

46





Here the tent was unfastened from the boat and pitched on a high bank for a week's stay. Each man had his own cot



The small boat—"The Coffin"—was used in transporting supplies from the village to camp, thus avoiding the payment of toll to cross the bridge

of a 12-foot ash oar, but at times it was necessary, on account of the rapids, to steer it from both ends.

The leakage was very slight, perhaps one-half an inch in twenty-four hours, which could be easily bailed out by gathering the water in one end and throwing it out with a can. Ten miles a day was the average speed of the current, and the boat was tied to the bank each night.

Many stops were made by the party between Sayre and Wilkesbarre, and several times the

tent was taken from the boat and pitched on the bank. Many interesting things happened on the trip, such as visits from the farmers, from whom the provisions were purchased, the search for springs, and the fun of cooking. It was an outing full of variety, and it was inexpensive.

When Wilkesbarre was reached, the boat could not be sold, so it was divested of its tent and contents, and given to the revelries of the flames. The trunks were then expressed to the several

homes and a hearty handshake separated the well-tanned party.

The itemized account of expenses follows:

Lumber, nails, etc. . . . .	\$21.00	Carting . . . . .	\$ 2.00
Paint . . . . .	2.00	Gasolene . . . . .	2.50
Provisions . . . . .	32.50	Oil . . . . .	.50
Cooking utensils . . . . .	8.00	Water-pail . . . . .	.50
Lanterns (2) . . . . .	2.00	Straw hats . . . . .	1.00
Canvas for cots . . . . .	2.00	Railroad tickets . . . . .	9.00
Stove . . . . .	5.00		
		Total . . . . .	\$88.00

## A THREE-DOLLAR HOUSEBOAT VACATION

By EDWARD I. PRATT

Photographs by M. H. PRATT, and the author

**T**HREE unexpected vacation days. Three hours in which to decide what to do, and \$3 to do it with. What could be done? We were strangers in a country town, so the brief vacation looked good somewhere else. There was no time to lose, and as we, my wife and I, sat under a catalpa tree that hot summer afternoon, we realized that something desperate would be necessary to make possible an outing within our limit.

Every suggestion fell flat — stumbled over our three dollars — no trip to the city, no visit to the lake, for any kind of an excursion would cost eight or ten dollars at the least.

My wife broke the silence of our meditation: "Oh," said she. "If we only had a houseboat, there's such a nice river here. I've read that houseboats are great fun, but then the magazine article said the cheapest kind of a houseboat costs \$70."

"Let's get a rowboat and make one," I suggested; and we did.

It was six-thirty that same evening when we pushed off from the rickety dock above the old mill-dam and pulled bravely northward to the fading music of the mill-race. Up stream about half a mile, the river turned westerly, and behind towering elm trees the sun, a ball of fire, emblazoned valleys of low-hanging clouds, lighting our pathway. The shrill greetings of tree-toads cheered us, while the occasional bass of the bullfrogs in the bordering marsh sounded a solemn warning of possible dangers of the night. No time of day can be more beautiful than sunset, whether amongst the hills or on the meadows, and the quiet and cool of the on-coming evening filled to overflowing our cup of happiness. Our vacation had begun.

We did not have the \$3 now — only seventy cents — but we had rented a big clumsy flat-bottomed rowboat of the miller for \$1 and the balance had gone for provisions.

Besides the boat (and the dog) we had a ten-by-

ten canvas with plenty of rope; a lantern, oil stove, small oil can, water bottle, hatchet, three army blankets, an extra-wide folding cot, fry pan, kettle, pail with cover, two tin cups and plates, knives and forks, two books and a camera. All of these things we had at home. Our provisions came to \$1.30; one can each of beans, peas, and corned beef; one dozen eggs; one pound bacon; one-half pound sugar; one-fourth pound each of coffee and tea; bread, cake, pepper and salt, and matches.

This little river was navigable, we were told, for several miles up stream, and we decided going on a leisurely voyage of discovery. A half-hour's row brought us past heavily wooded banks, and from the underbrush along the shore we cut eight saplings and proceeded to "finish" our houseboat. Here also was found a suitable stone for an anchor. Four of the saplings were trimmed to fit vertically into the gunwales, snug against the ribs, two on a side, eight feet apart. The four



The improvised houseboat made out of a rowboat. The sides were lifted and the canvas used as an awning during the day



The Tramp was seaworthy, wide, and steady, but even with the outfit stowed away, some skill was required of the crew in moving about

remaining sticks were lashed horizontally to the uprights at such a height that when the canvas was spread over them, its sides reached down to the boat and could be fastened securely. When a storm threatened additional rope braces were run from top to bottom. A piece of canvas was then pinned to the top at the stern end and when lowered, closed our canvas cabin completely. The cot, when opened and resting on the bottom boards fitted nicely over the middle seats. We did not realize, until the next morning, what our house boat looked like, but it served us well, so appearances were ignored. We christened her "The Tramp."

Our traps were stowed away under the seats and a light lunch sufficed for our first supper. The Tramp was seaworthy, wide and steady, but, even with our outfit packed away, some skill was required of the crew in moving about. When en route, the pup was stationed in the bow where he was useful, being out of the way. Our cooking was done at the stern unless we had a fire on shore.

To the writer, our houseboat had one overwhelming advantage over any land expedition, because, when anchored in the centre of the stream for the night, there were practically no mosquitos; even though along the shore they were humming busily.

Sleeping amid stream is as far ahead of any grass-grown pillow in a stuffy, spidery tent as can be imagined. Our first night on the water began with threatening weather, but by eleven the sky was clear. With the ends of our cabin drawn wide open and the boat motionless yet wafted to and fro by the gentlest breeze, we seemed to be floating in a great miniature of the heavens; the wooded shadow banks, doubled in the stream, made up the frame, while the stars above and their reflection in the mirrored water below made our little craft the centre of a new galaxy.

The occasional splashing of a fish, the stealthy rustle of some four-footed marauder in the underbrush along the shore, or the cry of a night bird were the only sounds that broke upon our dream until the first twitterings from nearby trees told us of the coming of the dawn.

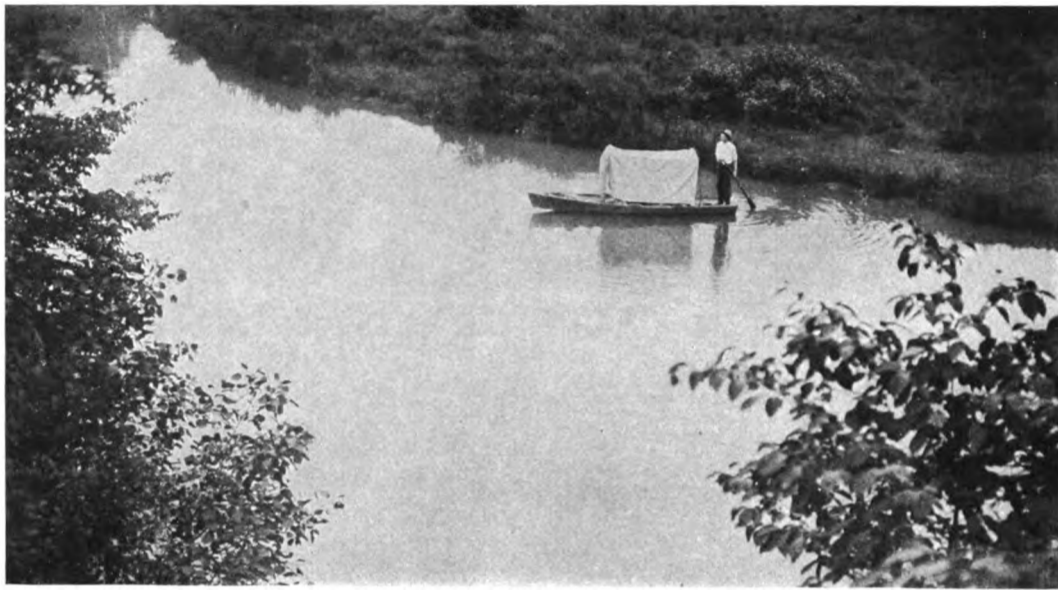
By six o'clock we were eating a delicious breakfast of bacon and eggs, and by seven-thirty our canvas was rolled up and the leisurely trip up stream continued. We spent the days in reading,

stopping to "snap" pretty scenes, birds and animals; fishing, and taking things easy. We visited some farmhouses and bought milk and greens; discovered hidden springs in woodlot glades; while in the deep tangle of a deserted pasture corner we found a quail's nest so carefully hidden under the weeds that it was invisible but a few inches away; altogether, we had so charming a time that the hours sped.

The end of the first day brought us where the

un-Walton-like contrivance. For a distance of thirty feet along the bank he had stuck ten or a dozen sticks, at the upper ends of which hung small bells, each connected to a line that disappeared into the river. The old gentleman would lean against a nearby tree trunk as though half asleep, a big pipe in his mouth; but at the tinkle of one of his bells he would run for the line with surprising agility.

The morning of the third day opened raining and misty, but the dampness was made up for by the exquisite odors of the freshened air. By ten o'clock, after visiting a pretty little park with rustic bridges over white-gravelled spring brooks, we started homeward, and with unusual high water and a favorable breeze came down stream at a steady clip. Before reaching home in the afternoon, as we left our faithful Tramp, we took a snapshot of our equipment, but no pictures are needed to keep fresh in mind the pleasure and real enjoyment of our impromptu three-dollar houseboat cruise on Mill River, possibly because it was impromptu.



The houseboat had one overwhelming advantage over any land expedition—when anchored in the centre of the stream for the night the mosquitos ceased from troubling

river wound amongst little hills, and climbing one of them, we cooked and ate our supper in the glory of a wilderness sunset. Below, "our" river stretched away, its breeze-strewn ripples sparkling up to us their inimitable lure. Off to the southward some straggling sheep along a hillside and cows grazing in the stream-bordered meadow made a landscape the envy of a Corot; while two blue jays angrily scolding overhead caused just enough discord to remind us of the reality of it all.

This trip was not without exciting moments. Once, in a narrow part of the river The Tramp caught on a submerged fence wire — afterward it was fun wondering how near we came to turning turtle, pup, camera and all. Occasionally in the afternoon and evening we would pass people out rowing, and wireless communication was frequent. No C. Q. D. signals were necessary. Once, we stopped and swapped experiences with two couples who were camping nearby a la mode. Our fishermen friends, however, were most interesting and varied, from the barefooted urchins disturbed in their "swimmin' hole" to the old German who, wanting to make the best of his opportunity, had evolved a picturesque but

### HOW TO PROTECT CAMP BEDDING

ANYONE who has camped out knows by experience how difficult it is to keep mice and squirrels out of bedding, eatables, etc. I have found the following a sure preventive:

Tie up in a bundle the articles you wish to protect, leaving one end of the rope long enough to suspend the bundle from an overhead cross-beam or a tree branch.

Tie a knot in the rope about four feet from the end, and run the rope through a hole punched in the middle of an old tin plate or basin, so that the basin will rest on the knot, and so prevent any creature from running down the rope.

Then tie the end of the rope around the beam, so the basin will hang about a foot below it. The bundle should be four or five feet from the floor, or higher than a squirrel can jump.

For this purpose a piece of pliable wire (which should always be carried on a camping trip) is even better to use than rope, as it cannot be gnawed in two at the upper end where it is tied around the beam.

PHOEBE THAYER.



Ready to move on. As there was but a short distance to carry the outfit it did not require careful packing



Supper on shore was an enjoyable affair. The blankets were hung so as to shelter the stove from the wind