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Old Booklet Records Mountain Climb

By **LYDIA KING FREHSE**
 Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

If you have leanings toward the out-of-doors, the chances are that you are a collector of sorts. Plants and rocks, beetles and bugs, nests of birds and wasps, photographs and fossils, sea-shells and snake skins; there is no end to what people will collect with some degree of profit to themselves if not always to others.

Recently there came to my hands one such collection. It is a small hand-made booklet. On its fly-leaf is the inscription "Specimens of plants collected on Mt. Washington, August 5th, 1899," followed by the collector's name and the collector's signature written in a fine Spencerian hand.

Obviously it was of no other purpose than to serve as a memento of a happy day spent in the out-of-doors.

On the first page is mounted a sprig of *Spiraea tomentosa*, a common shrub of the New England region. We have its counterpart in our closely related "meadow-sweet" which has white instead of rose flowers.

The common name "stepleebush" comes from the spires of a bell bloom which top its branches. It is probable that the collector found this plant at the beginning of his climb since it prefers low, moist ground.

OUR NEXT specimen is labelled "Epilobium spicatum," the common "fire-weed," which quickly establishes itself in our northern Michigan burnt over lands. The species named "angustifolium" is now more generally used.

A friend recently reported seeing this plant growing in profusion in Alaska where its flowers were red.

Turning the page we come to a little buttercup marked "Ranunculus sp." This is followed by a twig of birch marked "Betula sp." Both of these may have grown on the banks of one of the many little mountain streams which trickle down into the valley. The placing of a question mark after the species is a common practice of honest botanists both amateur and professional, and in this case we will not try to disturb it.

Collected on the middle reaches of the mountainside are two species of *Vicia*, the common cow vetch (cracca) of roadsides and fields and the larger pea vetch (*Americana*).

THESE ARE representatives of the pea-family which spread a variegated tangle of lavender and purple over our summer roadsides and meadows.

Our next specimen was probably the first I saw on the slope of the mountain side, for it is the alpine goldenrod "Solidago Alpestris." Like all Alpine plants, it is dwarfed by the rigors of a high altitude.

For the same reason, it blooms early to ripen its seeds in the short season between the late melting and the early falling of

We now come to a sprig of red spruce, *Picea rubens*. From the tiny size of the needles, we conclude that it came from a dwarfed specimen growing near the tree line. This is the zone where plants make their last stand against the rigors of tearing winds and obliterating cold. Beyond this line no trees will grow.

The last specimen in our little collection is one which must have come from the near-summit where only a few small and hardy evergreen plants nestle against the protecting rocks. It is the white-flowered cinquefoil, *Potentilla tridentata*.

I have a particularly pleasant association with this small plant for I saw it first in 1939, growing in a similar situation above the tree line on the day we climbed Mt. Monadnock. To my surprise, I found it again two years ago blooming along a sandy roadside just south of Mio.

IT IS reported as common to the rocky and exposed regions of the north and northeastern part of our range. It differs from the usual members of the cinquefoil family in its three-lobed instead of five-lobed leaves. Its white flowers are generally yellow-flowered genes and its evergreen character. Since this collector loved the

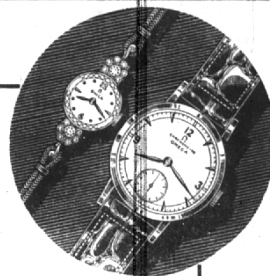
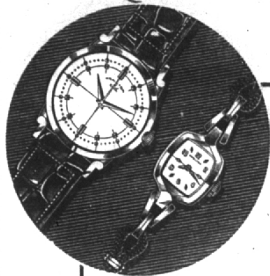
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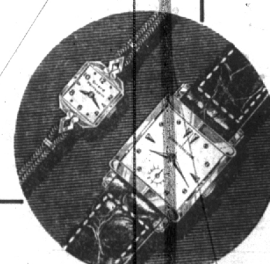


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