F
29
.S94N5

Class ____________

Book ____________

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT

Maine District ss
District Clerks Office
July 3d 1858
Received
Attest Wm. P. Preble Clerk

MEMOIR

OF

COLONEL SAMUEL NEVERS.

MEMOIR

OF

COL. SAMUEL NEVERS,

LATE OF

SWEDEN,

TO WHOSE EARLY FRIENDS AND RELATIVES THIS LITTLE WORK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

WILLIAM NEVERS 3D,
AUTHOR.

PRESS OF GEO. W. MILLETT,
NORWAY.

1858.

F29
5?4N5

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858, by
WILLIAM NEVERS 3d,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Maine.

4743
6437

PREFACE.

So small a book, can hardly be supposed to need a preface; but small as it is, it has a design.

And first, let it be understood that it is not made to *sell;* and the *question* as to whether it would "pay" or not, was not *made* a question.

A few friends and relatives wished to preserve, in some form, the life of MR. NEVERS; and at their instance, these brief outlines are ar-

ranged in this form — brief and imperfect.

There was material for a *longer* "Life;" but this answers the design of those interested; and furthermore, the writer has none of that *imagery* so necessary to deck the "theater of realities." As this little work will not be likely to be thrown much upon the public, the public taste has been little consulted: and if it pleases those interested, it certainly ought to please the AUTHOR.

MEMOIR

OF

COLONEL SAMUEL NEVERS.

INTRODUCTION.

It is to be regretted, that the genealogy of the family cannot be traced with reasonable minuteness, farther back than to Samuel, the father of the subject of this Memoir; and only enough is known of him to show, beyond doubt, that he was born in Woburn, Massachusetts, not far from the year 1730. His right name was Marshall, but he was an adopted son to one Samuel Nevers, of Woburn.

He settled in Burlington, Massachusetts. His first wife was a Miss Wyman, by whom he had six children; Samuel, born 1766, William, Mary, Susanna, John, and an infant son that survived only a few hours.

Of these children, William alone survives, and still lives in Sweden, near the home just left by Samuel, the eldest.

The others have long since left the scenes of earth.

To John, there is attached a mournful history. Long after the Revolution he was on board of an American vessel lying in one of our Atlantic harbors, when she was boarded by a British recruiting officer, and refusing to show his protection papers, was impressed into the British Naval service, and his after fate is yet untold.

By a second marriage with a Miss Wyman, of Burlington, — sister to his

first wife, — were added twelve children: five sons and seven daughters.

The sons were Elijah, Asa, Wyman, Benjamin, and Issac. The daughters were Harriet and Matilda, (never married,) and Mrs. Bennett, Mrs. Locke, Mrs. Carey, Mrs. Raymond, and Mrs. Curtis.

The father was early engaged in the "French and Indian War," in the expedition under Rogers.

In this war he was in many of the hardest-fought battles with the Indians. One little incident of Indian cunning, may be told in his own words.

"One day, as our file leader was taking us through the woods, he stopped short, and struck his hatchet into

what I supposed to be the ground; but pretty soon a large Indian sprang up and reeled forward *dead*—his head entirely split open by the hatchet.

"This was a *ruse* of the Indians to hide one of their number in the leaves on the ground, to count the American forces as they passed along; but this poor fellow had made a *miss-go* that time."

He, too, was the first to take up arms in the Revolutionary struggle. He heard the report of the first gun discharged on the morning of the battle of Lexington.

He joined no company; and easily got permission to fight on his own

hook, for he was every where known as a "*dead shot.*"

He secreted himself along the line of the enemy's route, and in the course of the day — to use his own words — "gave them sixty-two bullets to do what they pleased with."

Towards sun-set, he was wounded in the thigh; but he managed to keep hard on the enemy's flank, till he was utterly unable to walk, when he lay down behind a fence.

In a short time he saw approaching, five British officers, with a horse and chaise which they had stolen. Of this last scene on that memorable day, he says: "I put two balls through the leather of the chaise in the right place.

Pretty soon they hauled up; and two of them got out and lifted out three dead bodies and threw them over the wall!"

In a short time there came along one of his near neighbors, by the name of Bacon, on horseback. He had his horse loaded with clothing he had taken from houses where the inhabitants had fled at sight of the English. Bacon was an infernal tory.

Nevers requested the loan of his horse, so that he could overtake the enemy; but was refused. Mr. B. did not go but a short distance before his horse fell to rise no more.

Mr. Nevers said he knew the man who piloted the British out of Boston.

His name was Smith. He tried him once, as he was coming down a hill. There was one of the Light Infantry beyond Smith, who jumped his length above the rest, and fell a corpse. S. got down from his horse, took off his hat and examined it, but did not mount again in his sight. Smith was not a friend to his country.

The generous reader must pardon the seeming haste with which we pass over this part of our task; but the space is small.

Of the heroes of that day, impartial history has written.

They lived for Freedom; and they could die for it.

Whether on paper or marble, each

name shall be found, does not matter; for it is just as safe in the *heart-history* of grateful sons and daughters.

They met life and death with equal courage. They repose their ashes under the green sward, and all above them is the blessing.

We pass to the subject of our sketch.

COLONEL SAMUEL NEVERS, was, as has been seen, the eldest of eighteen children. Born in 1766, his early life was one continual hardship and danger.

He had no opportunities to acquire an education. In the rugged school of *real life* he was taught "the rudiments of desperate studies," without the polish of scholarship.

At the age of thirteen, — his mother

being dead, — his father told him that he had the whole world to get a living in; and with a firm purpose, and a light heart, he proceeded to take formal possession of his heritage!

Alone, and on foot, journeyed to Warwick, where he found a home in the family of a Doctor Williams. He seems to have been quite a favorite with the Doctor; and tells, with great *gusto*, a thousand and one incidents of his "boy-life," during his sojourn with the family; how he watched the squirrels at their daily work, and pounced upon their miser-store of chestnuts; how he shot the marauding crow and the thieving thrush; and gathered the well-stored and fiercely-protected Win-

ter stocks of honey from the forest pine; and numberless freaks and whims, joys and sorrows, as familiar as "household words," to any one who has ever had the ineffable happiness of being once a boy!!

One scientific experiment of his, while at the Doctor's, is sufficiently amusing to warrant a record; and the ardor and spirit of research was manifestly entitled to a more gratifying result.

He says:—"One Sunday morning, as the family had gone to meeting, leaving me in possession of the Castle, I thought I would have some sport with the dog. I brought out the Doctor's battery, and after having charged

it to the highest notch, I took the dog and placed his paw on the wire. The first thing I knew of myself, I was on the floor, flatter than a *broken egg*.

"The *dog* took it harder than I did. He whirled around and around, and finally went through the window, taking with him the entire sash!

"When the Doctor came home, he asked some questions about the window, and I told him the dog went through it. He asked no further questions; and whether he ever mistrusted the real truth, or not, I never knew."

His stay at the Doctor's was two years; he then went back to his father's. He stopped at home but a few days, — long enough to help dig a field

of potatoes after four incher of *snow had fallen.*

His next move was to Brooklyn. where an uncle (his father's brother) lived.

There, he says, "he had another cold job digging potatoes;" and concludes, in the event of his ever owning a farm, he would never plant them!

Of the particular reason of his next move, he says nothing; but it appears that he soon left his uncle's, and shipped in a Privateersman, — the brig Hyder Ali, — then just fitted and ready to sail from Salem.

This brig mounted sixteen guns.

From this period, dates the danger, the privation, the cool, calculating, yet

fervent and bold spirit of the man, the ardor of the Patriot, the courage of the Soldier, and the character of the Citizen.

The writer of this, has no records of the owners or officers of the brig. She immediately sailed, and her first cruise was off New Brunswick.

One adventure of the crew is, perhaps, worth relating.

One fine morning, as the brig was moored close to the shore, a proposition was made to go ashore, and if possible find some poultry — perhaps some truant chickens, too far strayed from the parent roost.

Close by the shore was a thicket of bushes, while farther back, a sloping

field and farm house could be seen — near which the *chickens* were supposed to be.

The party had hardly landed, before they saw an Indian creep cautiously across the path, a little distance ahead.

Betaking themselves to the landing, they hoisted a signal, and instantly the cannon from the brig roared a broadside, and the shot raked the thicket. One minute more and the whole hill-side was lined with scampering savages, who ran with all the strength of beings frightened to madness. In the words of the narrator, "they acted as though they had urgent business at home!" But the chickens were forgotten, and when our little company remembered

that they were but a short distance from a British fleet, they very quietly weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

But the cruise was a short one and unfortunate. Chases most of the time, it required all the energy of the little band, to keep safe and afloat, with waging a war of aggression.

At length they were overhauled by a British cruiser, as they lay in a fog. The Englishman proved to be his Majesty's three deck ship, CHATHAM, mounting sixty-four guns. The Privateer, unwilling to contend against such odds, surrendered; and the crew, numbering forty-four, were ordered on board the enemy's vessel. The Eng-

lish told us they would run us under if we fired a gun.

Perhaps we can do no better than give the history of the capture, imprisonment, and subsequent escape of the young captive, in his own words: as often repeated to his children and friends.

"After they had drawn in the long boat, and manned the prize, the Band stationed themselves on the fore deck, and played "Yankee Doodle."

"When the strain was ended, an old gruff and weather-beaten Yankee tar, sung out,—

"Play *Bunker Hill*, d—n ye!"

"Then came the tallest swearing I ever heard. The British officers or-

dered us all butchered on the spot. We immediately passed round the order to draw our knives; and, as there were two stacks of muskets standing near, with bayonets fixed, it is certain that there would have been a hard fight, if they had attempted to execute the order.

"We kept cool, however, and they finally contented themselves by putting fourteen of us in the dungeon.

"The rest were afterwards sent to New York and imprisoned. All we had to eat was a kind of porridge made of pea-meal and water — burjout, so called.

"This they let down to us in a bucket. I generally managed to get

my shoe full, and going into a corner, would *cool* it and have a feast. At the end of fourteen days we were taken out, and ordered to do duty.

"They asked me if I could serve the King; and I told them I thought I could but poorly.

"The task assigned me, was to wait upon the 2nd Lieutenant, unless in active duty, then I was obliged to be powder-monkey.

"It was a hard task to carry cartridges to kill my own countrymen, or, perhaps, a brother; but I managed to be of little service to them.

"The first favor I got, or asked for, was permission to take a gun and shoot

some gulls that were flying about the vessel one bright morning.

"I stationed myself on the fore-castle, and pretty soon one came along, and I blazed away.

"The gull fell into the water, and I knew it would, for I was a dead shot. At the report of the gun, the officers came on deck and asked me what I was up to.

"I pointed to the dead gull. They asked me if I could shoot another. I told them I thought that must have been a *chance shot.*

"But I was willing to humor them, so I blazed away at another. It fell: I knew it would.

"They asked me if that was the

way the Yankee boys could shoot; (and didn't the answer do me good.) I told them I was always reckoned a *fool of a gunner.*

"They said no more, but I heard one of them muttering something to the effect, that they "might as well try to take h—ll as America!"

"I got off that day without a flogging. I usually got two or three a day. The officers were a cruel set of men. Humanity was absent from them. I have often seen them flog old grey-headed sailors in the face, because they could not hurt them bad enough by striking them anywhere else; and the sufferers not all knowing

the cause, nor daring to offer the slightest remonstrance.

"Their love for liquor was immoderate. There was not a man on board, except the Americans, but that would get "*tight* as a tiger's tail." The men would save their allowance until evening, then they would drink it, and carouse till morning, unless the officers interposed.

"When any quarrel arose between any two of them, they would draw out a chest and sitting astride of it, would box it out. I have seen twenty boxing at one time. The crew were not allowed to pick any quarrel with us; and the Lieutenant once flogged another waiter for striking me, as I was pas-

sing him while going into the wash-room; and afterwards scolded me for not fighting for my rights.

"After this when I saw any disposition on the part of a sailor to quarrel with me, I hit him under the chin, or grappled him by the fore-top, and jumped him back on the deck, and punished him till he asked for quarters.

"A few lessons like this, put me on terms of safety; but before that, I had a *black eye* or a *broken nose* most of the time.

"I generally managed to conciliate the favor of the officers, and soon passed for a harmless waiter. But it must

be remembered that I did them all the mischief in my power.

"When I was ordered aloft in a dark night, I would take my knife and cut off pieces of rigging and throw overboard, and call for more.

"They always kept the cannon charged, ready for action; but often the powder would get wet, and they would be obliged to *draw the charge.*

"I destroyed, generally, about sixty pounds of powder per day, by putting water in the vent-holes of the cannon. I managed to burn the large cable nearly a third part off, partly out of mischief, and partly because it might some time *part* and allow the vessel to be driven ashore.

"While they were on this cruise they took three prizes — one American and two French ships.

"I do not remember the names of any. In one engagement, an eighteen pound shot came through one of our port-holes, killing the gunner and the man who swabbed the cannon, breaking the oven, amidships, into a thousand pieces.

"It came so near me that it knocked me down, and half buried me in the blood and mangled bodies of the two men it killed; and still it was not an *unpleasant* sight to me!

"There was one Yankee enterprize that came under my notice that I must relate.

"There was a large, new, English brig came into New York harbor, loaded with provisions and munitions of war for the army, and ran aground.

"They run a sloop alongside and commenced unloading the brig, so they might get her off at the next high tide.

"The Americans, from the Jersey shore, with their glasses watched the operations. After the labor of unlading was over, the crew went on board the sloop to sleep. At the right time of night, seven Americans, in a whaleboat, started for the harbor.

"They boarded the brig and made sail. They then proceeded to unlash her from the sloop. This last operation awoke the lubbers; but it was too

to the fore-scuttle, and told me to get down and hand up such pieces of rigging as he named over.

"When I had passed up a sufficient amount, he threw all back over me, and locked the scuttle.

"About nine o'clock, the next day, the British officer came on board and asked the Captain if he had any deserters on board. The Captain told him he had not.

"The officer insisted upon knowing. So they searched every part of the vessel till they came to my hiding place. He then got the key and unlocking the scuttle, ordered his attendants to search that.

"They dug so near me, that they

trod on me several times; and when they desisted and went on deck again, you had better believe I felt more at home! If they had found me, they would have whipped me to death, and hung the Captain.

"The following day the vessel sailed for Salem. Four days after we reached the wharf in Salem, Mass.

"During that time I had nothing to eat, save three small biscuit; and yet I was *happy*.

"When I got ashore, I went to a house and asked for something to eat. The woman — although she ought not to be reckoned among mankind — asked me who I was, and where I came from. I told her; and she refused to

to the fore-scuttle, and told me to get down and hand up such pieces of rigging as he named over.

"When I had passed up a sufficient amount, he threw all back over me, and locked the scuttle.

"About nine o'clock, the next day, the British officer came on board and asked the Captain if he had any deserters on board. The Captain told him he had not.

"The officer insisted upon knowing. So they searched every part of the vessel till they came to my hiding place. He then got the key and unlocking the scuttle, ordered his attendants to search that.

"They dug so near me, that they

trod on me several times; and when they desisted and went on deck again, you had better believe I felt more at home! If they had found me, they would have whipped me to death, and hung the Captain.

"The following day the vessel sailed for Salem. Four days after we reached the wharf in Salem, Mass.

"During that time I had nothing to eat, save three small biscuit; and yet I was *happy*.

"When I got ashore, I went to a house and asked for something to eat. The woman — although she ought not to be reckoned among mankind — asked me who I was, and where I came from. I told her; and she refused to

give me a mouthful. The family were infernal tories. I do not know why it was, that I was not *indignant;* but I went out, sat down on the steps, and *cried like a child!*

"It was thirteen miles to my father's; but I resolved not to ask again till I reached home, and, Oh! the welcome!

"The family had given me up as lost, and I do not remember of ever hearing of but one man, impressed into that service, who had the good fortune to escape. His name was Twist.

"The reason why I never applied for my pension, was because I knew not where to find him at the time the pension act went into effect, and I had no

other proof. I was with the British or English, eight months and a half, and was seventeen years of age when I left them. None but the officers' attendants were ever allowed to go on shore.

"But few can ever know the cruel treatment of impressed seamen, — flogged, and stone-dead, some times, before they have received half their number of lashes! and not leaving the service until too old to do duty.

"I have seen men, thus impressed, who never set foot on the land for forty years.

"The lash, on board a vessel, is called 'the cat with nine tails.' The staff or stock is a piece of rope eighteen inches in length and three inches in

circumference; at one end of this are attached nine smaller ones eighteen inches in length, at the end of each of each of which is attached knotted wires. It is a cruel tormentor."

Many things, incidents of every-day-life on ship-board, have been omitted here, as perhaps lacking the general interest, sufficient to make them profitable to the general reader.

It appears that soon after his return to his home, an uncle offers him the Lieutenant's office in one of his brigs; but he declined the kind offer and gave for his reason, that he had seen enough of the sea "to last a life-time."

Indeed, it is very apparent that this kind of life never had any, even *seem-*

ing charms, in the first instance.—There was none of that wild and wayward *boy-fancy;* nor that thirst for the excitement of novel sensations, that prompted him to leave his home; but it was from the simple, but earnest desire *to do something*, a trait that never left him once during his life.

And even in his declining years, he was constantly busy in some kind of work.

And from this escape to his father's home, begins the life of the freeman, the penniless seeker for work, the mechanic, the business man. How well and nobly he met the rude touches of the world, and fulfilled life's mission,

in laboring, acquiring, and *giving*, let the reader of these pages learn.

His first work for *pay*, was for a Mr. Brown, a Boston baker. Here he stayed till he was well clothed, and had saved a small sum of money, when, being one day absent, he lost, by the burning of his boarding-house everything but the single suit he wore away.

At this time there was no State Prison, and the convicts were put on Castle Island, now Fort Independence.

Here he did fort duty and baker for the garrison three years; and here he mentions a circumstance that gave him an opportunity to see the third Lieutenant of the English ship which he so ungraciously left in New York.

"A large English ship came into the harbor, and I went on board of her, with others at the invitation of Gov. Hancock.

"I found there the third Lieutenant of the Chatham, but he did not recognise me.

"His name was John Love; and he was the most arbitrary man I ever met.

"The men always hated him; but he never left this vessel till he left it for an ocean grave, having been doubtless, quietly slipped overboard by the night watch."

In 1791, he came into New Suncook — now Sweden — where he spent the remainder of his long life. He had accumulated a small sum of money, and,

tired of the turmoil of his former life, he gladly turned away, even to the wilderness of Maine.

In 1793, Mr. Nevers mentions a Spring's work on Sebago Pond, while he was clearing his farm in Sweden. He took a job to raft and "get out" a large quantity of boards — 70,000 feet — from Stevens' Brook to Standish Landing; distance, 30 miles. He says that his was the first raft ever taken across this Pond without being broken up. He also mentions a perilous voyage across this Pond along with a man by the name of Butterfield, and his family. They made the voyage in a long log-boat. The distance was 14 miles to the mouth of Songo river.

"When we had got about half way across, the wind began to blow, and I hoisted a bed-quilt for a sail.

"At last the wind increased so that our only safety was to keep right before it. I told Butterfield to take the helm and I would bail out the water. It took my best efforts to keep from sinking. Butterfield was a Blacksmith, and was on his way to what is now Lovell.

"We however managed to 'weather' the whole, and by running under the protection of an island, we were able to haul up out boat, and the next morning it was so calm that we could row the rest of the way.

"Just as we were going into Songo

river, I saw a flock of Shildrakes light a little distance off. I took my gun and followed. When I got a good position, I blazed away and killed thirteen and wounded two more, that swam a little way and turned *toes up*. Nothing more, worthy of note, happened till we arrived safely at Stevens' Brook in Bridgton."

In 1791, Mr. Nevers came to New Suncook — now Sweden — 178 miles from his father's and into a wilderness four miles from any inhabitants. He explored the land he had bought, hired a man to fall and burn eight acres of trees, and then returned to Boston, Massachusetts.

In April, 1792, Mr. Nevers return-

ed to Sweden, accompanied by one Benjamin Webber, who bought a part of Mr. Nevers' land. They labored together, Summers, in clearing off the growth where they made their farms; but they returned to Boston each Autumn.

As Mr. Nevers was on his return to Sweden, in 1793, he stopped at Songo river, or the main inlet of Sebago Pond, and fished one day and a half for Salmon trout. In that short space of time he caught two-thirds of a barrel. He salted them down, and said they were as nice as any Salmon he ever eat.

In the Spring of 1796, Mr. Nevers was married, in Tukesbury, Mass., to Miss Esther Trull, and immediately

removed to Sweden; his wife riding the entire distance on horseback — 180 miles.

Mrs. Nevers had six sons. Three died when they were young; the other three are yet living. Their names are Samuel, William 3d, and Benjamin. William Nevers 3d, lives on the chosen spot of Col. Nevers; Samuel and Benjamin live near by.

He built the first house (of logs) ever built in this region, in 1796, four miles, or more, from any clearing — the nearest neighbor being a Mr. Wm. Hazen, then living in what is now Bridgton; and even to this one there was no road — all an unbroken wilderness.

In 1797, Jacob Stevens built a house within a mile and a half. This was deemed a near neighbor.

Of the many privations and hardships of this early settlement, few realize, though *most* have heard. To this day, children listen eagerly, to the stories, rehearsed for perhaps the hundreth time; and the "tales of a grandfather" are caught up and borne along through groups of boys and girls, and made miracles.

There can scarcely be a choicer field for the American history-writer, than this Pequaket region.

From Fryeburg to Bethel, still exist the relics and charmed scenes of the bloody drama of Indian cruelty and

"pale-face wrongs;" and it is to be hoped that some day, such a place in our New England History, may be assigned to this, as it manifestly demands.

Nor can the wonder-seeker, the scientific explorer, the romance-writer, the curiosity-cabinet-gatherer, or the matter-of-fact historian find choicer facts, or themes, or more correct *data*, than here; for 'tis all traditionary.

When we look with pride on the now prosperous villages of this region, and mark the happy blending of Art with Nature, the princely houses, the busy mills, the prosperous schools, and the "Spires of Faith," fancy bears us back to the "solitary clearing,"

'Where the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept,'
—oft startled by the prowling wolf, and the glare of Indian camp-fires.

From the old men of silvery locks, tottering steps, but youthful-sparkling eyes, the well cherished legends of Pequaket, have thus far descended; but one by one the "grey-haired heroes" are gathering to their fathers.

A few days more, and the last of that "pilgrim train" shall sleep his last sleep.

The actors through all the tragedies of blood-bought Liberty, the supporters of Constitutional Freedom, will soon be gone. Oh! let the sons learn well, the lesson; and watchful of the trust confided, imitate the bright examples,

and show to the world deeds worthy of

"Heroes, descended from heroes."

It is proper and quite necessary to speak of the neighbors, families and descendents. Mr. Stevens left several children, and some are now settled near the spot of their birth.

Capt. Benjamin Webber was the next settler. He came in 1798, and settled within a mile of Mr. Nevers, whose sister he afterwards married.

He was more nearly allied to Mr. Nevers in interest, than any other man, and for years they toiled together.

He was distinguished for his application to work and business, and has left behind him the bountiful harvest of an industrious and frugal life. He has

left a large family, and many of them are living near the first home of their father.

The old homestead still retains the thrift, taste and opulence of the ancestor.

The next early settlers in this town, were Andrew Woodbury, Micah Trull, William Nevers (brother to the Colonel, and still living), Senter, Peter and Philo Holden, Elijah Richardson, Calvin Powers, Stephen Sanderson, a Mr. Ordway, Mr. Green, George and Naham Maxwell, David Millikin, Oliver Knight, Sullivan Jones, Eben Stevens, Nathaniel Flint, Ephraim Jewett, Capt. Joseph Sanderson, Oliver Haskell, Ruel Power; all of whom made homes, and

most of whom still reside on the first chosen lots — leaving families.

These settlers were a hardy race of men, and no doubt to their labor and example, the present prosperity of the descendents is due.

They sought no luxury, beyond that of a quiet home; no pride beyond the respectability, the integrity and morality of the deserving citizen; no ambition to grasp the fortune of any other than the laborer; and no aristocracy beyond that of blood.

The soil was good; the climate healthy. 'Twas a rugged surface — like all 'upland' — but productive, and so well was it timbered, that though for sixty-six years the ax has plied the

forests, all along the streams and hill-sides, still exist important evidences of its native wealth.

The forests were full of game, and the streams of fish; and many hunter stories might be told, but space for a few only can be spared.

It appears that the bear was a constant dread and danger. Whole flocks of sheep, and sometimes cows and oxen, were the prey of this night prowler. There never was a war of aggression waged upon bruin in his own peculiar haunts; for it required all the time the settlers could spare, to defend their own premises from his attacks. Mr. Nevers says he seldom followed a track; but when a flock was scattered, or a

cow carried off, the neighbors followed the trail, and avenged the wrong, by at least a future security, if not a past indemnity.

To show the great strength of the bear, he relates the escape of one from a wooden trap.

One Fall, his corn field was visited a number of times, and he and Capt. Webber determined, as their steel trap was gone from home, to set one made of logs, for a large bear they had often seen.

"We cut off a tree eight inches in diameter and twelve feet long, for the "fall piece," and brought along and lay crosswise of this, four logs as large as we could lift.

"I should judge the whole must have weighed over twelve hundred pounds.

"Early in the evening we heard the bear's howl, and started for the trap.

"We found that the bear had sprung the trap and got away. The "fall piece," with all the weight of the four logs, must have come upon his back; but he had scattered them all."

He adds, however, that he was troubled no more that Fall, till his corn had ripened.

He tells, too, of setting his steel trap, for one, and fastening it to the top of a birch tree, hoping he might hang him up; but on his hearing the "holler" he went, to find the tree broken off some seven feet from the

top, and followed the "varmint," with his appendages, nearly two miles before he came up with him.

The Sabbath day, so sacredly kept, was sometimes profaned by a bear-hunt, as seems from the following fire-side story, related by Mr. Nevers.

"Early one Sunday morning, as I was reading my Bible, Capt. Webber came in and said that the neighbors had started an old bear and two cubs, that had been seen several times within a few days.

"I took my gun and started after them. The cubs had climbed a tree, and a man, by the name of Felt, was half way up the tree after them, but

dared not go any farther till the old one was killed.

"The rest of them were equally undecided as to the best mode of attack. They seemed to be afraid to fire, for fear that they might miss; and all this time the bear was snarling at them, and they were dodging behind the trees.

"Webber and I lay behind a log, watching the fun. At last the bear came within about fifteen rods, and I fired at her. She toppled over, dead enough to skin, and the men soon killed the cubs."

There was, no doubt, not a little feeling as to which of the neighbors was the best shot; but Mr. Nevers rather

claims it himself, in the following bear story. There is no mistake, he was a dead-shot.

"A Mr. Stevens had treed three bears, and "treed" them on or *in* a big pine stub.

"He, as usual, summoned the rest to attend. We took turns chopping at the tree, till it was most off, and then Stevens was to finish, and Webber and I was to stand and shoot them when the tree fell. The first one that made his appearance, I shot so effectually, that he died on the log. I then took Stevens' gun to shoot the next, leaving the third one for Webber, who fired, but did not hit him.

"I followed and shot him at the dis-

tance of eighteen rods — putting two balls through his shoulder — but he ran some rods and fell dead."

He adds — "He was the only bear that ever ran twice his length, after I fired at him."

Had these early occupants of the soil been ever so indolent, in farming, they could have lived from the productions of the forests; for every kind of game was here.

Mr. Nevers tells of one coon-hunt that gave him a sled-load of seven.

But as practised as they were in the art of fishing, fowling, and trapping, they allowed themselves to indulge in these pursuits but little.

They had determined to find plenti-

ful homes here for themselves and children; and they nobly pursued the work.

Farming, then, was a matter of hard labor; not of experimental ease.

To do a hard day's work, and then take a bushel of corn on his back and carry it four miles to be ground, was a common task for the farmer.

To eat it in the form of hasty-pudding, or bannock, with skimmed milk, was the full bounty of the tiresome journey; and when butter or molasses was added, it assumed almost the shape of a luxury!

But to enumerate the many inconveniences of "farm-life," then, would take more space than is warrantable.

The first four seasons, Mr. Nevers lived here, he only stayed on the farm during the Summer months.

Most of life, thus far, is a matter of his own record; but from this time, it is carefully remembered and told by "the oldest inhabitant."

He had made a fortunate purchase of lands, and he had the courage and strength to improve upon it.

The wants of a family, then, were few — scarcely beyond the immediate growth of the farm.

Bridgton was the nearest trading town, and the "shopping" was generally done by Mrs. Nevers, in a weekly journey, on horseback, through the woods. This journey was made gener-

ally between the "early breakfast" and the hour for preparing the noon-day meal.

The only draw-back on the family prospects, was the long protracted law-suits which were instituted by two men in Massachusetts, who had bought, for a trifle, quit-claims of these "settlers lots;" and nothing but the nerve, energy and public spirit of the man, would have withstood the vexation and expense of carrying them on.

One suit was in Court thirteen years, and the whole costs paid by him,—though as much for the benefit of several others; but he had the satisfaction of seeing them forever settled in his favor.

He paid one lawyer, Stephen Longfellow, almost a thousand dollars.

In the war of 1812, Mr. Nevers held a commission — that of Colonel — but he assisted in mustering his Regiment, and then gave the command to a senior Colonel, and was in no active service.

He was a member of the Convention which met at Portland, to form a Constitution for the new State. He was frequently a member of the Legislature till 1837.

Besides this public duty, he held one of the first offices of this town, a long series of years.

He was, too, almost universally employed in surveying lands. He sur-

veyed and alotted out several towns and plantations, whose lines and monuments, to this day, remain undisturbed.

A few facts as to the market price of land and timber, then, may not, perhaps, be uninteresting. He says —"I once saw a deed of three lots of land, in which the consideration was '*two mugs of flip.*'"

The same lots, twenty-five years ago, before the timber was taken off, were worth $12,000. He says of one of his own purchases:—

"I sold a horse for three hundred acres of land — three lots. From one lot I took $900 worth of timber, and sold the land for $1,400. From the second I took $500 worth of timber,

and now the Assessors value it at $2,-500. The last lot has since been sold for $3,500.

There is no doubt but that seventy-five, and even fifty years ago, this region was one of the best timbered portions of the old "pine tree State."

Within the memory of many men, the choicest pine timber,— what is now almost impossible to find, "clear stuff," —was sold for twenty-five cents a thousand on the stump. To-day it would be worth *twenty dollars.*

The purchases of a few of the early settlers, were a *world of wealth;* and even now are acres of dark-waving pine, "ever singing and ever sighing," the remote wealth of Mr. Nevers, Captain

Webber, Capt. Wood, and some others.

In 1837, Mr. Nevers lost the partner of his 'joys and cares.' He never married again; and from about this time retired almost wholly from business. In his last days, he says:—"I had accumulated enough of this world's goods to carry me through life, and since that time I have lived pretty much as I pleased." For forty years, surrounded by his children, grand-children, and great-grand-children, in the old mansion-house, on the first chosen lot, he has lived, respected and almost revered by all who knew him.

His great memory and conversational powers never failed him, nor was he ever unwilling to talk with any one who might call. But few men may

hope to win the envious reputation of thus being a Patriarch.

He loved to tell to a circle of eager hearers, even for the hundredth time, the stories of the Revolution; and in some particulars, he has thrown light on some of the doubtful passages of that history.

It appears that while on board the ship Chatham, as a prisoner, he formed the acquaintance of a Mr. Abram Day, who told him he was in the battle of Bunker Hill. He was in the first section that stepped into the American works. He says Pitcairn flourished his sword, and said, "By G—d, the day is ours." An American boy in the fort, said, "By G—d, you lie," and shot him down, and then escaped

by running like the d—l. Day told him that his company were all killed but six, and they were all put on board of this vessel for marines.

An incident in the "last war," too, is worthy of record. He says:—"I was in Boston in 1814, when a bill was introduced into the Legislature to admit the British fleet into Boston, unmolested. Com. Bainbridge, then being in the harbor with one of our largest ships of war, heard of it, and requested the committee, chosen by the Legislature, to meet him on Long-wharf the next morning at eight o'clock.

They met him, and he made them the following comprehensive speech.

"Gentlemen, I understand that you propose to allow the British fleet to an-

chor quietly in this harbor. I shall consider this, then, an enemy's port. I shall open a fire on the town, and batter the State House down about your heads; and land my men on Chelsea beach, and lay a slow match to my magazine. I will hear your answer to-morrow morning."

The next morning the committee waited upon him with the news that "the bill could not pass!"

Many more interesting historical facts might be written here, to show how well Mr. Nevers studied and learned from his own personal observation, the history of our Nation, and the memory he had to relate them; but enough have already been recited, to answer the purpose of this work. But

the soldier life, and the politician life, has long since passed with him; and we turn to the character of the citizen and the man.

In the extensive and varied business of his life, he never ground the face of the poor; nor wrested one farthing unjustly from the poverty-stricken neighbor. He never took but six per cent. interest for any money in his life. While no man suffered by his extortion, many a one has rejoiced in his bounty. He never gave in large sums to any particular sect or society; but he gave as occasion demanded, to all.

In 1827, he gave a lot of land to the School fund of Lovell. The same year he built a house for the public meetings of the town of Sweden, and they

still use it. In 1854, he built a brick house for the School in his own district. His charity was not of that kind, that challenged the *admiration* or courted the *favor* of founders of societies; nor did he need to purchase absolution of the world, for his old age safety, by any dazzling display of fanciful munificence. His bounty began at home; it filled the full measure of an earthly fortune; and then it flowed in the easy channels of deserving merit, and worthy but unblest labor.

His character for benevolence shall never need be written as long as living witnesses shall be found; and it is the design of this work, not to swell into undue proportion any attributes of this man; nor to aggrandize the family —

nor add a shade of doubtful merit to the name; but to give, in a brief, plain manner, the main features of a long life — embracing almost a century, and taking in, as it were, at a glance, the whole history of our Nation and Government, from its earliest conceptions, to its matured strength.

His education was limited, and his home, so far obscure, as to give him no wide-spread notoriety; but the places he has filled, show how well he was fitted for others. And it was, doubtless, as satisfactory to him to fill the stations of humbler life, in the gift of a constituency living all around him, as it would have been, to have borne the *easier* burdens and worn the *heavier* harness of Governmental patronage, for

his whole life shows how well he cherished the wholesome truth that "the honor of an office is not *in* the office, but in the manner in which that office is discharged."

"Paint me as I *am* — *wrinkles and all*," was the stern wish of the old *Protectorate.* The rigid sense of justice and the quiet tone of the subject of this sketch, had he been consulted as to a biography, would have endorsed this sentiment. His friends wish to preserve this, more as a family record and gift-book to a few early friends, than a praise of the family name; and the writer would avoid the fulsome, fawning, and o'erreaching tone of so many "*Lives.*" No material has been created; no facts have been colored; and

no trait has been rounded into a praise unless it was legitimate.

It is a *palpable* but deplorable fact, that, after a man has died, we are apt "to gild his virtues, and bury his frailties." But when we remember that the memory of the dead, is almost, if not *quite* as potent in shaping the fortunes of men, as the acts of those among whom we live, it certainly becomes us, in justice to ourselves and children, to have impartial *biography*, as well as impartial history; for as we live *for* example, we also take *from* example.

The object of this little work, aside from the gratification of a few relatives and friends, is to weave in something of the town's history, and to furnish to the young men a page or two of the

life of a worthy pioneer, and a trust-worthy example of what any one who has courage and integrity, may become in more fortunate times. Nor is it likely that such an example will be lost. His life measures so many events, that he was capable of advising. He has marked the early struggle for freedom, and the faithfully-guarded treasure of free institutions and free society. He has marked the fiction of unreliable trade and over-crowded business, and the commercial crisis. He has been borne on the wave of business pressure, and he has met the revulsion. And often has he told the story of his early patient labor and luxury-denying habits, when he has heard the young

farmer talk of "profit and loss" in the *Stock Market.*

His success, and the success of cotemporary settlers, has fully established the productiveness of New England soil, as sufficient to sustain and reward the faithful farmer; and his testimony shows how any one, who has learned

"To labor and to wait,"

may find a competence for his declining years; and, that contentment,—the "Philosopher's Stone" of real life—does *follow*, and *reward* willing hands and hearts.

Mr. Nevers remembers, and tells of the various political measures and changes in the history of the Government. He has voted for every President, from

Washington — first election — down to the present incumbent of the Executive chair. Through all the storms and tides of interest, passion and prejudice, he claims to have been a Democrat.

In the struggle of a doubtful theory, he maintained and at last realized the successful experiment of a Republican form of Government; and has ever had the fullest confidence of the perfection of a Patriotism that may render perpetual the blessings thus descended. And does it not become the sons of such fathers not to waste the heritage of so nobly endowed privations? This universal fortune deserves the same "Sentinel Watch" that hailed its first dawn in the Colonial Assembly.

Of the moral character of the man, enough, has, perhaps, been seen. As for integrity, which is the basis of all moral actions, he lived above suspicion. True to the impulses of his heart, he lived and died an honest man; and the choicest eulogy to pronounce, is that in all the business of his life, surrounded, as all men are sometimes, by unfortunate circumstances, and dealing largely with all classes, there is no record of a single act he ever did, that even the breath of envy has made a stain upon his character.

As a Religionist, he was a believer in the faith of Universalism. His first teachings, were from the lips of the Rev. John Murray, while he was yet a

boy; and through all his life hopefully spoke of the final restoration of all men to the bounty of Him "who is able and willing to save."

He died September 10th, 1857, at the age of ninety years, eleven months and twenty days. His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. J. W. Ford, of Norway; and to one of the largest audiences ever assembled in the town. For miles around, the people gathered to pay the last tribute of respect to a "Revolutionary hero," a neighbor and a man — aye, more than this — a PATRIARCH. In the family tomb, on a sloping hill-side and hard by the home of his early manhood, he sleeps his last sleep. Society has lost a valuable mem-

ber; the world, a philanthropist; the country, a *patriot;* and *humanity*, a *friend.*

Three of his children are left behind him, and two brothers—all living near. The others, with the partner of his "joys and cares," sleep along with him in the family vault. But why mourn? His was not an untimely death. He had filled the full measure of a lifetime, and rests on the spot he loved, 'neath the shade of his own planted trees,—

"Whose composing sound have their own sanctity;
And, at the touch of every wandering breeze,
Murmur, not idly, o'er his peaceful grave."

FINIS.

5 May 1859.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 013 995 828 7