

CANOEING IN THE WILDERNESS

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Canoeing in the wilderness by Henry David Thoreau & Clifton Johnson

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HENRY DAVID THOREAU & CLIFTON JOHNSON

CANOEING IN THE WILDERNESS

By Clifton Johnson

BATTLEGROUND ADVENTURES. Illustrated.
A BOOK OF FAIRY-TALE FOXES. Illustrated.
A BOOK OF FAIRY-TALE BEARS. Illustrated.

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By HENRY D. THOREAU

EDITED BY
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ILLUSTRATED BY
WILL HAMMELL



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INTRODUCTION

THOREAU was born at Concord, Massachusetts, July 12, 1817, and at the time he made this wilderness canoe trip he was forty years old. The record of the journey is the latter half of his *The Maine Woods*, which is perhaps the finest idyl of the forest ever written. It is particularly charming in its blending of meditative and poetic fancies with the minute description of the voyager's experiences.

The chief attraction that inspired Thoreau to make the trip was the primitiveness of the region. Here was a vast tract of almost virgin woodland, peopled only with a few loggers and pioneer farmers, Indians, and wild animals. No one could have been better fitted than Thoreau to enjoy such a region and to transmit his enjoyment of it to others. For though he was a person of culture and refinement,

with a college education, and had for an intimate friend so rare a man as Ralph Waldo Emerson, he was half wild in many of his tastes and impatient of the restraints and artificiality of the ordinary social life of the towns and cities.

He liked especially the companionship of men who were in close contact with nature, and in this book we find him deeply interested in his Indian guide and lingering fondly over the man's characteristics and casual remarks. The Indian retained many of his aboriginal instincts and ways, though his tribe was in most respects civilized. His home was in an Indian village on an island in the Penobscot River at Oldtown, a few miles above Bangor.

Thoreau was one of the world's greatest nature writers, and as the years pass, his fame steadily increases. He was a careful and accurate observer, more at home in the fields and woods than in village and town, and with a gift of piquant originality in recording his impressions. The play of