

The term "Pepacton" is said to mean "marriage of the waters;" and with this significance it suits my purpose well, as this book is also a union of many currents.

The Pepacton rises in a deep cleft or gorge in the mountains, the scenery of which is of the wildest and ruggedest character. For a mile or more there is barely room for the road and the creek at the bottom of the chasm. On either hand the mountains, interrupted by shelving, overhanging precipices, rise abruptly to a great height. About half a century ago a pious Scotch family, just arrived in this country, came through this gorge. One of the little boys, gazing upon the terrible desolation of the scene, so unlike in its savage and inhuman aspects anything

he had ever seen at home, nestled close to his mother, and asked with bated breath, "Mither, is there a God here?"

Yet the Pepacton is a placid current, especially in its upper portions, where my youth fell; but all its tributaries are swift mountain brooks fed by springs the best in the world. It drains a high pastoral country lifted into long, round-backed hills and rugged, wooded ranges by the subsiding impulse of the Catskill range of mountains, and famous for its superior dairy and other farm products. It is many long years since, with the restlessness of youth, I broke away from the old ties amid those hills; but my heart has always been there, and why should I not come back and name one of my books for the old stream?



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# PEPACTON

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## I

### PEPACTON: A SUMMER VOYAGE

WHEN one summer day I bethought me of a voyage down the east or Pepacton branch of the Delaware, I seemed to want some excuse for the start, some send-off, some preparation, to give the enterprise genesis and head. This I found in building my own boat. It was a happy thought. How else should I have got under way, how else should I have raised the breeze? The boat-building warmed the blood; it made the germ take; it whetted my appetite for the voyage. There is nothing like serving an apprenticeship to fortune, like earning the right to your tools. In most enterprises the temptation is always to begin too far along; we want to start where somebody else leaves off. Go back to the stump, and see what an impetus you get. Those fishermen who wind their own flies before they go a-fishing, — how they bring in the trout; and those hunters who run their own bullets or make their own cartridges, — the game is already mortgaged to them.