A Breath from the Maine Woods.

For the last four or five years my friend Lincoln (commonly known in camp as “the Loafer”) and I have made it a point to spend a part of our summer in the backwoods of Maine. So last spring, as Tech. work drew to a close, and visions of the summer vacation rose before us, we began to make plans for our customary outing. There was little to prepare in the way of kit, for experience had taught us what to carry and what to leave behind, and everything needful was at hand. The great questions were, when to go and where. The first was easily settled, for July was the only month that we both could spare. The second was not so easily answered, and many and long were the consultations held upon this all-important topic.

Down the west branch of the Penobscot? No go. We had been down once, and we knew that the river was too wild and rapid to be safe for two men and one canoe alone. Down the Allaguash? Also no go; it would be too long a trip. Moosehead, Brassua Lake, and Moose River? Out of the question, as we would get no good fishing. Finally we decided to go to Ktaadn Iron Works, which lie about thirty miles east of the foot of Moosehead Lake, with nothing between them and Canada but thick forests, dotted here and there with lakes and mountains; they make an excellent starting-point and base of supplies for a camping trip.

Accordingly, on June 26th we shipped a box of provisions and a light canoe for the Works, and followed ourselves June 30th, leaving Boston on the night train for Bangor. Our camp kit we took in a trunk, thus avoiding having to pay express or freight; we also carried a camera, a light rifle, and our fly-rods.

Monday morning found us in Bangor, but we made only a short stop of two hours, leaving at seven o’clock on the Bangor and Piscataquis road for the Iron Works; and after a tedious ride of nearly four hours we alighted at our journey’s end.

Ktaadn Iron Works is a very small place. It consists of the smelting furnace, the store, the station, a small hotel, and ten or a dozen houses. It is almost surrounded by mountains lying in two parallel lines running east and west. Between them is a narrow valley, down which flows the west branch of Pleasant River, called by the Indians “Munolanamônungun,” which astounding word means in English, “the place where very good paint is found”; and, indeed, a brief acquaintance with the Works will make it hard to believe that the Indians were not inspired when they named the place. The soil and water are both full of iron, so that by mixing them one can get a very good reddish paint. The easiest method of testing this is for one to take a walk in the early morning or after a rain; and if on returning to the hotel one does not find one’s clothing tinted all over with various shades of red and yellow, and one’s self a veritable walking sample sheet of different qualities of natural paint, I am much mistaken.

Alongside of the river runs the Gulf road, which after thirty-five or forty miles brings one to Chesuncook Lake. For eight or ten miles from the Works this road is passably good in summer; for the rest of the way, however, it is used only in winter with sledges.

Pleasant River bulges out just at the Iron Works into a charming little pond called Silver Lake, ringed round with lofty mountains, and fed by numbers of little streams, which, babbling down from the hills pure and cold, are the abiding-places of that delight of anglers and prince of fishes, the true Salmo fontinalis, the speckled trout. At the foot of the lake, so close to the outlet that its piazza overhangs the river, stands the little hotel, and on this our eyes rested as soon as we stepped from the train.

We requested the station agent to have our trunk sent after us, and hastened up to the hostelry. Here we engaged a room, and as soon as our trunk put in an appearance proceeded