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RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
A CHECKERED LIFETIME

Told for His Children

by

*William D. Toddard*

in His Old Age

VOLUME I



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RECOLLECTIONS

of

A Glorious Lifetime.

Told for his Children by William C. Stoddard in his Old Age.

Chapter First.

The Stoddard Family Tree.

In the year 1635, Governor John Winthrop founded the Connecticut Colony by building a fort at the mouth of the Thames river and landing a number of adventurous settlers who had sailed with him from the port of Yarmouth in England. He was himself a Suffolk man and his recruits were of course largely drawn from Suffolk and the neighboring county of Devon. One of the ancient families of the latter county bore the name of Stoddard. The name is a derivation of Stod-orStud-orStod-herd, and the crest on the family coat of arms is a horse's head surrounded by a ducal coronet for the Stoddards were Dukes of Devon during many generations. One of the colonists who landed at the mouth of the Thames with governor Winthrop was a gentleman from this family by the name of Ralph Stoddard. He was a man of substance and position and he brought with him some property that was hardly in place in a log cabin. One specimen of it, with other silver, was a large silver punch bowl bearing the family arms. Only two or three generations later, this priceless relic of old English life was melted up by the then head of the Stoddard family to provide wedding outfit spoons for his marrying daughters.

Ralph Stoddard obtained a grant or purchase of three thousand acres of land on the left bank of the Thames, opposite the present city of New London and somewhat above it. His grant included the ferry right. He at once built a comfortable log house and the logs of it were tremendous. Long



years afterwards, when a larger mansion was erected upon the same spot, the original cabin was carefully preserved and became part of the new kitchen. I have seen it and wondered at its black logs when I was a boy. The farm which then remained of the old estate was still large, part of it being owned by my granduncle Guy Stoddard and part by his son Ralph.

Other members of the Winthrop colony were Smiths, Averys, Tabers, Morgans, Knowltons, Halls and so forth, and there was much intermarrying, so that the Stoddards of the present generation are descended from nearly the entire original shipload which sailed from Yarmouth. More than that is said to be true, for one of the earlier Averys married the daughter of a sequot chief and by own father bore very distinctly the indications of that remarkable addition to the roots of the family tree.

The early Stoddards were all fighting men, from the days when they had the great privilege of shooting stray Indians in their front yard. I well remember how vividly my grandmother, Mrs. Smith-Stoddard, related to me the family military traditions. The last time was during the Civil War and although she was then nearly 90 odd, and she died at 97, her memory had not at all failed her. She told me how, in the old French War, when she was a child, every able bodied member of the Stoddard family was, as she expressed it, "out." Again, in the Revolutionary War, they were "all out." Once more, in the War of 1812, the breed was well represented but I can only recall that my granduncle Guy was in the Connecticut contingent. In the Civil War, however, she said, every one of her Stoddard grandchildren of military age was in the Union army. That included the Morgans. She had long before told me, and she then repeated the story, how when Benedict Arnold burned New London, she was a girl of thirteen or fourteen and fled with her family to the



hills above the town. There she stood, with her neighbors, and saw her home and theirs burned to ashes. At the same time, she told me, several of my ancestral kindred, of more than one name, were in Fort Mifflin, and no less than four of them were slain in the pitiless massacre which followed the taking of the fort. Their names are on the monument. The Revolutionary Stoddard who was my immediate ancestor was a Continental soldier under Putnam, from the days of Bunker Hill, and was severely wounded at the battle of White Plains. He left no daughters but had five sons, Vine, Guy, Isaac, Ralph and Frank. The latter became a successful physician but died of the cholera at somewhat over fifty. Ralph was a druggist in New London and lived to nearly eighty. Isaac became a Methodist minister and was during many years Presiding Elder of the Wampanoag and Martha's Vineyard circuit. Guy received for his portion the old Family Farm and was a prominent citizen, long in the State Senate. The older brother, Vine, received a farm which included the head of Noank Cove, near New London, and there I visited him in my boyhood. Guy lived to be ninety-three but Vine dropped off at ninety-two. His first wife was Sabria Avery, of New London and my step-mother, a great genealogist in her way, told me that Sabria's family were the very best of the Averys, for some of whom she appeared to have less admiration. Sabria's children were Harriet and Samuel Prentice. The former became Mrs. Morgan, in due season, once more adding that old Welsh name to the family tree. Not long after Sabria's death, which occurred as a consequence of the birth of Samuel, Vine Stoddard married a widow Smith, whom I have always known as my grandmother. She already had four sons, Erastus F., Amos and James T. Smith, who settled in Providence, one of them becoming governor of Rhode Island, - and Gilbert



A. Smith, who became a merchant and manufacturer and ship owner at New Haven.

One other "root" was all this while preparing. Among the earlier colonists of Massachusetts were the Osborns. One of its members migrated to Connecticut and then passed on into New York, settling in the Mohawk valley. It resided for a long time in Albany and then joined with the Whites and others in founding the town of Whitesboro, near Utica. Still another "root" was planted when the Rev. John Cotton landed upon Plymouth Rock, if he really did so. Some of his descendants passed on westward and one of them settled in the Mohawk Valley. My impression is that he lived in Albany when John Osborn was there as a schoolboy and, afterwards, as a jeweler's apprentice. He had no sons but he had three daughters. One of these died an old maid, at Gloversville, Fulton County. The next became a Mrs.            and her one daughter married Deacon Henry Thomas of that place. Her daughter died married Rev. M. B. Randall, and has but one son, Harry. This brings us down to the generation which contained my own grandparents and their children, in addition to those already named.

My father, Samuel Prentice, received his middle name from an ancestor, but I have no knowledge of the Prentice family. At an early age he so strongly objected to the nickname of "Sam" that he changed his titles to Prentice Samuel and so it continued to be. He received a good common school education, which was about all there was to be had, but during all his life he was fond of books and became a well informed man for those days. After serving a few years as a clerk with his New Haven step-father, Gilbert A. Smith, he was taken by the spirit of adventure and removed to what was then the "Far West." Buffalo was then a mere muddy village but the village of Rochester in Monroe county already contained his step-mother's sister T.





Smith and a cousin, W. F. Smith, whose wife was also a cousin, having been a Miss Barbour. All this had much to do with the fact that the young adventurer selected Rochester. He was a fine man and a good bookkeeper and before long he was Deputy Postmaster of the village with what was then the enormous salary of nine hundred dollars. He was enterprising, moreover, and he laid up some capital as well as a high character and good business credit. Something more had been preparing for him, however, in the Mohawk Valley and elsewhere. Many years before, John Osborn had been born, in Albany, and had grown to manhood before his family removed to Whitesboro. He had served his apprenticeship as a silversmith and jeweler, and been successful in business and had accumulated or inherited property. In later years, he was fond of telling me stories of his life in Albany and one of his amusements was to scold me furiously in Mohawk Dutch. He had also met and married Amelia Cotton, a direct descendant of the witch-burning Rev. John Cotton. During their entire married life they had nine children, of whom all but three died in infancy or childhood. The oldest, Amelis, reached the age of twenty one and died of heart disease. Two remained, Sarah and Adeline. There came a time when the western part of the state of New York was securely pacified of the Iroquois Indians and the new country that was opened appeared to offer inducements to settlers. Several families from Whitesboro and its vicinity decided to migrate to the new county of Courtland in company. Among them were branches of the Whites, Tubbs, Dickson and other well known Mohawk Valley families. My grandfather, John Osborn, sold out all his Albany and Whitesboro interests and made good investments in and about what was to be called the village of Homer. When, however, the time for moving came, there were no stage



coaches over the intended route and the trip will be made in harness or on the saddle. Sarah Osborn, Clara Tubbs and Miss Dickson declared in favor of a journey on horseback. Just before leaving Willsboro, each got a riding switch. That of Miss Tubbs was a long slip of willow and that of Miss Osborn was a fine cutting from her favorite "balm of Gilead" tree. They had a merry time on the road and, on reaching their destination, each of the girls carefully planted her riding whip. Both sprouts grew and when I was a boy the "Tubbs Willow," at the forks of the Truxton road, was a mighty affair, while the balm of Gilead tree in our own yard was taller than the house. On reaching what was to be Homer, John Osborn built the first brick house in all that region. It was said to have been the first of its kind in central or western New York. Not a great while afterwards, his friend Mr. White built a brick store and dwelling upon the neighboring corner. It was in this house that my schoolmate and to this day my friend, Andrew Dickson White, was born, two years before I was born in the Osborn house. The Dicksons had settled in Truxton and to this place the Whites afterwards removed, for Miss Dickson was then Mrs. Morse White. The Tubbs family also lived at the first selected Truxton.

Young as was the village of Rochester, it at that time boasted of the best seminary for young women in the state, above New York City. This was the Phipps Union Seminary and at its head was a learned lady whose maiden name had been Phipps but who had married an equally learned Greek by the name of Achilles. To this school, therefore, it was necessary to send the best girls of Courtland County. Miss Dickson, Miss Tubbs and Miss Osborn went, as a matter of course, and they were "chums" off and on at the



institution. There were consequences, but not all of a pattern. Miss Dickson was already spoken for by Mr. Tubbs, who was to be the father of Andrew, and Miss Tubbs was to wait awhile, as will be told hereafter. Miss Tubbs was a singularly handsome young woman, with fair eyes and beautiful, wavy, light brown hair. Young Mr. Stoddard, whom she was so likely to meet when she went to the post office, was said to be the handsomest young man in Rochester. Before she finished her collegiate course they were engaged and, before long, he came to Homer and there was a grand wedding. The officiating minister was Rev. Alfred Bennett, one of the noted characters in the frontier history of New York. After the wedding, the newly married couple returned to Rochester and I have heard from several of their old friends that they were considered the handsomest pair in the village. They now had sufficient means to go into business for themselves and my father, in company with a young friend named Weston, purchased a business property in a thriving and central village called Richmond, some distance south of Rochester. The firm name was Stoddard and Weston, and the enterprise rapidly assumed large proportions. Long years afterwards, Mr. Weston became a prominent and successful storing and forwarding merchant in Brooklyn, and there I visited him and his family.

I of course know nothing of Richmond by memory, but it appears to have been a pleasant village and our house was a pretty one, opposite the store across the road. My father had extensive connections in Rochester and in New York, after a while, and these were his ruin, for they involved the pernicious custom of endorsing friendly paper and taking the risk of it.



All went on swimmingly, however, until the terrible money crisis of 1836 and 1838. Much money was made and my father bought largely of wild western lands, as a probably good investment for the future. The great pressure came, at last, and found Stoddard and Heaton heavily involved in accommodation endorsements. They did not go into bankruptcy, but their concern was hopelessly wrecked and they had to close up the business.

I was born in 1835, while my mother was on a visit to her father and mother in Homer. Twenty one years afterwards I was planning my first adventure in the west and my father desired me to go through Michigan and stop at Kalamazoo, long enough to examine that city. He gave as a reason that when he shut up his Richmond concern he had several odds and ends of property remaining upon his hands. One was the village of Richmond, an uncomfortably large part of it, and the other, one of the others, consisted of a tract of nine hundred acres of unimproved western land. His wise friends counselled him that Monroe county property was "sure" and would in time increase in value, while there was no market for western lands and never would be, there was so much of it. So he sold the Michigan tract and upon it much of Kalamazoo was afterwards built. It cornered in the very middle of the city and when I did examine it, for I went to see, I concluded that it would have been a good thing to hold. On the other hand, DeWitt Clinton dug his ditch and the Erie canal was the making of Rochester and the utter ruin of Richmond. My father's property there went back to farm land prices and he sold his buildings for less than it had cost to construct them. I remember many fragmentary stories of the family life in





the little business village, but they are of no importance now, except that I gathered an impression that all the Monroe county people swallowed enormous quantities of cheap wine, brot it all the way from Albany and the Hudson river in vast forty horse power wagons.

Upon giving up his produce and grocery and commission business, my father established the first regular bookstore of Rochester, on the corner of Buffalo and State streets, which is, to this day, the very centre of that municipality. The firm name was Henry Stanwood and Co., but my father was really the concern, for I never saw Mr. Stanwood and suppose him to have been a mere money partner who rarely made his appearance at the store.

Mean time, to go back to Homer, Miss Tubbs had married young Mr. Ira Harris, a special protege of John Osborn's and he was beginning to make his mark as a rising young lawyer. He removed to Albany and in due time became celebrated as a jurist. He was sent to the U. S. Senate and his son William was my college chum. I shall have more to tell of the Harrises on some later page of these reminiscences. Prior to that, however, I will try to recall points of my childhood in Rochester, for it was an odd sort of childhood,--for so very young a fellow as I was then.



## Chapter Second.

## Childhood in Rochester.

I can imagine that not many people have clear recollections of their first and second years. I do not know just where my memory begins its mysterious record. I do know, however, that at a very early age I went to an infant school, kept by a grim old woman whom I did not admire. She must have been an expert teacher, nevertheless, for I learned to read wonderfully soon. It was a small school, with only one really large boy in it, for Johnny Stitt was almost ten. Next to him was Johnny Philpot, whose father lived in a dreadfully large and glossy brick house with a gigantic iron railing in front of it to keep out the boys. We were then living on Fitzhugh street, in a frame house which had a wide stoop that reached to the sidewalk. One of the boys lost a splendid alley marble under that stoop and father refused to have the whole thing taken away to find the missing treasure. He burned wood in the parlor fireplace and I carried for many years the scars on my hands caused by a dive into that awful mass of red coals when I was one day running away from my sister Julia. She was three years older than myself and I believed her to be an absolute perfection. As she grew older, and until the day of her death, at twenty-four, she was my boy idol. She was of medium height, graceful, intellectual, and if my children wish to know just how she looked, they have only to think of their own sister Sadie, of whom she was a fine likeness.

I can remember going with my mother and others to see the upper Genesee falls in midwinter, when all was white with ice. I can remember, also, a



wand ride in a brougham with a green lady, so that I was a society. It was when my father was entertaining Mr. Jared Babcock, of Utica, and I believed that he was a great man. He was an organ builder and he was in Rochester to sell organs, but he may have had them in his pocket for all I knew.

It was the custom, in those days, for clerks to board with their employers, and among the young men from our store was a Mr. Rollo, who afterwards became the managing partner of A. S. Barnes & Co. of New York. Another was Samuel Sheather, who went to New York and founded the great fur house which bore his name. One other of my memories of the Pittsford street house relates to the front stairway, down which I rolled repeatedly,--it was such a fine playground. Even now, as I turn and examine my left hand, I can find the ridged scar left by a piece of window glass upon which I fell one day and which went clean through. I am afraid that I was not what is called a quiet boy, although very good. My goodness took a queer form, at one time, for I was seized with the fever for travel and adventure. That is, I ran away and was found by a gentleman who knew me, already out into the great world and trudging somewhat tearfully along the banks of the Erie canal. At all events, I knew my part of Rochester pretty well and was often entrusted with errands. One of these came to me when there was a new baby in the house and the nurse, a tall woman whom I knew as Miss Spence, wished to send a note to my father at the store. She was impressive and she said to me, repeatedly: "Tell him that it is very important!" That was where the ignorant woman lost all my respect for her, for I was strongly of the opinion that she should have said "portant," the superfluous "im"



changing the whole word into a negative. In like manner I severely criticized the first persons who erroneously spoke in my presence of "turnips." They should have said "poturnips" and I had learned that "taters" were entitled to be called "potatoes."

It was in my fifth year that we removed to a frame house of moderate size but quite respectable on Clinton street, away across the Genesee, on the eastern side of the town. There was a Methodist church on the corner and right across Buffalo street, on another corner, was the Second Baptist church, to which I and my growing family belonged. It had a large and enterprising Sunday school and not long after I entered that school there were prizes offered for varied proficiencies. For the largest number of Scripture texts recited, and for excellence in reading other quotations. I won a prize of a really elegant polyglot Bible, gilt edged and bound in English calf. It was a bad piece of fortune for me, for it convinced some friends of my father, including that great man Professor Dewey, that I was a rare boy and that I could not begin my classical education too early. The professor himself was the principal of the Rochester Collegiate Institute, which had a big stone building all to itself and was a grand affair. Therefore, before long, I found myself perched upon a high stool before a long desk in the second story of the Institute, and digging away at Andrew's Introduction to the Latin Language. Of course, I was also in other branches, but my own favorite was arithmetic, it was so queer to see how the figures and sums would come out if you worked them rightly. It may have had something to do with Latin, or a desire to visit Rome, that





I again determined to run over and see confidentially Deacon's workshop, down the Hoyer Street road, where I had caught, broad <sup>↑</sup> road, and down-  
 by Swift with. I had seen, I said, I remember, at our Clinton street  
 home. One of them relates to little Miss Julia Barton, for Deacon Barton's  
 pew in church was just in front of ours and Julia, aged three, was prone  
 to get up on the seat and disturb the services by a fitful noise, and  
 to the great discomfort of so good a boy. I was cuffed for her sins, nev-  
 ertheless. On the Methodist church corner occurred a direful accident, one  
 day, for my sister Julia and I had been to the grocery after a two gallon  
 jug of molasses. It was not then the custom for shop people to send home  
 purchases and so we took the willow wicker baby wagon. We obtained our  
 cargo and all went well until in my zeal I tried to make too sharp a turn  
 into Clinton street at that corner. Julia was pushing, I was pulling and  
 over went the chariot. Crash went the jug and the brick sidewalk was dark-  
 ly sweetened for a wide area. It was a childish grief to both of us, but  
 in after years I learned that much older people may now and then turn  
 their corners too rashly and upset their wagons.

Halfway down Buffalo street, toward the store, they had placed the  
 swift Genesee, on its roaring way to the upper falls. There was a long  
 bridge over it and I acquired much faith in that bridge, - after several  
 experiments at walking over it. After that, it was awfully fine to hunt  
 for knotholes and cracks and peer down at the rushing, glancing water.

Back of our house was a garden patch and beyond that was a barn that  
 opened upon an alley. I had a strong prejudice against that barn. Somehow



or other, I had seen a bear or bears of one or another kind in a beautiful  
 crowd of a procession of bears that marched up to the back door of our  
 house from that mysterious barn. They were dreadful and it was more than  
 I could bear, for I can see them to this day, with their noses close to  
 the ground and growling. I can remember pretty well the exterior of the  
 bookstore but not much of its contents. A stronger impression was left by  
 a remarkable sign upon the front of a large stone building across the  
 way. It was under the windows of an upper story and it read, in big, black  
 letters, "Job Printing." Now it happened that I had heard a great deal  
 about Job, at Sunday school and elsewhere, but I had not known that he did  
 any printing until I saw that sign. Many years afterwards, revisiting  
 Rochester, I went to see if Job were still there and was agreeably sur-  
 prised to find that his sign, though old and in need of repainting, was  
 still in the old place.

So the years went by until I was on the edge of seven. It was in the  
 trying financial year of 1892 that my father had been again engaged in  
 business operations, with successes but with consequent endorsements. As  
 a still further consequence, he was compelled to sell out his bookstore to  
 his friend William N. Sage and quit his other undertakings. As late as  
 when I left college, Mr. Sage was still in charge of the old bookstore.  
 The only thing to be done, while my father was engaged in unravelling his  
 affairs from the effects of the panic, was for the family to take refuge  
 in my Grandfather's house in Homer. Most of the furniture was put away in  
 a storehouse but a splendid haircloth sofa of which I was proud and some



other articles went to ornament the Homer parlors.

I had now a well grown little boy with a strong liking for travel and adventure, to whom the prospect of a long journey was the best thing that could have been proposed to him. As for the business disasters, I had not yet attained any eminence as a financier. In fact, my knowledge of money was narrowed down to a few facts. One of these was that the amount of copper coin in circulation was large and varied. I wondered at the hugeness of the Canadian copper pennies, which were often taken in trade but were hard to stir again. There were the numerous "alfpenny pieces" and the bits of copper stamped with "Not One Cent- for tribute. Millions for defence" which had been coined along of the war of 1912. Then there were the Latin coins, but those came later. I began my political career with Harrison and Tyler's hard sider campaign for my father was a Whig and I had principally a brass log cabin medal, bright as gold, but a Tippecanoe handkerchief printed with campaign songs, some of which I learned by heart and believed that I could sing them. In other matters I took a deep interest but in none more than the Greek rebellion, the massacre at Scio, and the wonderful career of Bozzaris the hero. I do not know how much of my pro-Greek enthusiasm came out of the fact that Mr. Achilles, formerly of Homer, was for a long time Superintendent of the Sunday school to which I belonged. At all events, in due season there came to Rochester a celebrated Greek patriot and he gave an eloquent lecture in the largest hall in town. Of course, my father and mother were there and I talked Greek enough to make them take me along. Little did they guess what they were doing! Among



the attractions of the lecture were many articles of Greek dress and equipage, warlike and otherwise, but chief among them all, to my enthusiastic eyes, was a long, curved sabre, declared to have been the sword of Bozzaris the brave. The lecturer drew it from the sheath and was flourishing it gracefully to show how brave it was, when a small boy who had neatly escaped from his preoccupied parents came up the sidestairs and upon the platform with a shrill demand to be allowed to handle and swing that sword. The Greek hero was a wise man, for, amid the cheers and laughter of the packed audience, the small boy was permitted to do what he would with that keen and glittering sabre which had cut up so very many Turks. Then, because there were no Turks present for me to cut up, the sabre was taken from me and I was forcefully removed from the platform. I still believe it was an interesting feature of that broken English lecture.

Speaking of money, I must tell one more financial incident. My mother's sister ~~Madeline had married~~ ~~Mr. Edward~~ ~~Tricket~~, a rising young English minister, and at one time he and his wife came to pay us a visit. I took to him kindly at once for at our introduction he gave me the first silver coin I had ever owned, although my mother had always been liberal in coppers and so had some other people whom I admired. This was a "sixpence", for we had then very few American five cent pieces, or any other form of American silver and were compelled to use Spanish and Mexican coins as a substitute. Gold was not in circulation. I took stock in "Uncle Edward," of course, and the next day I brought him a large pine shingle with a modest request that he would make me a bow. Instead of that, he made fun.





## Chapter Third

## Boyhood in Homer.

The days of the railroad had not yet come. From an early period of the civilized era in the history of the state, once the "Long House" of the great Indian confederacy of the Six Nations, there had been a stage route through the centre of it, from Albany westward. It was still in existence but it was supported by such passenger traffic as did not belong to the line of the canal, or that was desirous of travelling faster than six miles an hour, the limit of the new water way passenger or "liner" boats. The latter carried freight as well as passengers and were not as aristocratic. Both depended upon horse power in its original form, sometimes going as high as three horse-power to the boat. Places were secured upon a craft of the best kind for the migration of the Stoddard family and the voyage was begun, for one member of it at least, in a high condition of mental exhilaration and with some curious questions in his mind as to whether or not such a vessel were at all liable to shipwreck. There were wonders all the way, including the bridges in passing under which all the grown up people had to bob their heads while a short boy might safely stand erect and stare up at the bridge. Then there were the locks, by means of which the boat was to be let down to eastern and lower levels, through vast, cavernous clefts in the surface of the earth, while the boat staggered back and forth as if she were frightened. I can well remember how, before dinner time, the entire boat would be pervaded by the rich aroma of boiling corn,-sweet corn, of which I was fond when hungry.



I do not now recall any remarkable incidents of that journey, but it might be very wonderful to the public mind to see a stage of that kind in and to be darkly curtained in. I saw two luckless power horses slide from the towpath into the dreadful water at Syracuse and that is all there was to interest me in that then very young village. It may have contained six thousand people but it contained us only long enough for us to be transferred to the "extra" which was to convey us to Homer. This vehicle received its name from the fact that there was a regular stage line running, with the regulation pitch and roll coaches, and that whenever the rush of passengers overflowed it was needful to put on some other kind of wagon instead of building another coach. The vehicle provided for us was a long two-horse carryall with a closable hood and curtains. It was warranted to do the required thirty miles in one day, with several stoppages. It will be seen that if a day contains six hours, that stage speed had to be worked up to the high pressure point of five miles an hour. I saw them do it, myself, in spite of the long, long hills and the danger we were in from the Indians. This peril belonged to the fact that a part of the road from Syracuse southward runs through the Reservation of the once proud and merciless tribe of the Onondagas. At the date of this my first long journey, the dangerous nation numbered, I was informed, about three hundred souls, chiefs, warriors, squaws and papnooses. There was nothing terribly warlike in the aspect of the one story wooden Council House, which was pointed out to me on the left as we went by, but my acquaintance with the red men and my interest in them may be said to have begun then and there,



although I believe I must have heard a great deal about them at some earlier day. At all events, it stuck in my mind that the Council House stood upon the spot where in former ages had burned the Sacred Fire of the Iroquois, the Six Nations, who had killed and scalped so many white men. I think that it was in pleasant September weather that our trip was made; it was warm and sunny and we reached our destination in first rate order, in the evening.

My uncle Edward Bright was at the time and during several years which followed the pastor of the Homer Baptist church, and he and his family had been visiting at my grandfather's house until their own could be made ready for them. They were hardly out when we came in and my cousin John, four years older than myself, took me around the premises next morning on a tour of explanation, exhibiting with pride his father's horse, Jerry, and our grandfather's horse Nig. In after years there was a long succession of horses under the ownership of Uncle Bright, but they all fell heirs to the same name. As late as after the Civil War, I visited their home in Yonkers and took more than one ride upon a Jerry who much resembled the old sorrel-bay I had admired in Homer.

I was now seven years old and I was mentally prepared to make a thorough exploration of the new town and come to grips with its real progress. I did not know, then, that my grandfather had suffered business reverses, from endorsements and the like, and that his property had dwindled to what seemed to me a very large one. It consisted, mainly, of his residence, a shop on the main street, some land between Homer and Courtland



village and a piece of about twenty acres on the hill west of town. The residence lot was a wide one, with a fine side yard and possibly an acre and a half of garden and orchard behind it. In front was a line of fine maple trees and the sidewalk was of stone. So was the inner walk, away back beyond the house. This was a well built, two story affair. It had no wings. The main part contained on the ground floor two large parlors and a bedroom and above were chambers to correspond. Behind this was a brick addition, on the ground floor of which was an ample dining room. Over this was a large chamber lighted by a delightful dormer window, then, but which at the first had had two windows in the rear. These were now closed for, after the first building, of brick, a large frame kitchen addition had been put on. This addition also contained a large pantry and milk room but its chief importance to me was soon to become the fact that all its upper part was one immense, mysterious, wonderfully occupied garret, in which I was to have three play rooms. Opposite the kitchen door was an excellent well, housed over, and cold water might be bucketed up from that well and the depths of the earth in the hottest of summer weather. Just back of the well began what was called "the granary," a long, two story frame building, painted red. All the brick houses in the village were painted yellow and if any barn was colored at all it was like a new brick, except the large barn of Mr. Paris Barber, on the western hillside, which still impressed us as black. More than half of the lower story of the granary was a woodshed, large enough to contain a full winter's supply of fuel. Next to this was an apartment given up to bins for grain





and to an awful punishment arrangement which I abhorred. I would see they have taken a moderate switching, rather than to be rained upon from above with cold water while rubbing it under that direful machine. The upper story of the granary was little more than another wonderful garret, overflowing with ancient machinery and the wrecks of all manner of domestic and mechanical undertakings. I have sometimes thought what these two garrets had much to do with some parts of my education. So far as they were concerned, I had more pleasure than any other boy in the village but I was not allowed to bring the other boys into my places of wonders.

Away back, on the granary side of the lot and to be reached by a long lane, was the barn, containing stables for horses and cows, and such hay room. Behind this was a cow-lot and a comfortable pig pen. All the lower part of the lot was orchard and some of the fruit was very good. About twenty paces behind the house, however, was its star fruit tree. It was a large old pear tree, bearing really splendid winter pears all over it except upon one mysterious branch which had been taught how to carry yellow backed summer pears. How it could do so was always a puzzle to me, but a more important branch than that was the strong one which carried the swing. There were many plum and cherry trees on the place when we went there but the curculios were already in the land and three or four years later all these had passed away. In the side yard were two or three well-girdling cedar trees and my mother's "balm of Gilead." All along the rear of the house were ranged hives of bees, but for some reason unknown to me, the keeping of them was given up a couple of years afterwards. They were



there, however, long enough for me to get well acquainted with them and to know that they considered me a special friend of theirs. I loved to go and watch them at their work, an hour at a time, and it was a grand treat to be with them at swarming time and to see how Mr. Smith, the miraculous "bee man," would fearlessly gather them into their new hives without one of them seeing a word so him against it. At all events, I learned a great deal about bees and I knew why the wicked kingbirds were so fond of visiting the trees around our house. Of course, there were plenty of hens and their husbands and families at the barn and one of my first experiences of country life was that I was entrusted not only with the important business of feeding chickens, but also with the exciting sport of hunting for eggs all over the barn, even up and into the shadowy recesses of the haymow.

The topography of Homer was mainly governed by two immovable circumstances. The first of these was the old north and south highway which naturally became the main street from which all other thoroughfares went off as branches, although not one of them crossed it to make a "four corners." The other compulsory was the Troughneck river, running along on a level to the eastward of the middle of the valley. It was a considerable stream until the forests which covered the hills on either side of it were cut down and then it gradually lost both size and beauty. There were many reaches of fine woodland in my childhood and I prefer to remember the river at its best. Above the village and below were two large millponds, with grist mills and sawmills, fishing in summer and skating in winter. The lower mill was owned and carried on by a man named Riggs, honored by all Homer



boys for the liberality with which he provided them with a first-rate spring-diving board at the swimming hole, near the mill. The owner of the mill was a man by the name of Smith, I believe, but he was invariably spoken of as More. R. Smith and I finally gathered the idea that he was supposed to be descended from Noah.

The side street upon which our house stood went out eastward from the Main street in the lower or southerly part of the town. At the left corner was the two-story brick house belonging Andrew D. White, who lived on the lower story was still occupied for mercantile purposes, the rest of it being occupied as a residence by its owner, a Mr. Chittenden. The opposite corner was adorned by the Temperance House hotel, a pretty large country tavern with a dining room well suited to occasional festive or theatrical entertainments, as I may relate hereafter. Its leading attractions, to me, were its very fat and jolly landlord and his pet rooster, trained to crow whenever duly called upon to do so. Between this and our own was a small, frame dwelling. On the Main street, the next house above Mr. Chittenden's was my Grandfather's shop. It had been one of the first buildings erected in all that valley, for John Osborn's business had been well established there before he brought on his family. One large part of his trade had been with the Indians, as I understood it had previously been in the Mohawk valley, from Albany days onward. A consequence of this had been that the first name of his new settlement, before the white men who laid out the county into townships had gratified their classic tastes by remembering the old Greek poet, was a string of sounding Iroquois



syllables and a grunt which were to be interpreted "The time when the  
 sun lives and wills the silver opponents." That is, it was "Silver-time"  
 until it means "Silver". He still called the birds of a feather and par-  
 ticular, although he was robbed from a part of it and had found the birds  
 front shop as a silver friend of his house strategy. All the very best, he  
 -1018 were the fairs and awfully and wills other birds, was still his own  
 and therefore became an important addition to my already considerable play-  
 house. Next above the shop were the universalist church, its wide yard and  
 sheds. My own memories in connection with that house of worship are mainly  
 concentrated upon a great warlike which I fought in the little yard. That  
 had taken me in dress I do not know unless it was a very tall, but I was  
 attacked furiously by an ugly bearded dog. I had in my hand a heavy  
 stick, as thick as your finger, and this was broken to pieces in a desper-  
 ate attack on which he lay down. I could hardly have been so badly hit for  
 an old four-and-a-half inch fragment of a wooden stick which lay near by the  
 ground ready for use. It had been provided that the handle of the handle  
 at the end of it had been rusted stiff at right angles and had kept its  
 point. That, therefore, I gathered the stick and began to pull the dog still  
 it, the handle began to swing the stick in every direction. In a moment  
 more he was racing away down the street, striking loudly. I carried the  
 marks of that fight for many a year after my ninth, in which it occurred.  
 He was not so very large a dog and I cannot be sure about his breed but  
 believe him to have been a thoroughbred--- cur. Across Main street from the  
 end of ours, which had no name, were the residences, handsome ones, of the





Schermerhorn and Williams families, close friends as well as neighbors, which at once provided my sister Julia and myself with private education. With the Williams family began my political education. Mr. Williams was the owner of a woolen factory in the upper part of the village, in which the wool crop of the neighboring farmers found a ready market and in which very good cloth was manufactured. Two years after my first acquaintance with little "Fb" Williams I was greatly grieved to hear that his father had failed in business, the factory was to be shut up and the Williams family was to move away. When I asked what they did it for, I was informed by my Whig "Protectionist" father and grandfather that the failure was caused by a new, Democratic, Locofoco, Free Trade Tariff, and that it would not thenceforth pay the Courtland County farmers to raise sheep. It became fixed in my mind that the sheep were to be killed and the factory shut up for the benefit of some Englishmen across the ocean, and I never got out of my mind how desolate the Williams factory looked when I went to pay it a visit and see if it were really done for. As to other political items, my father was a strong "Seward Whig" and my grandfather was one of the first subscribers for a small weekly journal which had been set going in New York City by a queer character by the name of Horace Greeley. I will note at this point that John Osborn had all his life been an active politician until his deeper interest in religious matters destroyed his interest in other things. He had represented the county in the State Legislature as long as he would consent to go to Albany, and among his best personal friends were a number of prominent politicians, with whom, as I



afterwards discovered from old letters in the secret, to have had a vigorous literary correspondence. I was informed that, owing to his great personal popularity, he had twice been elected county Justice, but had refused to take the oath of office, from some unexplained religious scruples. He was an intensely religious man, being over 80 years of age I believe in the matter of non-resistance, and suffering himself to be plundered, rather than go to law. On the other hand, he consented to be elected Justice of the Peace, perennially, and was a general peacemaker for much more than the township of Homer.

I think I will now let go of all these things that happened afterwards and try to get myself into better relation with my seventh year and particularly with my enthusiastic explorations of my grandfather's house and farm and our end of the village.

Right here it may be well to add to my family tree memoranda the fact that through my grandmother Sabria Avery I am directly descended from the celebrated Elder Brewster of the Pilgrim Fathers of Massachusetts Bay. So my children are of what somebody has called the "Brahmin blood" of the old New England stock and ought to be aware of their inheritance.

In earlier years, I had paid more than one visit to Homer but had been too young to take any kind of possession of the place. I had travelled on the canal and in stage coaches, of course, with my mother and the other children, as I was to do afterwards, but now, in looking back, all of those journeyings appear to melt into one and I cannot separate them, if I had any good reason for doing so. Now, however, that I understood that



we had come to stay and not to visit, the case was altogether different and I made myself at home. Perhaps my first important discoveries were my grandparents themselves. I had from birth been a special favorite of my grandfather. He had made for me, with his own hands, (and culled down Mexican dollars, a tall silver cup, bearing my initials, now in the possession of my beloved cousin Mrs. Mary Bright Bruce, and a silver porringer in my own present keeping. My name, at first, was William John, after a son of his who died in boyhood and after himself. It was not until I was nearly sixteen years of age that I substituted, with my father's assent, the name Osborn for "John". It was an idea of my own, entirely, and I remember telling my father that "John was nobody's name and that if I were to be named after my grandfather I would take his own." I soon learned that all who knew him spoke of him only as "the Squire," or "Squire Osborn," except that a large number of them pronounced it "Square." He now made a great pet of me and liked to have me with him in the shop, where I soon began to obtain clear ideas of how silver pieces and other metallic affairs were manufactured. It was slow work, compared to the machine rapidity of our modern shops. He also soon began to take me with him to school proper meetings, in which he was a leader, when often I was so stout that I had to reach up to take one of his fingers as we slowly walked along. I found, also, that he had a great deal of fun in him and that it was simply impossible for him to give me a whipping, however much I might be in need of correction. That was about the case with my grandmother, for whom my affection grew tremendously. She was not in very robust health



Although still a busy, active woman, like a stream. All of her own and a great deal of character. She was not tall, was slightly made, and she had singularly graceful manners, including the "drop curt'sey" greeting of the old school of gentility. When I grew old enough to make such a criticism, I was more than a little proud of my grandmother's dignified way of receiving company. One of my first alliances with her and with good behaviour grew out of the fact that she could, and continually did, manufacture wonderfully good sweet "cookies," and that she retained the custody of them in a large stoneware pot that was kept in the dark, deep closet which opened into her bedroom from its cave under the front stairs. In this closet also would at times be stores of maple sugar and the like and her influence over her grandchildren was all that could be asked for. We had the house to ourselves at first, with the exception of a long line of varied "help," obtained with some difficulty and for brief terms of service from among the families of the neighboring farmers. During the winter, however, several boarders were admitted, most of them sons of old friends of Squire Osborn and all of them students in the village Academy. He had been one of the founders of the institution and it now had a high and wide reputation. My own impression was, and it was afterwards confirmed, that quite a number of promising young men had from time to time "boarded" with John Osborn and been otherwise provided for, when they had no means for paying board anywhere. He was very proud of the subsequent successes of some for whom he had in this manner lifted over a tight place in their educational careers.





Now, for the first time, I discovered my splendid aunt Mrs. Adeline O. Bright and her children, my cousins. She, like my mother, was a woman of strong intellect and unusual culture. Instead of being blue eyed, for my mother resembled her father, Adeline was a Cotton and had dark eyes and hair like her mother. The same type was afterwards wonderfully reproduced in my sister Julia, my daughter Sarah and my cousin Mary Bruce who is almost a likeness of her grandmother. I think she was as handsome, too, and that is saying a good deal. The children were Osborn, nearly fourteen and no playmate for me; Matilda, about ten and a constant companion for my sister Julia; Amelia, about six and just the mate for my younger sister Kate; and Mary, perhaps three and disposed to look on while the others did the noise and the romping. My aunt Adeline and I soon became great friends and I remember her to this day with the tenderest affection. As for my uncle, I heard some of the good people say that he was "too bossy," but I knew that he and I were all right and that I could make him laugh almost any where but in meeting.

The street upon which our house stood ran down a gentle slope to the bridge over the Tioughneauga, and beyond that it was but an eighth of a mile to the forks of the roads at the foot of the East Hill. Here one road turned away at right angles toward Truxton. One inclined somewhat to the right as it went upward steeply and was called "the brewery hill road." The third highway started off early on the right and I was looking for it for, at about five minutes quick walking, on the right, was my grandfather's land, extending away up and over to a cross road far beyond my



immediate explorations. Just at the forks of the roads stood the oldest brewery in those parts and I was yet to learn more about that and its conductors. At right angles to the left ran yet another road, almost parallel with the river, and on the lower corner of this was a frame homestead painted red and occupied by a family by the name of Ford. They were excellent people and before long I learned that they had both boys and dogs. It was a matter of course that I made a thorough search of the house but I had a shy feeling about the front parlor, into which I rarely ventured, for fear, perhaps, of unexpectedly meeting "company," for which kind of being and for their impertinent questions I had a strong aversion. It was well furnished and among its ornaments were remarkable specimens of ancient art needlework and painting from the hands of my lost aunt Amelia and my grandmother. Besides the outer blinds there were hanging calash blinds or wooden green curtains within. So it was in the back parlor but that could never, to my mind, be made quite so chilly and gloomy as the company parlor. Over the front door was a latticed porch which was covered with honeysuckle vines in summer, and around the door were queer little narrow paned windows, the bits of glass being set in leaden sashes. All around the house were rose bushes, of red and white flowers, and the walks were myrtle bordered. It was a very pretty, tastefully ordered home and I loved it at once immensely. The front hallway extended only a little beyond the door into the back parlor. It left here only just room enough to accommodate the tall eight day clock which is now in Mrs. Bruce's care at Rockledge, Yonkers. It is fairly hers, but she was too young then to



have the treat that I did, every Saturday evening, when I regularly went with my grandfather to see him wind it up. It is still a tall and wonderful clock but it does not seem to me to tick as loudly as it did then. I noticed, however, that the pendulum never appeared to be in any kind of hurry and there was never any change in the expression of its face.

In the parlors were fireplaces, with brilliant brass andirons and woven wire fenders and I thought there could be nothing finer than a wood fire on a winter evening and all the family gathered in front of the blaze. When I think of it, I am of the same opinion still. The door into Grandmother's bedroom opened from the back parlor and it was a remarkable room. At the right, as one entered, stood a large mahogany "secretary," which was a cupboard below in which were shelves for papers. All the upper front could be rolled back and made to disclose many small drawers, while a green cloth covered writing table shot out ready for use. In one of those drawers were usually kept the small pair of rifled derringer pistols that were made for me, but I was allowed to take them out and practice with them frequently, after I reached the high age of eight, on condition of moulding my own bullets. That secretary was for a long time an object of respect which was almost awe to me. Over the front parlor was a well furnished "guest chamber," into which I probably never ventured more than a half dozen times, it was so unnecessary to me and was so secluded. Over the back parlor was another chamber as large and this was my mother's. It was a pleasant room, for she made it so, and I was in it a great deal. It was the room in which I had been born. Over the bedroom below may have



been another of the same size, but into that room I never once looked, so far as I can remember. It is one of the unexplained mysteries of my boyhood.

The diningroom part of the house was all my own and it was grand. It fronted on the long, wide piazza, and it extended all the way across the building. It had a flight of boxed and steep stairs which went up to what was now the children's bedroom, with the dormer window. Near the foot of the stairway was a square little window into Grandmother's bedroom. Opposite this was an ample buttery, with an opening into the kitchen. Next to this was an enormous chimney in the bosom of which was the old fashioned "bake-oven," which after a while always made me think of Mr. Nebuchadnezzar's furnace for burning pious Jews. Next to the oven, to the left, were crypts, the upper of which contained the liberal sporting tackle which John Osborn's earlier tastes had accumulated. His fishing rods and so forth were equal in quality to any I saw during many an after year.

And now I think I will make a new chapter for the rest of that dining room and the garret, as this one appears to be long enough and there must be stopping places upon every well ordered highway. Besides, I am remembering too much and some of the curtains which are lifting disclose bright places over which hang clouds which threaten rain.





## Chapter Fourth.

## The Old Garret and Other Wonders.

In the middle of the village, on the westerly side of Main street, was the village green, containing many acres. Upon this green, beginning at the north, all of them well back from the street, were the public edifices of Homer. First came the Episcopal church, in which John Osborn owned two pews, by reason of his contributions to its erection, for he was a liberal minded man and not at all sectarian. He had been born and brought up in the Presbyterian fold, which he had left for the Baptist when little more than twenty one, publishing a considerable pamphlet account of his reasons for so doing, which was a remarkable thing for a young Albany jeweler to do, or for other people to expect. Next to this building, at a distance of perhaps thirty feet, was the "cannon house," calculated to contain with comfort one of the glories of the village patriotism. It was a six-pounder brass fieldpiece which had been captured from Gen. Burgoyne at the battle of Saratoga. I mention it here, because it was always associated in my mind with some of my findings in the garret. They also had probably fought at Saratoga, but I learned that Squire Osborn himself had not been there and had not captured Burgoyne. Next south of the cannon house was the really large and respectable Academy building, built in the style usual for church edifices, steeple, bell and all. The next affair on the green was the small frame structure which we called the "Presbyterian Conference Room." Then came the Presbyterian church itself. It was separated by a good width of grass from the Methodist meetinghouse and beyond that was



a street which ran westward and on which was my uncle Bright's first residence, a neat brick dwelling, the side yard of which bordered upon the wide and well peopled "graveyard," behind the green and separated from it by a long line of sheds for the accommodation of the teams of worshippers from the country side. South of this street was a large bit of pasture land, cut off from the green that upon it might be built the Baptist church, with a "prayer and conference meetinghouse" of its own just behind it.

As I have said, the military idea was one of the first to take hold of me when I began to explore the garret. It came by way of a sheathed cavalry sabre which hung from one of the central wooden uprights. It was a weapon worth looking at, when one dared to draw it out of its sheath and to swing it as if it had once belonged to some trooper as brave as Buzariz the Greek. On its edge were deep notches, such as your sabre is sure to get when you are fencing with a British trooper who has another sword very much like it, and there were several dark blotches which may have been rust but which I preferred to consider the stains of the blood which had poured in battle from the many victims who had been mowed down by that tremendously curved scythe of war. The brass hilt had a guard and ended in an eagle's head and I felt sure that it was an American eagle of the best kind. Not long after unsheathing the sabre, I found in an old chest a long bright dirk, without any haft, which I was informed had once been the weapon of a British midshipman, but I am now not clear in my mind as to how he came to part with it. My next find, in the chest, was a terrible, three cornered, sharp pointed, long bladed man-sticker, which I learned



to glory in as the distinctive weapon of a British sergeant of artillery who had been compelled to give it up at Saratoga. All these went along with the cannon to make me feel a growing sense of patriotism and to entertain a belief that my Osborn ancestry, like the Stoddards, had been "out" in the old fighting days and had served their country in battle, at Saratoga and elsewhere. Hardly less interesting than the weapons, after ideas of peace had a chance to return, were the remnants of an ancient loom, upon which the girls of the Cotton or Osborn families had woven much wool before there were factories to do it for them. Before a great while, however, I was to witness the cutting up and twisting of huge quantities of gathered cloth fragments, linen and woolen, for the manufacture of "rag carpets," and I was to have the inestimable privilege of going to a house in the upper part of the village, where dwelt a woman whose loom was still in running order. With my own eyes I saw the woman develop those long rag twists into the most beautiful carpeting that you ever saw. It was for the diningroom and it exhibited all the colors of the rainbow, with some which I never yet saw on any cloud anywhere. There were spinning-wheels as well as a loom, and these were in a good state of preservation. So was the reel which went with them and I in due time acquired a strong aversion to that reel. The way of it was this. Mother and grandmother were good spinners and every now and then there would be carded wool in the house and the largest wheel would be taken down into the diningroom. I did not mind that, for I loved to watch my mother at her spinning. I believe she enjoyed it and she certainly never showed how very graceful she was



more perfectly than when she was stepping back and forth at the side of that tall wheel and feeding the spindle of it with snowy wool. My trouble came always afterwards, when my grandmother and the reel required me to hold out my small hands and help them in transferring endless "hanks" of yarn into balls, ready for the knitter of stockings and the like. I had to play assistant reel, sometimes, when I would much rather have been some where else, or anywhere else.

Under one of the now blind windows between the garret and the dormer window room lay an enormous horsehide covered trunk, the lock of which was broken, probably for my benefit. It was in this trunk that I found the dirk but there were other treasures almost as brilliant. Here were numbers of old dies, for stamping silver work; scales for fine weighing, with the cases of weights belonging to them; bits of colored glass jewels of many varieties; queer tools and a general mess of inestimable uselessness.

Near the trunk stood a large red chest of my father's, of which and its hidden availabilities I was to learn more at a later date. There were hosts of other things in the garret and in the entry at the foot of the steep back stairs which led up to it there was one thing which caught my wondering eyes immediately, but which was for the present withheld from my handling. High up on the wall were wooden hooks and upon these rested the first gun I ever became acquainted with. When I did come to the happy hour of being permitted to lift and level it, I discovered that it was really a firstclass piece, for those days. It was a single barrelled shotgun, not





very heavy but of the best make. It was, of course, a flintlock, for the percussion cap had not yet arrived upon the earth. Beside it hung a leather shotpouch, double, to carry two sizes of pellets, and a beautiful powder horn. Through the thinly scraped horn I could distinguish the dark and dangerous powder, such as hunters and soldiers did their killing with. I knew at once that it was to be my gun, but did not dream how long and how much I was yet to carry it.

My next trips took me from the top of the house to the bottom, for the cellar was a vast cave requiring an explorer. It extended the entire length of the building and was quite deep, so much so that all mince, pumpkin and other pies upon the swing shelf that hung in the centre of it were entirely safe from rats or other marauders. So was the closed store room and its closet where the main lots of maple sugar were kept but I did sometimes overcome some difficulties. At the right side of the cellar and at the far end were bins for apples, pears and potatoes. Grandfather had another orchard up on the hill and his fondness for fine apples had descended to me. Also for pears, as soon as their flinty hardness at gathering time had ripened into their midwinter mellowness. On the opposite side were barrels and I soon knew that one of these contained good cider vinegar, made on the place. I was to learn how vinegar, received its peculiar character, for cider came in exchange for apples and was treated to perfection in our side yard. The next barrel, two of them, contained sweet cider, which bye and bye would acquire a hardness of its own and strongly resemble vinegar. The only preventive was to drink it expeditiously and I soon acquired the



science of long straws. One barrel there was of bitter beer, and I did not at all admire hops in a liquid form. A smaller barrel contained the oldest of currant wine, but I was debarred from that. Our garden was bordered and so were its paths by luxuriant currant bushes, and these were for the benefit of the neighbors, as soon as our own requirements were filled for abundant jelly and as much wine as grandmother cared to make. At the rear of the cellar was a crypt under the chimney, down into which all ashes from the family fires were sent through a shoot. The ashes were possessed of qualities which I began to learn that very autumn. A first and highly interesting ash-experiment began with a barrel perched upon a frame. Into this, when filled with ashes, water was poured which came out below colored deeply a brownish red and this was strong, pungent lye. With it and much boiling, all sorts of garnered fats were transformed into soaps, soft and hard, and the quantity of them was not small. Second to the soap in the opinion of the unwise was the manufacture of "hulled corn," sweet corn carefully selected, and this was also prepared in quantities. I watched it all, from day to day, as I did in seasons following, but before long I was to be an eye witness of a different and to me a much more thrilling operation.

I may suppose that throughout the civilized world, including Paris, London and the City of Washington, the chilly month of November is "pig killing time." Not that all the pigs are then disposed of, but only those for whom this present world has come to an end. I had at once taken peculiar interest in the hogpen, and had paid it a number of visits



of inspection. Its occupants were remarkable animals and appeared to be quite intelligent but I had heard them squealing tremendously in a gale of wind and could not imagine any good reason why they should invariably do so. I was now about to hear them squeal yet more loudly, one after another, upon being "stuck," although I was assured that the sticking did not cause them any pain. Their squealing, the men told me, was merely an expression of anger and astonishment. Nevertheless, they bled a great deal and then lay down and the men cut them all to pieces. I saw it done and I saw how the hams and shoulders were put aside for the smokehouse, with some bits for bacon, and how the remainder, barring tenderloins and the like for immediate cooking, were consigned to the salt-pork barrel. Also, I observed the subtle processes of manufacturing sausage meat and headcheese, and I knew that some of our pork had been traded for much beef for the "corned beef barrel." So much more there was, therefore, to go down into that dark and capacious cellar.

Fully equal to the pigs in interesting characteristics, from the very beginning, had been our cows. One of these was a large, red, matronly looking animal, of a high order of cowhood, but she was not by any means so handsome as was her brindle-yellow mate, with the sharp and tapering black horns and the very uncertain temper. I was to be much better acquainted with that brindled heifer thereafter, but I saw her kick over the milk pail soon after my arrival. My grandfather sat down upon the grass at the same moment but he kept his temper and spoke to her about it quite kindly. Milk I had always been fond of and I could recall an oc-



casion, in Rochester, when a young woman fresh from the rural districts came to our house to borrow some. She was liberal in her ideas concerning milk, for she brought with her a wooden water-pail and I knew that our milkman employed only tin and that our own milk came in by the quart. Now, however, by frequent attendances in the barnyard at milking times and also in the milkroom off the kitchen, I was to learn the nature and the gathering of cream. Alas for me! Ere long I acquired the most complete and experimental knowledge of buttermaking, for many was the weary half hour that I was to spend at the churn, as soon as I grew tall and strong enough to ply the dasher up and down. Equally unpopular with me was at a later day a new, patent churn whereof I was made to turn the dismal crank until the butter and the buttermilk should be divorced the one from the other.

In November and afterwards came the storms and snows of the long Courtland county winter. The average level of that hill region is several hundred feet above the level of the sea and the winters come three weeks earlier and stay three weeks later in the Spring than they do at Syracuse, thirty miles northward. Nevertheless, the snowtime was at first house-time, for a seven years old, and I had an abundance of leisure. All was well with me except that the cold shut me out of the garret and that a journey as far as the barn was sometimes difficult. It was even easier to reach the shop, because of better paths, and I patronised the shop. It was during this semi-imprisonment of Arctic weather that another step in my curious education came to me. My good grandmother may not have fully





agreed with Professor Dewey of Rochester as to boys and Latin, but Mrs. Amelia Osborn was of Pilgrim stock and believed that I could not too soon begin my studies of the Bible. Had I not already won a Bible prize in a Sunday school and might I not grow up to be a preacher or a missionary? I was not, however, to be confined to the small print of my own polyglot, for the great quarto family bible was at my service and I was commanded to read it through. Beyond a doubt I did so and in after days there came an era when I deemed it my duty to read it from cover to cover, once in each calendar year. At the beginning I think I was somewhat more discursive. The special time for Bible was upon Sundays, of course, and the big book was regularly laid down for me upon the diningroom floor. Here also I lay down and it must be said that I took an astonishing interest in much that I went through. The quarto was of the only kind then printed, so far as I know, of that size, for it contained the books of the Apocrypha and my grandmother had by no means lost the old notion that these were only a somewhat less sacred kind of Bible. At all events, it was not wrong to read them on Sunday. Were they not bound up with the rest? She probably never took the trouble to consider that precisely that authority, that of the printer and binder, is about all the warrant there is for the general belief in the "inspiration" of sundry other books of the inestimable collection which we all reverence and love. I became quite fond of the Maccabees and of all the other Bible men who did any traveling, like Jacob, or any fighting, like David and Saul and Paul the Apostle, of whom, the latter, there was splendid picture of his tumble from his horse among mount-



ed soldiers, under the influence of a great glare of blinding light. I have a feeling of personal fondness for Paul, to this day. This regular Bible reading continued during all my boyhood in Homer, but there were several other books which I was permitted to delve in on the Lord's Day. First among these, of course, was the Pilgrim's Progress and I soon all but knew it by heart, both parts of it, giants and all. Next to this was Bunyan's "Holy War," but it was hard reading although there was much good fighting in it. My mother also permitted me to take up, on Sundays, the Works of Hannah More and the altogether harmless poems of Miss Amanda M. Edmonds. I think that Good's Book of Nature was not entirely forbidden me, but some of my prime favorites were. Among these were Shakespeare's Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream and two or three of his fighting plays, but these came when I was nearly ten and I could go no further. Earlier was Scott's Lady of the Lake and I believe I could almost have repeated it, from end to end. With that came Rob Roy, Ivanhoe, and I read them over and over. So I did Cooper's Leatherstocking. There was an illustrated History of the World which gave me much occupation, but it was nothing at all in comparison with the wonderful volumes of the Works of Josephus, all of which I finished before "ten" and at the same time I took a long and thrilling course in Fox's Book of Martyrs. There were other books, of course, including the United States Speaker, but these are all I can remember just now and I believe they were quite enough for a beginner. Of periodicals, the only visitor I cared for was Peter Parley's Magazine for Young People, but it came only once a month when it ought to have come



at least every week.

During that first winter and afterwards there was more than one Apple paring Bee and Sewing Society at our house, and there was a constant stream of day and evening callers. It was not difficult for me to gather the information that numbers of men were in the habit of coming to consult with John Osborn concerning their affairs of all kinds and that his decisions were generally regarded as final. I afterwards heard that he was considered almost as an enemy of law practice, he killed off so many promising suits in their infancy. At the same time I saw that my mother was the life and soul of the Grand Ligne Mission Society and could talk better about missions than could any of the other women. She was better looking, too, and I had an idea that Homer contained some very ugly pieties.

Right in the middle of that first winter came the cold beginning of yet one more educational experience, for my entrance into the Academy was just after New year's, when I had been intending to devote myself entirely to my new and beautiful sled. It was an affliction, but I had to endure it. My next affliction was that my proficiency in arithmetic, reading and so forth, put me into classes where all the others were much older than myself. None of them liked my being among them and the other small boys keenly resented what to them appeared favoritism. From the beginning of my academical course, therefore, I was placed in a position calling for all the gentleness, forbearance and love of peace for which I became distinguished.

I will not dwell upon that now, for this chapter is already long enough



## Chapter Fifth.

## In the Village.

Beginning at the upper end of what was now regarded, in central New York, as a pretty ancient kind of village, the first object of interest to an exploring boy was the Upper Pond. It was long and irregular, with both deep and shallow places, and here and there still stuck up above the surface or were visible under the clear water, the stumps of the trees that were cut down when the valley was invaded by the destroying white men. It was no larger, perhaps, than was the Lower Pond, but it undoubtedly contained more snapping turtles and not so many pickerel. With the mills, grist and saw, I had little to do, but not far away were the smokehouse and the tannery, for both of which I was one day to have repeated important errands. As for Nore.R.Smith, I was inclined to shy him, for some unexplained reason, and was more deeply interested in his neighbor, Don Brown, by all odds the blackest and, some said, the most peculiar character in Homer. He was not only black but dreadfully lame of one leg and also in his reputation, for his not very large corporeal was full to the skin with all sorts of mischief. He was said to be fond of fat chickens and I myself have seen him shoot "doves" as the pigeons were called, to which he had no other ownership than that of a dark sportsman who innocently mistook them for wild game. He also was a sawer of wood and it was well to pay him by the cord rather than by the day. Not far from Don Brown and the mill was the other dark man of the village. He was the mulatto





barber and his distinguishing characteristics were vast personal dignity and a conscientious opposition to the payment of small debts. Once, when he owed my grandfather a quarter, the claim was presented to me on fish-hook account, if I would manage to collect it. I think I must have overcome the dignity, more or less, for I did get some of the cash and the fish hooks, by instalments, with more than one expression of disgust and more than one quizzical laugh from John Osborn. Only a little further down the Main street from Don Brown and the pond and the mill, was old Uncle Jed Barber's really great country store, the largest in those parts, in which all that the country needed was offered for sale. It was a frame building, a cellar, three tall stories and a garret. I was told that Uncle Jed's first store, on the same spot, was but little larger than a drygoods box. Over its front had been a small, gilt sign, "J. Barber." That sign, dingy with age and weather, was now visible to the naked eye, away up over the third tier of windows. Under the same tier was his second sign, larger and brighter, painted when prosperity and the new building arrived, "J. Barber & Son." Over the lower windows, at the time when I first saw the store, was the culmination of the sign matter, for a long, wide, glittering plank carried in brilliant gold letters, "Jedidiah Barber, Son & Co." My great interest in this store arose from the fact that my father was now the bookkeeper and chief clerk of the establishment. He continued to be so during an entire year, while he was collecting the pecuniary remnants of his old Rochester business and preparing to strike out again on his own account. Of course, Uncle Jed and John Osborn were strong



friends and the big brick house of the latter was painted in the same shade of dark yellow with our own. One of his daughters had married a Mr. Schermerhorn, our near neighbor, her children were our playmates, and I at once took kindly to their grandfather. He was a short man who knew everybody and he had a large, clear voice. He also appeared to have an idea that the people who came to trade with him were mostly deaf and it was worth while to see him stand in front of a tall man and shout at his head as if it had been on a housetop. He also shouted down at me but I was not afraid of him. On the upper corner at the right, very near Don Brown and the mill, was a comfortable tavern, from the barroom of which it might have been well for Don to have kept away more than he did. There was another tavern in the middle of the village, opposite the green, looking all the churches impudently in the face, although all of their members were supposed to be against the sale of liquors, except as occasional medicinal agents susceptible of complete and convincing explanations. I heard some of them and was convinced. There was nothing else of very great interest, after leaving Don Brown's part of the village, until one came to the green. I have spoken of that and may as well pass through it into the graveyard. In after time, it was ruined by the requirements of a railway and all the graves were transferred to a new cemetery on the West Hill, at the expense of the railway company. As, however, my uncle Bright's house was on the cross street beyond, my shortest cut to it, when coming southward from the store, was through the place of tombs. I explored it, thoroughly reading all the inscriptions, some of which were literary gems. I became accustomed to that kind of company



and before long I astonished some of the Homer people, older as well as younger, by the perfect nerve with which I was ready to pass through that graveyard after dark, in the night!- When ghosts and ghostesses might possibly be cutting up, -or down. Then I obtained the admiration of the small boys by the extreme recklessness with which I was willing to go, at night, and knock on the door of the Presbyterian church and stand still and wait to see if anybody would come. The fact was that my mother had so instructed me that I had not an atom of the fear of spooks in my growing mind. It never got in afterwards and I was able to assure the superstitious that if I were ever to meet a ghost I would kindly bid him good day.

Of the Baptist church across that narrow street at the end of the green, I have few memories, other than such as belong to the routine of church going. From this broad and sweeping assertion, however, I must except one of the upper windows in the back of the building. As time went on, I became an acknowledged expert in the casting of stones at any kind of mark. One ill starred day, when coming down that street, I was seized with the subtle temptation of an ambition to throw a stone over the church, for I vainly gloriously believed that I could do it. Perhaps I could, but I did not. The fragment of gray limestone I selected from the gutter, as young David McJesse once picked his slingstones from the brook, was a smooth, oval pebble which was just the thing for a throw. I threw it and it went well but my aim, like that of many other ambitions, had not been high enough. Up went the pebble, in a great and graceful curve but it did not go over the meetinghouse. It ended its curved career against an upper pane of glass



in that rear window. The result, to me, was consternation, but to the brittle oblong up yonder it was no great disaster. There was no general crash, no panic in the glass market, for the hole made was hardly larger than was necessary to let the pebble into the church. I have sometimes thought that the admission of others who get in must be through similarly close fitting entryways. I wisely kept my dreadful secret, then, but when, thirty years afterwards, on a visit to Homer, I passed along that street and looked up at that window, there was the hole in the pane in a state of perfect preservation. I am inclined to believe, consequently, that hardly anything will wear longer than will a hole in a pane of glass, if it is high enough from other things to escape the eyes of impertinent glaziers in search of a job. Next to the church was the long, frame "big building" a window of which was said to have once been broken by the concussion of the discharge of the Burgoyne cannon on the green. I did not see that done, but in the Main street entrance of the building was Deacon Short's harness shop and I knew what happened to a greenhorn, once, when he was sent to that shop to borrow "a quart of strap oil." McNeill's house, in which Miss Molly McNeill kept the "infant school," was a little below, on the right and old McNeill raised a kind of beans out of which he made what he declared to be the best of coffee, but he preached his doctrines in vain to the people of Homer and a new coffee sect was not formed. Away along on the left, half way to the lower mill, was Sanders's furnace, wherein I became convinced, almost against reason, that hard iron might be melted and poured into a mould, like candle-fat. Before long, also, I





learned that old Sanders would pay two cents a pound for old iron scraps, if they were good scraps. I am informed that the present price of the metal is somewhat lower, but then his furnace was far away from any mine and transportation was costly. So were other factors in the price of iron. The furnace man himself was a noted character. He was of a literary turn and when his furnace went out of existence he did not do so but turned author. He wrote and composed "Sanders's Spellingbook" and my father was one of his publishers. It was said that more copies of that work were printed and sold, per annum, in its day, than of any other current work in American literature. I had one, myself, and became deeply interested in it.

That is about all I need to say of the village, just here, but as I have carelessly mentioned candlefat, I will add that in that first winter I began to learn the mystery of illumination. I soon knew that the beautiful astral lamp in the parlor was made to burn either whale oil or lard and that it was equally obstinate about lighting with either. As to the first illuminator, I was shown a picture of a whale and read about it in God's Book of Nature. I was sorry to know that none of those fish were ever caught in the Tioughneauga, so that we might bring them to the house and boil them out as we did the lard or even as the beef-fat for the candles. Candle making was a bad smelling affair, whether you were slowly manufacturing "dips" or whether, with better materials, you were employing sets of tin moulds. In either case, the product was somewhat uncertain, for many of its fruits were erratic and would "run."

Across the way from our house was the home of my immediate playmate



Hank Babcock, almost precisely of my own age. There also lived his mother who at once became an aunt of mine, God bless her kindly face, and so did his father, Deacon Jared Babcock of the Baptist church, who had visited with us in Rochester. They had a pretty place with much garden, but down beyond that garden and toward the river was the wonderful organ factory. I spent many a happy half hour in that factory, watching the workmen shaping pipes of wood or lead to carry music in. The melting of the metal and casting it into sheets and then the processes of shaving smooth the sheets and cutting them to fit the measures of the required music was a depth of mysterious inquiry. So was the boy-process of obtaining enough of the leaden shavings for the subsequent re-melting processes demanded for the production of sinkers for fishlines and of small cannon which were sure to burst, but you might hammer up the bursted place and try them again with less powder and see them go all to pieces. I have a fairly distinct remembrance of an occasion when Hank Babcock might have associated a small organ pipe, which he mistook for attainable lead shavings, with what appears to me in retrospect to have been at least a half-quart of "strap oil," applied by his musical father. Hank also was musical, for at least that occasion, and they were training him as a music teacher in defiance of the fact that he had little music in him,—other than such as might better be elicited by a strap than otherwise.



## Chapter Sixth.

## The River.

Down sloped the road from our house to the Tioughneauga, and it led into a new world in which a large part of my small boyhood was to be passed. The bridge itself was strongly built, of rough stones, and had several low arches, under which one might row a boat at ordinary times and against which the water would dash and foam and roar gloriously at flood-time, often hurling at them masses of ice in a manner which was grand to see. Above the bridge, the water was shallow as well as wide and most of the teams passing that way were driven in fearlessly and halted that the horses might drink while they scared off the fish for which, and their never coming bites, the village boys strung along upon the low, much whit-tled parapet, were waiting. Below the bridge, not far, was the "baptizing hole," in which I was yet to see numbers of converts immersed and to obtain a distinct, ineffaceable idea that just so did Jesus of Nazareth receive immersion in the Jordan. Still, I did not quite understand Uncle Bright, Elder Bennett and other good men when they spoke of that hollow place in the Tioughneauga as "our Jordan." And then all the country people pronounced it "Jerdan" and I heard them talk and sing of its "stormy banks" when I knew better. On the right of the bridge and opposite the place of baptism was the blacksmith shop. It was under the management of Frank Smith's father. Both of them were awfully redheaded, the old man to such an extent that I did not go into that place to see them shoe horses unless he had the hoof already in his leather apron and his back was turned. I



knew I could get out in a jiffy and he never went for me unless I had a troop of other boys with me. Opposite the blacksmithshop, at the heel of the bridge, was the pottery. It was owned, when it first passed under my inspection, by a Mr. Letts, and he could make almost anything out of the really fine mud of which the bank of the river was at that point constructed. It was a study to see him at his wheel, itself a relic of the most ancient days, and to note how a pot or a jug would grow into shape and ugly beauty under his skilful thumb and a small stick, as the platen spun around with his foot upon the treddle. The roasting furnace was a huge and rude affair of brickwork, but I looked into it once when it was all a going. I was able to tell the other boys "he didn't pay a cent for all that wood. It's nothing but floodwood that he gathered when it was floating down the river." A year or so later, the making of pots at that place was given up and I saw a vast brick kiln take its place, for the purpose of teaching me how to make bricks. They all went into it of a muddy gray or brown and the fire reddened them. One narrow but deep and swiftly running arm of the river separated the claybank from Spice Island, which I preempted for a summer playground. It may have contained a long, straggling acre of grass and bushes, grass in the middle and spice and alder bushes around its edges, but it has now disappeared. It might be more nearly correct to say that it has vanished only as an island, by reason of the filling up of the old channel between its former wildness and the main shore. Above that island there was nothing to interfere with navigation until an explorer should come to the dam of the upper mill-pond and I one day at nearly ten, persuaded Hank Babcock to aid me in





overcoming even that apparently impassable barrier. We had a small, flat bottomed boat of our own and I proposed that we should imitate Columbus and sail upon a voyage of discovery to reach the source of the river. It would be a great thing to do and we went. We managed, with much toil and some small disasters, to get our ship over the dam. Then we sailed gallantly on over the rude waves of the Upper Pond and followed the further windings of the dashing Tioughneauga. It was all delight and success and heroism and excitement until the water itself gave out. That is, we went on up to a place where the billows became so shallow that even our craft, however little it might draw, could float no further. As commander of the expedition, I was obliged to imitate our Arctic explorers and decide that we were near enough to the head of the river for this time. If we were to try again it would be needful to have less boat or more water. We poled our boat homeward, both of us getting a ducking in once more beating the mill-dam and both of us receiving rewards of merit on arriving at our destinations. My reward was a good deal of fun and quizzical questioning from John Osborn, but Hank's, I am sorry to say, consisted of a music making warning against letting Willie Stoddard get him into any more wild escapades. Nevertheless, he did require and obtain another, one of those days. Peter Parley's Magazine and other instructive volumes in my library had taught me how folks at the seashore made and sailed their ships and I determined to improve our own. All we would really need would be a mast, a boom, a bowsprit, another sprit to spread our canvas and a mainsail. Anything like a keel, ballast or rudder, was not in my head nor upon my boat. Grandmother Osborn gave me half of an old sheet for my mainsail and I



somehow obtained cordage for the rigging. Such a ship as that might well be steered with a paddle but it was just as well that her crew had already been taught to swim. One splendid summer day, Hank and I set out upon our trial trip and we got our gallant bark past the bridge by taking down the mast so she could go under. The wind was fair, the way was clear and we glided on and out upon the glittering waters of the Lower Pond in complete security. Thus far, with the wind astern, we had needed no keel nor any other addition to our outfit, but now I saw before me an opportunity. I had learned from my books that all ships tacked, at times, and sailed right across the edge of the wind. That was what I now would do and I fearlessly made my first tack. The ship obeyed her helm but, as she did so, the wild wind smote her rippling mainsail sidewise, so to speak, and in one moment our voyage was ended. The boat was on her beam ends and was filling fast while Hank and I were paddling for the shore. I think that he gave it up entirely and sat upon the shore to drip and to guess what his folks would say about it, while I went out again and pulled the boat in to bale her out. We went upstream without help from sail or wind and we were admonished not to try that thing again. My admonition came from one of the apple trees down in the garden. In fact, it was at an early stage of my Homer experiences that I discovered why apple trees so meanly sent out sprouts or "suckers" near their roots, and why even a sweet smelling balm of Gilead tree would follow their pernicious example. It may or may not have been true that the sprouts grew larger as I grew older, but since then I have met men of whom I feared that in their earlier days their



educators either did not own any appletrees or did not understand the moral and intellectual bearings of pliable sprouts.

The Lower Pond had a few distinguishing characteristics. One of these was said to be that owing to the reception of much refuse from the slaughter house, below the bridge, its eels were more numerous and fatter than elsewhere but I vainly tried to catch one of them. They may have been too well fed but all of us boys complained of the unbiting habits of the fish in that river. It may be that they had too many hooks offered them and became educated in the art of self denial in that shape. After awhile, a wide area was added to the pond, and it was mostly quite shallow. Here, indeed, I had a new experience, for the pickerel would lie and bask in the shoals and I could drift along toward them silently until near enough to shoot them, after learning how much below the apparent fish the refraction of sunshine in the water required me to aim. I actually brought home a reasonable number of them and some were not shot at all but only stunned long enough for me to scoop them in. On the easterly bank of the pond was a long meadow and near it were wheat fields. Both were a choice feeding ground for meadow larks and blackbirds. The larks were hardly fair game and I did not care for blackbirds except at one season. When, however, at the end of a season, they were gathering for migration and were fat and fine, they were sure to gather among the acres of low bushes of the flaggy swamp on the opposite side of the pond and were worth while. I remember one morning's shooting when Hank Babcock and I took home fat birds enough for potpies for both our houses and some to spare. In the winter time,



both ponds would often afford good skating and so would the overflowed swamp land on the western hillside, not far from Paris Barber's black barn and the big butternut trees. I used up two or three pairs of skates and bumped the back of my head severely while I was a resident of Homer and investigated those sheets of ice.

Spice island became a rare resource, after I had dipped into Robinson Crusoe, a work which I believe to be not yet out of print. I shortly undertook to be cast away upon Spice island, as he was upon his. Aided by Hank Babcock and Hank Short, the son of our neighbor the harnessmaker, I constructed a palace of broken boards on the upper part of the island. We were short of cannibals but we found and took there an old furnace pot which was just the thing to cook in. We even had a length of old stovepipe and a skillet and part of an iron kettle. In these appliances we boiled potatoes, gathered in the fields on the mainland, when we did not prefer to roast them. We also cooked fish, when we could catch any, but I had bad luck in one of our many daring expeditions after eggs. Old Mr. Babcock had a fine, large hennery, up near his house, but Hank had not sufficient enterprise to visit it on a collecting tour. The duty, therefore, fell upon me. It was a warm, summer afternoon when I ventured there for a supply of fresh eggs. I was barefooted, as was usual with me in warm weather, and had on a "shilling straw" hat. Anything more expensive would have been wild extravagance, for a boy who had more than once been known to come home bareheaded. Well! I reached the hennery all right and was superfluously successful in finding eggs. I had my straw hat in my hands when





I came hurrying away, down the garden path. I was a complete success until I heard somebody laugh and looked up to see Mr. Myron Babcock, Hank's grown up brother, standing in the path before me. It was a moment of defeat, perplexity and exasperation, and in my haste I stubbed one of my toes. That is, I tripped and fell forward, coming down full weight upon my hatful of fresh eggs. Not one of them but followed the example of stampeded soldiers upon a lost battlefield, they all broke and ran. It was too late for me to run and our entire force was shortly compelled to surrender ignominiously. The other boys obtained prison rations of strap oil and I of appletree luxuriances. We did not give up our island fort, however, and just as the autumnal floods were arriving to sweep it away, we all three and one more boy with us had a thrilling adventure there in the early darkness of a gloomy evening. We went over in our boat, of course, and we hitched it well before we went into the cabin to play Crusoe. It was grandly romantic fun until we were startled by the whang of a stone upon the wooden walls of our citadel. Another and another came and one of the boards was knocked off. Then we heard yells and shouts of derision from the mainland and the nature of our dilemma was explained to us. A lot of the uptown boys, with whom all the downtown boys were at feud, had ruthlessly undertaken to bombard us. The other boys crouched down as if they were frightened but I became wrathful. Out I dashed to get to the boat and they crept over the grass after me. Alas, for us! the wicked marauders had stolen our pretty scow and had hauled her upon the land on the other side of what was now really pretty swift and deep water. Then they



had gone further and were hidden by the increasing darkness. Here we were, apparently helpless and "marooned," while still the flying pebbles were rattling upon the island, occasionally hitting our doomed shanty. It seemed as if the boys had now something worth crying for but I took a different view of the situation. It was necessary to regain that boat and into the uncommonly cold water I went, without hesitation. That was not what our assailants were expecting and before they suspected such a military or naval manoeuvre, I had crossed the raging flood, swimming and wading, and was quietly paddling my boat back after my crew. In they came and all of us were shortly and in silence landed down stream near the bridge, without pursuers. We were safe, but I believe that was the end of Mr. Crusoe's adventures upon Spice Island. The winter floods carried away his palace and he did not care to build another.

Many another memory lingers along the crooked lines of the Tioughneauga but one which I will not omit belongs to the wonderfully beautiful nests of the fishes. I never tired of watching those beds of gathered gravel and the finny folk who came and went around and over them. It was such an unanswerable conundrum, how did the fish manage to pick up all those little stones and carry them and arrange them in the nests?" I had watched birds at their nest making and knew how they did it, but never did I actually see a fish with a pebble in his or her mouth. Probably, they knew I was watching them and were determined that I should not discover the secret of all that transportation. I was curious, indeed, as to all manner of stones and I knew the names of all the kinds in that vicinity. The habit



of studying the rocks stuck to me for many a long year. Among my earlier and later mineral trophies, moreover, were Indian arrowheads, spearheads, hatchet heads, and I wish I had been able to retain the collection that I made. It passed from me, in the end, leaving behind it little more than some knowledge of the ways of the red men and a strong conviction that what some wise anthropologists call "the stone age" is not so very far from ours in point of time. It might be of more instructive value if among their gathered bits of shapely flint they had found an ancient oyster or tomato can, such as those by the vast heaps of which future ages may yet study our own tin-sel civilization. It may not be out of place to add that with Grandmother Osborn's assistance, I also garnered a knowledge of the names and qualities of every tree, flower, grass, root and plant of which I had a chance to inquire during all those questioning years. On that account, I might be entrusted with the collection of wild herbs for her uses and of sarsaparilla, checkerberry and other ingredients for the manufacture of "root beer."

I must leave the river, now, and I do so with much regret, for I wish I were back upon its bushy bank, to day with as keen an interest in all things in it and around it, as much young energy to walk among them, and with the same bright faces sure to welcome me at the Osborn homestead. I shall see them all again, some day, fairer and brighter than then they were. Houses and fruits and flowers, trees, gardens and a river,- but I know that first I must reach and cross a bridge beyond which is a hill.



## Chapter Seventh.

## The Hill and the Woods.

My acquaintance with the regions east of the river did not fairly begin until the following Spring. Just at the end of the cold weather, there was a brace of fine calves in the barnyard and one of them was assigned to me as my own peculiar property. The title to that calf may have been somewhat defective but I valued it all the same. It did not altogether cease, indeed, after the greater part of the pretty animal was turned into veal. The hide was still declared to be mine and I conveyed it, in the baby wagon, all the way to the tannery. Thence, in due season, it returned in the shape of leather and was devoted to the manufacture of my own shoes for the winter next to come. During all the remainder of my stay in Homer, such was the history of my pet calves and such was the origin of my foot-gear. That first Spring, while yet the calves were on the earth, so to speak, the grass greened in the broad and sloping pasture on the hill. At once began my career as cowboy and the critters of some of our neighbors were brought to climb the hill with them. It was serious business and promotive of early rising, for it was needful for me to be at home from my cow driving in time to reach the Academy before its bell ceased ringing. It was a study in punctuality but I was to have other studies on the way. One of these grew out of the tendency of all the hill dogs to bark at any cow from the village. I had many stones to throw and runs to make but a particularly troublesome point was at the forks of the roads at the foot of the hill. An alarmed or exasperated cow was as likely as not to set off at





speed up or down one of those other highways. The worst of the situation grew out of the boisterous character and mutinous conduct of a cur owned by the Ford boys, who lived in the red house at the forks. My own dog, Watch, who disappears from my memory at about that time, was not worth two cents for protection and I was unsupported. Stoning a dog is a small incident to anybody but a small cow boy, but I was to meet the Ford family again. Long afterwards, as I will tell in its place, John Osborn died in the house of his friend, old Mr. Ford. Long, long years after that, when I was a deacon in Alexander Avenue Baptist Church, in New York City, I discovered that one of my most highly esteemed brother deacons was the elder of the Ford boys whose dog had troubled my cows at the forks of the hill road. Moreover, he had two sons, and both of them were already frequent visitors in my family. In fact, neither of them ever got out of it, for the younger, Charles Bigelow Ford, married my daughter Mabel, -God bless them both and their children!- while the older, E. Lewis Ford, married my sister-in-law, Harriet Louise Cooper, and obtained one of the best of women. I do not quite determine whether he is a brother in law or a nephew and am willing to call him both.

There were several houses on the road before getting to the bars of our pasture but the way was peaceful and the return easy. It was at night that the occasional waywardness of animal mental organizations now and then made trouble for me. If the cows were at the bars, waiting for me, all was well, but if they were wandering far and wide I had to do the same until they might be gathered and brought to a sense of duty and to the gap in the fence.

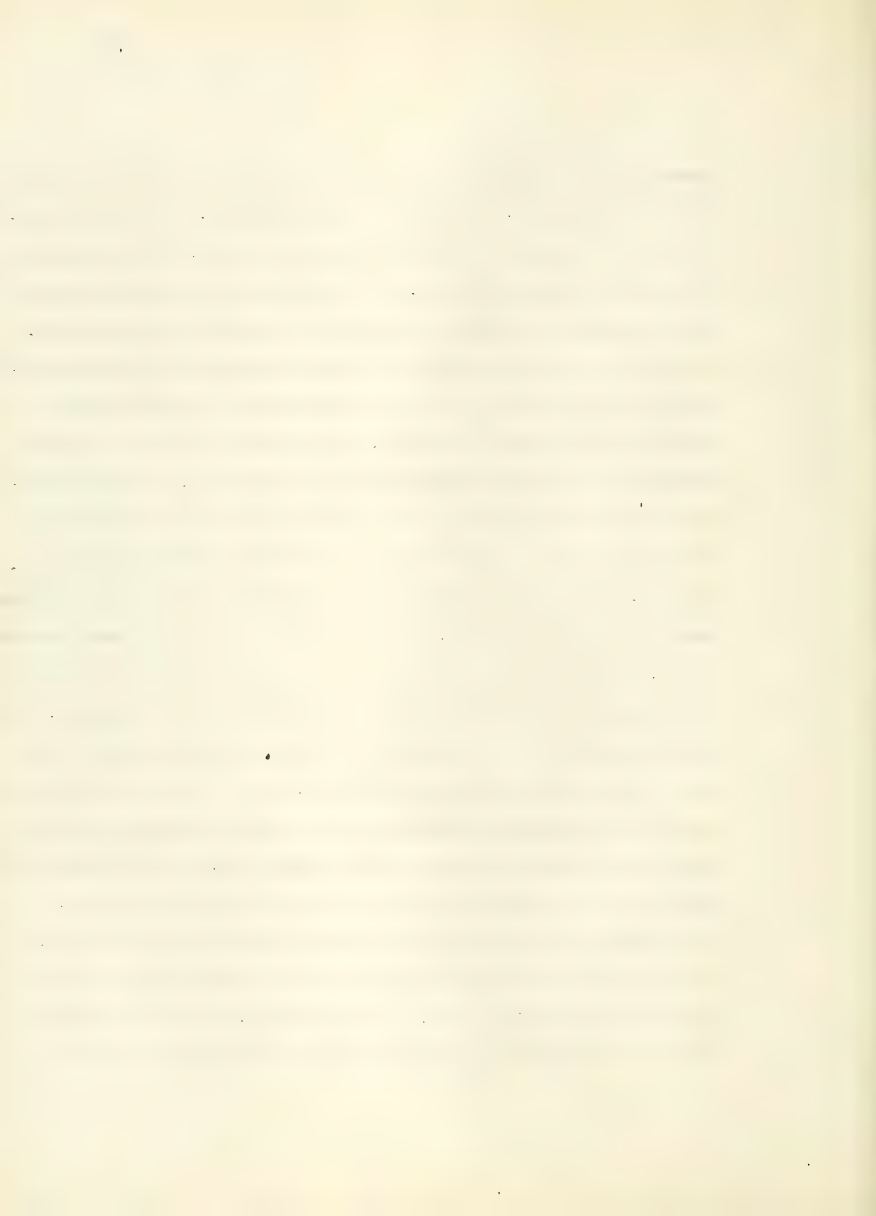


There was a ploughed field at the roadside beyond our pasture, but above that, spreading over all that part of the hill, were the gloom and the greenness and the beauty of Shearer's woods. Among them were sugarmaple trees, at the feet of which I by and bye learned the art of sugar making. Chipmunks were numerous along the fences and among the branches were squirrels, red and black and gray. I was to spend days and days among those woods and others, after I became master of the gun then hanging upon its hooks at the foot of the garret stairway. There was not one solitary oak or pine among them and it was long before I was to know anything about them. Maples, beeches, butternuts, hemlocks, birches, ironwood, basswood, and some others, were to be found, but I was told that all the chestnut trees had been cut down for fence timber because their trunks would split so easily and straightly. Far down to the southward were the Hemlock Woods, back of the precipitous cliffs of the old stone quarry. They were the right place to go to for sassifras and sarsaparilla but were vastly more precious on account of their abundance of wild raspberries, red and black. But then I only knew them as "rawsberries," like other Homer boys, and resented the rasp when told of it.

The woods, of course, bring me to my gun. I think it was in my eighth-ninth year that my grandfather began to teach me how to use it. I was carefully taught the mystery of its flint lock and soon was able to take the entire piece to pieces, clean it and put it together again. It after awhile became a frequent companion, with which I went out and wandered unquestioned. I can remember, once, when my father, on a visit from Syracuse,



remonstrated at the idea of making a hunter of so young a boy. "O," responded my grandfather. "Willie is a pretty good shot. He is trustworthy. He only has the gun on condition of always going alone. He is not allowed to take any other boys with him." That condition of care may account for the strong liking I acquired for my solitary wanderings among the woods. I brought home game, too, furred or feathered, and was all the while gathering physical endurance as well as a high degree of confidence in my ability to find my own way anywhere. Not once did I get lost or feel any doubt as to the right way home from wherever I might be. Perhaps my longest jaunt was one which took me on from forest to forest, one beautiful autumnal day, until I came out upon a bold headland with a broad valley below me. I was struck, child as I was, with the exceeding fairness of the scene which I had discovered. It was a vision of enchantment and I can see it now. No one was there to tell me at what I was gazing, but I knew that the bright strip of winding water at my right must be the Tiougneauga. Then the larger stream at the left must be the upper west fork of the Chemung and I could see where they mingled into one. Far on to the southward must then be the place where Anthony Wayne's men fought the Iroquois and forever broke the power of the Six Nations confederacy. I sat and looked at it all for a long time and I must have needed a rest, tough as I was. I needed another and a long one after getting home. It is strange to me, even now, that I was allowed, when not yet ten, to spend day after day in the forests, alone with my gun. At the same time, too, I was practicing with the short barrelled rifle bore pistols and was becoming quite an



expert. I believe I can do better, to this day, with a derringer pistol than with a long barrel. One of my most annoying disadvantages as a sportsman arose from the costly nature of both powder and shot and out of that financial consideration grew about my first acquaintance with the great and perplexing currency question. The circulating medium of rural New York, in those days, was in need of a sweeping reform. Its copper was to the last degree miscellaneous, like that of Rochester, as I had seen. The silver was almost entirely Spanish or Mexican and all trading was transacted in shillings and sixpences. The name had its origin, for the Spanish dollar was a "piece of eight," as is known to all readers of Robinson Crusoe, and each of its eight "reals" is of nearly the cash value of the colonial "pinetree shilling," sometimes called a York shilling. Of course, these shillings were worth twelve and a half cents each. Of gold there was absolutely none in circulation and I think I never saw an American gold coin until I was in my 'teens. The all but universal medium, therefore, was banknotes, and these, like the copper, were miscellaneous. I remember hearing that the only sure way to detect a counterfeit was to compare it with a bill known to be good. If the new bill proved to be better made it was probably spurious for the counterfeiters were splendid workmen. Much bad money was said to be afloat and the expert detectives were rare in all that region. Added to these were the unnumerable remnants of the unredeemed promises of broken banks. Now it happened that among my treasures in the garret was that old red chest of my father's. In it were stacks of cancelled checks, with which, as my arithmetic prospered, I was allowed to





play "store." All the contents of the chest were fully and formally presented to me and I had clear, definite ideas upon the subject of property. All went well until one day when, delving at the bottom of the coffer, I uncovered a time worn wallet. Open it came and in it were the treasures of Crusoe's island. There they lay, that heap of one dollar bills, and with me was no one to advise me that these were counterfeit and broken bank relics of the deceptions practised upon my father's clerks and salesmen. Whatever they might be, they were indisputably my own and I proceeded to use them as such. I think I am not in error in believing that my part ownership in my boat dates from that discovery. Very sure am I that my powderhorn and shotbag were shortly full to overflowing with a surplus for future consumption. Fishinglines and hooks came with the other ammunition but so, ere many days, came a crash in the currency, for one of the bills returned in disgrace and had to be redeemed by John Osborn. Then out was hunted the secret of my liberal expenditures and my wealth disappeared as does all fictitious capital in a "panic" for I had one of them. It may be a practical commentary upon the existing disorder of things to note that only that one bill ever showed its head again to trouble me or mine.

Having a gun of my own and being a sportsman, it was a matter of course that I took a lively interest in the village gunshop and particularly in the manufacture of rifles. I saw the long bars of soft iron bored out, day after day, and wished I had one of them. I was yet to own precisely such a soft iron rifle and I am in doubt whether the inefficiency of my right ear dates in any manner from the bursting of it. I heard well enough



afterwards, but when the breech of that rifle skipped past my ear so closely, I felt a jarring twinge all through my head. None would have been felt probably, if it had varied two inches in either direction. If that did any harm, more may have been done by the flying heel of our horse "Nig." He was sold about a year after I reached Homer, for he was only a four year old and not quiet enough for a family horse. He and I, however, had been good friends and I liked nothing better than to be allowed to get him out of the barn and lead him down to the river to water him. Leading was not all, for I delighted in making him play and prance around and he was always ready for a romp. So it happened that on one of these trips he was no sooner out of the yard gateway than he began his fun. He jerked the halter from me in a twinkling and up went his heels. He had intended no harm but one of his hoofs hit me a little behind my right ear and I fell to the ground insensible. Nig ran to the river and out into the middle of it as if aware that he had made a mistake of some sort. I was carried into the house and it was a full half hour before consciousness returned. The surgeon in charge informed my mother that it was well the hoof glanced for if it had not done so I would not have known what hurt me. He may have meant that there would have been an end of me but his language was defective for, as it was, I knew nothing at all about it, except that it was three weeks before I was permitted to leave the house.

Any effect of either hit must, I think, have been hidden until later days, for in all my boyhood I had the keen hearing of an Indian hunter and could catch the chipper of a squirrel in the tallest tree.



## Chapter Eighth.

## The Academy and the Shop.

Long ago did the old Homer Academy building disappear in fire and smoke but it was a great credit to the liberal minded first settlers who planned and built it. I hope that when it was burned the fire spared the cannon house, so near it. There must have been time to take out the cannon, if anybody could find the key of the door. The Homer boys managed to do that, once. It was in an early summer when the village trustees had inspected the honeycombed relic of the Revolution and had wisely decided that it was not in condition for the firing of Fourth of July salutes. It might burst and do harm to its artillerymen. Vast was the indignation aroused by that prudent decision. Did not the Homer boys know their own cannon, which they or their forefathers had captured from Burgoyne? At all events there came a dark night and a silent procession of young patriots across the green and when, shortly afterwards, the trustees peered in to take a look at the precious gun, it was not there. An excited spirit of inquiry ran all over the village and so did the trustees. Barns and outhouses were searched and so were the woods. All was in vain and something like a mystery brooded silently over the whole affair until the night before the Fourth. Then there was another youthful procession and precisely at midnight the villagers were startled from their slumbers by the loud beginning of the customary cannonade. There was the ancient gun and it was roaring its very best as if to express its indignation at its



hard luck in having been imprisoned so long at the bottom of the Lower Pond, for that was where the patriotic boys had hidden it.

Of the academy itself, as an institution of learning, I have few memories, except such as belong to the ordinary routine of a boy at school. There were elocutionary exercises in public, every Saturday forenoon, but these were the special province of the very largest students until one day when the ambitious youngster who had somehow won the nickname of "Old Put" or "Put Stoddard" managed to obtain the permission of the Principal, Professor Woolworth, and marched out upon the high platform to recite Hohenlinden with variations of his own. He was a proud boy, for his elocutionary effort was well received and he was not called upon to repeat it.

In one of the reception rooms of the building were preserved the oil painted portraits of the founders and among them was that of John Osborn. It is my information that the painting of those portraits was one of the earlier commissions of my friend Frank Carpenter, the well known artist of The Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, for he was a Homer boy and was the first artist I ever heard of.

The very large room at the southeast corner of the main story was the gathering place for over forty boys and girls, of all sizes. I believe that I was about the smallest member of that assembly and there came a time when I wearied of being told so and of being treated accordingly. There was no mischief in me, no spirit of revenge, but I was inventive and was fond of trying experiments. I tried one. A square pasteboard box was procured that shut into itself with a deep cover. An oblong cut in that cover





developed a door which would open and shut. A small tin matchbox also had a cover which would go on and off. It was at a time when the old kind of exasperators were giving way before a new sort of sulphurheads almost every other one of which would actually ignite by scratching instead of by being rubbed against a red hot coal, unless they put out the coal. It was early in a hot summer day that I drove my cows to pasture and lingered among the thistles and other efflorescences all the way, coming and going. Bee after bee, honey and bumble, with wasp and hornet, many as might be found among the flowers, were captured deftly and transferred to the pasteboard box. I was not afraid of bumblebees for I had robbed many a nest of them with much battling and I also knew the nature and armament of a wasp. The box was densely populated therefore, with an entirely new class of summer boarders and they buzzed outrageously, so that I was half afraid lest some enemy of their peace might discover them prematurely. The point with me was that all those ignorant insects were about to go to school.

My own seat and desk were in a corner near a window and within reach from that window was a lightning rod and I could climb. Before a great while after the beginning of the day's educational toil, the big room was silent except for the buzz of whispered study and the voices of varied recitation, for the buzz in the box was as yet inaudible. Now, however, that imitation of Pandora's case was deftly pushed along at the end of a stick, until it was under an unoccupied desk not far from my own. Then a slight blow of the stick knocked off the cover and the new candidates for admission to the academy were free to present their credentials. Every bug of



them was angry enough to do so and they all arose into the summer air in a humming throng. That was at the very moment when I myself was getting out of the window and reaching for the lightning rod. Upon that I clung for only long enough to discover that the schoolroom had suddenly become a scene of heterogeneous and exclamatory confusion. During days which followed, the wise men of Homer struggled with the problem of how so many different kinds of stinging insects could have broken out of the same nest and how and why they had made their nest in the schoolroom. Very similar problems are at this day floating around among the latest works of the greatest scientists. As for me, I held my peace, as became a small and unassuming scholar, but thirty years afterwards, I heard my cousin Matilda Bright, now Mrs. Hughes, of London, relating to a circle of friends the story of that sudden breaking up of the morning session of the Homer Academy. She had been in the room at the time. I was glad to be able to solve for her the mystery but if it had been divulged at an earlier day I fear that my own part in the matter would have been looked upon with strong disapprobation. As for anything else that happened in the academy, I was only half sure who it was that climbed into the belfry in midwinter and so packed the bell with snow that it would not ring at all, next morning. Neither did I know, for sure, who it was that drove Judge Keep's red cow into the chapel and all the way up stairs and left her with her horned head projecting from one of the upper windows.

If I was learning some things at the Academy, I was also finding out a great deal at the shop and I really liked that school the better of the two.



In much that interested me, the forge and its accompaniments, for instance, there is little worth telling. One specialty which fascinated me was the melting of chopped up Mexican dollars and the molding of long bars to be rolled out thin for the manufacture of silver ornaments for the Indians. I was willing to be my grandfather's assistant in any amount of silver work, including the stamping out of small articles, in which I actually acquired some skill. Deeper and sometimes almost breathless was my interest in the red men themselves and in their squaws and papposes. When they came to see John Osborn, they were sure to be arrayed in their best for they had great respect for him and he was their counsellor in many affairs as well as their silversmith. He had been of service to them during his long legislative experience at Albany. The warriors, as a rule, were dressing much like white men, but the squaws adhered to their picturesque national apparel, beadwork, porcupine quill work and all, and they invariably wore moccasins. Of these, I myself wore out several pairs and found them a comfortable kind of footing. More than that, my first bow, and it was a good one, was made for me by an Onondaga warrior. It may appear that my acquaintance with Indian affairs began early and my after liking for them is accounted for.

My best and most important school, all the while, was my own home. In it was the quiet and gentlemanly wisdom of Squire Osborn, the gentle and watchful care of my grandmother, and, most of all the overruling presence of my exceedingly lovely mother. I think of her, now, as an embodiment of unvarying patience, dignity, cultivation and intelligence, with the addi-



tion of graceful manners and a keen sense of humor. It is upon my mind that not any other boy in the village found his mother's copy of Bacon's Essays fairly interlined with critical and analytical comments, and it was so with some of her other books. Our family circle was now full. My sister Julia was in her teens and was developing at her piano a good talent for music. My sister Kate was a fat and merry little girl and my brothers, Henry, Charles and John, were aged down as regularly as the steps of a ladder. I must say that I regarded them all as small boys, too young to be entrusted with any kind of sportsmanship. As for that, had I not fished all over the several "Little York Lakes," a dozen miles away, with my grandfather? Had I not been with him as far away as Skaneateles Lake, for the capture of big pickerel and lake trout? Had I not even driven cows as far as Preble, seven long miles, and found my own way home on foot with three earned shillings in my pocket? I felt ready, after that, to take a whole drove of cattle to Syracuse or Albany. In the autumn of the year in which I passed my ninth birthday, however, there was prepared for me a journey of such extent and importance that it may possibly be entitled to a chapter by itself, for it let me out of Homer again and gave me a glimpse of a larger world. Several times larger and full of all manner of things that were new and strange.





## Chapter Ninth.

## The Young City.

Not a city at all but still possessing only a village organization, was Syracuse when the stagecoach which bore me rolled into it, in the latter part of September. I was received by my father at his boardingplace, the American House, on the site of which the First Presbyterian Church was afterwards erected. It was a grand experience to eat supper in so big a hotel, but a larger one came next morning when I went down with him to the bookstore of Stoddard and Babcock. The latter was a Courtland county man, from Truxton, the home of the Dixons and Whites, and I at once took a liking to him. Just how much of railway track had at that date been constructed, I do not know, but a vast, hollow, smoky railway depot stood in the middle of the village. It reached all the way through from Salina street to Warren street. Next to it, on Salina street, the longest and most important thoroughfare owned by the corporation, was William Winton's Hotel and next to that was our store. At the upper side of that square was Canal street and the canal itself, spanned by bridges, there and elsewhere. Of the store, I need as yet say nothing, nor of the depot, for I was at once turned over to the care of friends with whom I was to visit. The first of these were Horace White's family and Andrew White in particular. Then began the treasured friendship which has lasted to the present day. Of his father, then the cashier of the Onondaga County Bank, I saw but little, except at meal times, but I took to him, for he was full of fun and tried hard to make me like Congress water, of which he was using freely. I



drank some of it and then broke off, much preferring what was called "Teall water," from Mr. Oliver Teall, the originator of the village water works. One of my first explorations of the municipality led me, in company with Andrew, his younger brother Horace and some of our friends, to see a walking match at Winton's Hotel. Two planks had been set upon barrels in the long front room of the tavern and upon these a pair of pedestrian rivals were pacing back and forth. It looked to me like boy's play and I promptly offered to walk against any boy in Syracuse but the challenge was not taken up. Only a few evenings afterwards, however, I might have suspected, if I had been wiser, that Andrew and his crowd, including Jeff Hall and Carroll Smith and some older fellows, were inclined to let me follow my own lead, if it would but lead me into fun for the people. There was to be a great temperance meeting in a public hall and they went with me in a swarm. They gathered near a small table, well forward. An eloquent orator had spoken and subsided and hardly had he seated himself before there came an unexpected addition to the programme. His successor may not have been quick enough in arising to fill the vacancy and it was filled for him. I had avowed a conviction that I could beat that speaker and in an instant I was standing upon the table. The crowd may not have recognized me correctly but they cheered enthusiastically and I spoke right along. When afterwards I became a young citizen of Syracuse, man after man shook hands with me as the youngest temperance orator he had ever heard and favored me with choice quotations from my address. I have made more than one speech since then that was not so well received by the audience.



After spending a few pleasant days with the Whites, I was transferred to Judge Johnson Hall's, on Warren street, for the Hall family also were almost as if they had been kindred. Where else I went and what I saw or did is a kind of far off mist, now, not to be easily distinguished from later memories of the same people and places. What I was really doing, nevertheless, was of importance, for I was making the acquaintance of a town into which my entire family was soon to find its way. There was to be only one year more of my Homer life, for when the leaves began to wither in the following autumn, our household goods were in wagons, our family was in a coach and the valley of the Tioughneauga was behind us. Of that trip, as a journey, there is nothing to be said, but at the end of it was a great change in my life and I was ten years of age, with a curious suggestion always in my mind that I was much older. Among other things which I had left behind me was my old nickname of "Put" and as yet I was unable to guess when how or why I was to obtain another.

Long before there had been any considerable settlement at Syracuse, a prosperous village had formed upon the shore of Onondaga lake, a mile or so northward. The Indian name of that water had been Genantaha and was said to have something to do with the fact that the deer came to that neighborhood to enjoy the "salt licks." At all events, the salt springs had attracted the white men and a profitable salt making interest began its growth soon after the red men lost control of Onondaga valley. The little river of that name which runs through Syracuse into the lake had also an Indian appellation of its own and it was said to mean "Crooked Creek."



I never tried to find the source of it, but I was soon acquainted with all there was of it for several miles from its mouth. It made a millpond on the east side of the village, of land which is now occupied by houses.

The canal, on a due east and west line, and Salina street, running due north and south, determined the topography of the entire town, except where it was interfered with by old roads and the windings of the creek. The line of the railroad was only one long block south of the canal and of course its presence gave the name to Railroad street. There was then no such corporation as the New York Central. As I now remember, there was an Albany and Schenectady R.R.; a Schenectady and Utica; a Utica and Syracuse; an Auburn and Syracuse; an Auburn and Rochester; a Syracuse and Rochester Direct, and a Rochester and Buffalo, all built at different dates as separate enterprises. It would be worth any young man's while, to-day, to go as I did and make a study of that railway as it then was in Syracuse. The rails were thick straps of wrought iron, spiked down upon logs. When the head of one of those rails worked loose, by the breaking of its spike or the rotting of its log, it would sometimes fly up at the arriving carwheel and penetrate the car itself, dangerously. There were sad stories told of the work of those "snake heads," as they were called. The engines were unlike anything that is to be seen nowadays, but they were said to carry express trains at the dangerous speed of twelve miles an hour. Think of a passenger car letting go of its iron strap at a gait like that! Passenger boats were still running on the canal and it may be that many people distrusted the steam wagons. Years





afterwards, I went to inspect the first T rails, before one of them was put down. Their use was still a matter for discussion, and I was confidently assured by an eminent citizen that they would never be adopted. They were not only unwieldy but were much too expensive. No railway would ever have business enough to carry such extravagance as that. Then there came a time when the venturesome Railway Company caused the construction of the wonderful locomotive "Lightning." It was believed to be capable of going a mile a minute. It actually did so, with one passenger car and one freight car. I worked hard to get a ticket for that first trip of the Lightning between Syracuse and Rochester and expected to find the passenger car jammed with fellows eager to have the credit of riding that race against time. It was hardly so, for my fingers and toes would have done for the counting of our human freight. Did they all miss the train, or were there secret doubts as to the fate of that engine?

I suppose I must leave the road, now, and come back to our first house and its neighborhood. It was on Fayette street, two doors above the Park and it was a two story red brick house. Of course, it was detached and had front, side and back yards. Except the hotels and stores, there was not then a three story house in the village nor was there a connected "block" until two years later, when a gentleman named Farmer ventured upon the very doubtful experiment of building one. It was a permanent success! Fayette street and the Park were but one square south of Railroad street and our house was only a few minutes walk from the middle of the village. So was everybody else's house unless they lived out of town or up in Salina. The



other name for that was "Salt Point" only that some of the wicked boys gave it a worse one yet, by way of translation. It is now the First Ward of the Central City.

The Park was an oblong of about the size of a city square. It had a neat wooden fence around it and much grass and shrubbery in it but its glory was its fountain in the middle. I saw that fountain play, once, squirting real water to prove that it could do so. I am not sure that it ever did it again. Around the Park were the residences of some of our most substantial citizens. At the upper right hand corner was Hamilton White's house. He never spoke to small boys but his wife did and she was a special friend of my mother. When we came, a large house on the Fayette street side was occupied by the Wyman family and I was there a good deal with the Wyman boys but it was afterwards purchased by Horace White and that made Andrew again my near neighbor. Just above that place was the Butler house and the two Butler children, John and Mary, were soon prime favorites with us while their mother won my highest admiration and esteem. I shall have more to say of them hereafter. Then came a large open yard in the middle of which was Bill Teall's law office with a swinging squirt of water in front of it. That was a lesson in hydraulics, for the water itself spun the squirt, which was remarkable. On the upper corner, toward our house, was the Fitch place and that too became one of my abiding places. Across, on our corner, was the Forbes house but Burnet Forbes was too much my junior. Opposite that, next to Hamilton White's was the Outwater house and in it were jewels. Mrs. Outwater was one of them, and her daughter Mary, after-



wards Mrs. Andrew D. White, was the other. On the other side of the Park were fine residences and lovely families but I will not catalogue them now. It is enough to say that never elsewhere, within the same space, have I known such a settlement of excellent people. I already had acquaintances among "the Park boys," as all who lived near it were called, and I soon knew all the rest. The Wyman boys went to the Parochial School of St. Paul's church but all the rest went to the "Academy" kept by Messrs. Allen and Stebbins in the upper floor of the big wagon shop just below the Park on the right. I must not forget to mention that the Congregational meetinghouse faced the lower end of the Park, for that brick building was to have a great deal to do with me. As for the school, there had once been a genuine academy in Syracuse. Its founders, however, had been ahead of their time and had built their large, expensive brick edifice away out of town on a hill. It looked well, at a distance, but it was too long a walk to reach it, for any but its few near neighbors. Its finances also kept away from it and it was at last voted a failure. As an Academy it ceased to be, but, to the great credit of our citizens, it survived as a well filled and well sustained orphan asylum. My mother was almost immediately elected one of the trustees of that institution and I have heard from Mrs. Hamilton White that when any subject of importance was before the board it was sure to be tabled if she were not present, for several of them would refuse to decide until they "had heard what Sarah Osborn had to say about it," for they had known her in her girlhood. She was a good majority, at any time, with all who really knew her.



I was a busy boy during that first winter in my new country. Then, as afterwards, I was the factotum and errandboy of the family, besides having the school to attend and the bookstore to investigate. Spring came and the Summer and all sorts of fun with the Park boys and I think it was on that Fourth of July that I discovered what might be done by inventive genius for a young city which did not have any Burgoyne cannon. The big wagon-shop near the corner of the Park possessed a tremendous anvil and the foreman of the shop was a true patriot. So, perhaps, was the anvil for in it was a deep, square hole, large enough to admit the shank of the cold chisel used in severing iron bars for wheel tires. When that anvil was hauled out into the wide open space near the shop, it cheerfully assumed the attitude of a piece of ordnance. Much powder might be poured down the throat of that chisel socket and a hard wood plug hammered in on top with a small aperture on one side for priming. If then a paper slow match were lighted in due relation to the priming, all that we boys had to do was to stand still and see it burn, for a truly national bang was sure to reward us in a few seconds. We fired salutes for all the states and territories and for the flag itself, the night before the Fourth, until all our ammunition was used up and it was time to go home and see what our several families might have to say about it.

Autumn came again and with it were important changes. One of these was in the school, for it disappeared. Perhaps it was because the wagonshop had changed owners and perhaps it was because Professor Allen had gone into the music business and had opened a new store on Salina street, opposite





our own. He had also undertaken classes in singing and where Mr. Stebbins went I never knew. The place of that academy was shortly filled by another kept by a Mr. Weld in the Conference Meeting building of the old, and about to be abandoned, Congregational church, near the middle of the village. I attended it, of course, but my memories of its instructive power are vague. One of them is the frequent assurance of Mr. Weld that if we did our duty by our books we might in time become even presidents of colleges, and that such a prospect was perpetually responded to in my mind by a blind self assurance that I did not wish to become any such thing. I would vastly rather be something else, and if the other boys were of my mind, all but one of them had his own way.

The other change carried me away from the Park for a short distance, as my father had secured a more commodious residence on Onondaga street, between Salina and Warren streets. My father's business was now flourishing, his family was growing and all the future appeared to look reasonably bright. I was not by any means separated from my former playfellows and I immediately began to make new ones and at the same time to reach out into the surrounding country for I had attained the ripe age of eleven.



## Chapter Tenth.

## The Onondaga Street House.

Our new house was somewhat larger than the other, a high stoop basement, two stories and a most attractive garret. There was also a considerable frame addition in the rear, a woodshed with finished rooms over it. The garret was promptly preempted in memory of the grand one in Homer and became a new realm of work for me. There was a general likeness between this and the Fayette street house, externally, and another in the fact that both were infested with large Norway rats upon which I might now and then practice with my gun, which my grandfather had permitted me to bring with me. Here, however the yards, fore, side and aft, were larger and more susceptible of improvement, if hencoops are to be regarded as entitled to that ascription.

Hardly were we settled before there came one more reminder of my earlier experiences. Warren street, at the left, was only the continuation of the old stage road down the valley to the Indian Reservation and the red men and their families were frequent visitors in Syracuse. It offered them their best market for berries, moccasins, bows, small game and other products of their otherwise not very well tilled acres. Before long they became frequent visitors at our house and my old interest in them and studies of them were renewed. Added to this was the fact that only one square beyond Salina street on the right was Onondaga Creek, with the pond just below, as near to me as had been the Toughneauga, and about as hopeless a stream to fish in. I was never to own a boat on it although



I once did build one, with immense toil, and it positively refused to float after I dragged it to the creek and launched it. I had not acquired the art of shipbuilding at that time and many of the ships which I afterwards built and sent to sea did not come back again.

I shall not attempt any tedious and useless accuracy concerning precise dates, but if I were to attempt to correct my cloudy chronology at this point, I should place our entry into our new home on the first of May, in the middle of my eleventh year, leaving behind me a year and a half in the Fayette street house. That may have been the reason why so soon afterwards I seem to have had a long summer vacation for purposes of exploration in the neighborhood and elsewhere.

Be that as it may, I was well supplied with powder and shot and my head was filled with the legends which I had heard concerning the many attractions of Onondaga lake and the forests around its western shore. The eastern shore was occupied by villages, farms, saltworks, and I took no manner of interest in its somewhat shabby civilization. Only the village of Salina had attractions, for in the edge of it boats were to be obtained and in it were the residences of several families whom I knew and liked.

The lake may be somewhat over six miles long and at its widest place about two miles wide. In summer it contains any amount of undisturbed fishing and in winter it often affords good skating. In very cold winters it sometimes also furnishes a fine temporary horsereace track. In Spring and Fall, the wild ducks and geese gather here to discuss the propriety of a southern trip and numbers of them go to the Syracuse markets instead.



Their interruptions, for the greater part, are occasioned by what some sportsmen deride as "pothunters" and the favorite ducking method of these gentlemen requires a small flock of wooden decoy ducks. When these deceptions are anchored at point blank range from the shore, the real birds, in search of companionship and sanfere, will come and alight among them. The man with a gun, hidden behind a breastwork of bushes, then has them almost at his mercy, but I saw one eager shooter fall into a kind of trap, once. I was tramping along the lakeshore and caught a glimpse of a fine flock of decoys, bobbing up and down upon the water at some distance beyond me. At the same moment I espied an excited young man in pretty good clothes who was stooping, creeping and dodging from tree to tree in his eager haste to reach that point upon the shore. He succeeded in doing so and then there was a careful taking of aim. Bang! Bang! Went both barrels of his gun but his game did not so much as try to fly away and time was given him to reload. I was all the while drawing nearer, enjoying the sport, and had just reached the usual bush cover when both barrels went off again. So did an all but lunatic yell of laughter from a pothunter who was rolling upon the sand and trying to hold his sides in while he shouted to me that "That blessed lubber yonder is killing my decoys!" He discovered, himself, the sportsman did, that it was not worth his while to swim out after his well peppered game and I think he at once traveled onward. On the whole, I found pretty good shooting around the lake and brought home many a creditable string of snipe and plover in their season. Away up the creek, above the village, was another range of lowland where I often went after snipe.





It was two or three years later before I accomplished much with ducks and the like. I then became better armed for long range shooting. One day, in an old gunshop, I discovered a genuine, oldfashioned, bellmuzzled fowling piece, of the pattern with which our Pilgrim fathers killed deer and red men and their descendants blazed away at the British from behind the breastwork on Breed's Hill. It was heavier than any rifle I was acquainted with and its muzzle stood on a level with my cap front. Not yet had I obtained any reverence for relics of antiquity. In the most barbarous and ignorant manner, I purchased the priceless antique, had its bell muzzle sawed off and a sight put on, and had the great old flint lock exchanged for a modern percussion. It proved to be the best kind of "boat gun," but I honored the stalwart forefathers who were able and willing to tote such a weapon around all day. The amount of powder that was required to charge it fully accounted, in my opinion, for the historical fact that Putnam's men ran out of ammunition when the British came up the slope the third time. I believe I killed a diver with it at fourteen rods. The other addition to my armament came from my friend Andrew White. He made me come home with him, one day, and showed me a really beautiful rifle which had been presented to him by a friend of his father. It had telescope sights and was a treasure of a gun, but he said to me: "Now, Will, the fact is that I never go hunting. I haven't any use for a rifle. You take it and use it as long as you want to, just as if it were your own. Take it home with you, flask, pouch and all."

I was delighted to do so and if I afterwards became a pretty good rifle

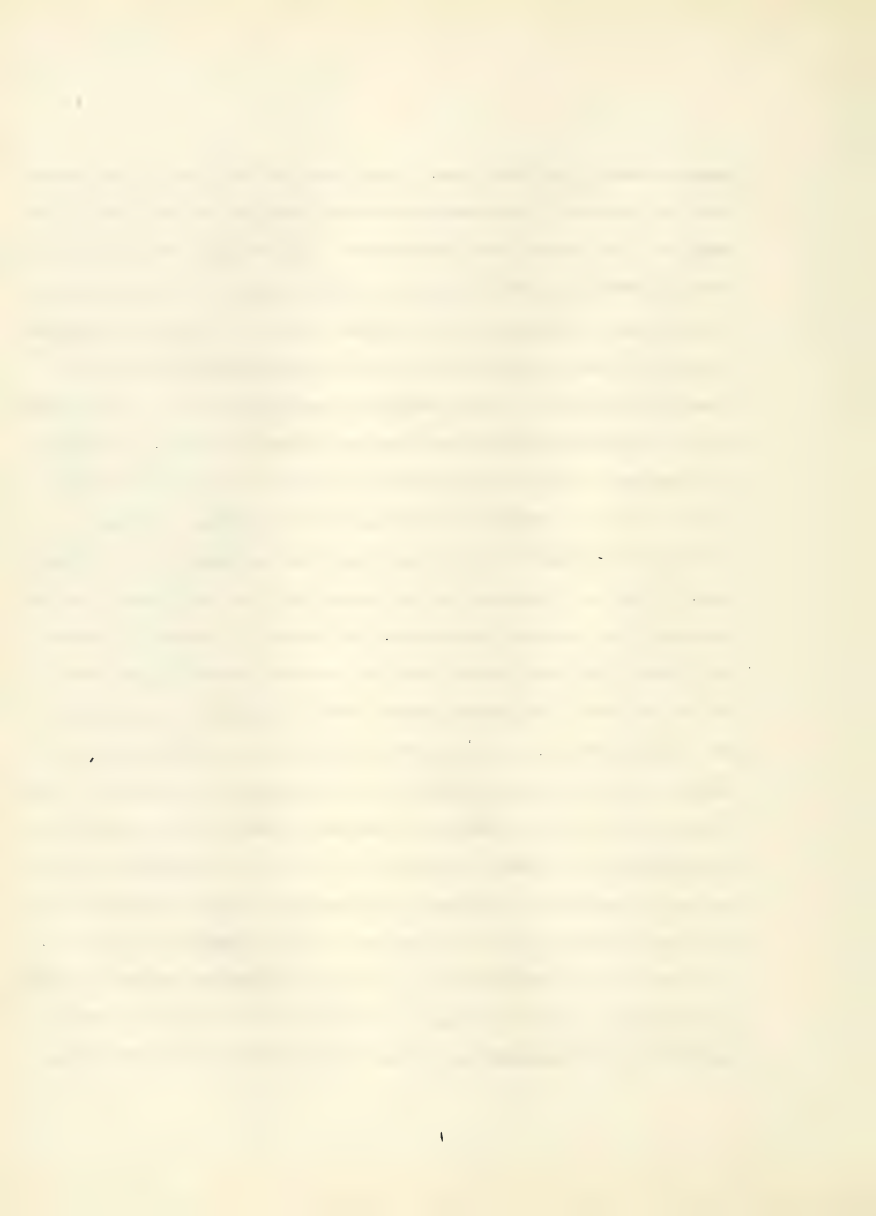


man, it was because I began practice so early with Andy White's beautiful gun. I kept it through several seasons, for he persistently refused to become a hunter.

My nearest boy neighbor was William Corning, in the big frame dwelling on the southerly corner of Salina street. He was a nephew of Mr. Corning of Albany, the well known iron merchant and politician, in whose business concern he afterwards became a partner. His father was a man of wealth and had been a minister of the Episcopal church but had left the pulpit to devote himself to business pursuits and to scholarship. He was said to be a very learned man and he had at that time about the best library in the county. Before long that library was a favorite place of visitation with me. Its owner was a silent, gloomy faced, unbending sort of man, and was not popular on that account, but I shall always remember his unvarying kindness to myself. I may have been something of a favorite, for he appeared to like to have me come and spend as much time as I pleased among his books. He was an antiquarian, an Oriental scholar, and his collection was rich in rare old copies, vellum bound folios and the like, which were objects of deep interest to a boy who was beginning to believe that the world was made for books. Will Corning and I became partners and we soon discovered that we were much alike in one particular. Neither of us had enough pocket money for the continual drains of our small exchequers. We held more than one solemn council upon that subject and one day a brilliant financial idea came to me. It was chickens. I had no coop but there was a small cornerib on one corner of the Corning place and we easily ob-



tained a lease of it, rent free. I had found out that fowls of all sorts might be purchased in the rural districts at lower prices than such as we could sell them for to hotels and dealers in the village. The next requirement was capital and Will Corning not only had none but was uncertain as to his father's confidence in his business ability. I had more impudence, if that was what I had, for I went right down to the store and laid my plans before my father, with a schedule of possible profits. He was standing at his countingroom desk and there were others listening. At the end of my programme he smiled audibly and so, I think, did his friends, but he opened the cash drawer and handed me out five dollars. That was on a Saturday morning and Will and I were ready with our baskets for a chicken trip. It was in a vacation time and we omitted Sunday only from a week of unintermitting commercial enterprise. At the end of the week, I was able to go down to the store and pay back the borrowed five and report that I had as much more in my pocket, besides what I had paid to my industrious and vigorous partner. As I remember, we paid twelve, fifteen and twenty cents a head, as the case might be, and sold readily at an average of twenty-five. It was only a question of how many we could find and carry, for the distances often made it hard work. At the next Thanksgiving time, we had our old corncrib all but packed with garnered fowls, including turkeys, but there the season began to be against us and we wound up the business. Will went out of it entirely, but I had begun upon my own account in another direction. I had made enough to pay for the erection of some pretty good coops in our backyard and to buy selected stock to start them with.



There must have been purchases and sales to advantage during the winter, as well as eggs and chickens, for in the Spring I was in funds. A neighbor named Hudson was a fowl fancier and had obtained some of the first Chinese fowls ever brought into this country. They were huge, they were new and they were hard to get. Therefore they commanded high prices and Hudson made money out of his investment. So did I, for I paid him two dollars for a dozen of eggs, instead of ten for a pair of fowls, and I am sure that I obtained five dollars a pair for some of my chickens. Some of them I kept and remember well one rooster whose crow would have put to shame a trombone in the middle of the German band. At about this time, too, I became the happy owner of a pair of genuine Maryland gamefowls, of the ancient ante-revolutionary breed. They were indeed rarities, both for fight and for beauty, and I reared some of them with care, keeping them separate. As long afterwards as when my brother Charles joined me in Arkansas, he told me of a great cocking main between Onondaga and Courtland counties which he went to see. To his astonishment, it was won by a gang of "the Stoddard gamefowls," so long had the fame of my birds been kept up. In my own time, however, the net result was occasional trouble with neighbors whose roosters had wandered within reach of mine and did not return to their homes, and more than one unpleasant episode with the "sporting" fraternity and the birds which they brought unduly to be killed by mine. More than that and in the way of fame, I won my new nickname for it was not long before I saw "Game Stoddard" scrawled upon the fences of all that part of Syracuse, including the Park.





I must not forget that among my treasures, brought from Homer, was a small pickheaded tomahawk. It had formed part of the regalia of a company of palefaced Albany Mohawks to which my grandfather had belonged when he was a young man and I learned to throw it into a tree, at short range, in the precise manner in which the red men never threw their own hatchets if they could do anything better with them. Somehow or other, it is always associated in my memory with a family legend often told me by my father. He said that he had been informed, when a boy, that one of his ancestors on the Avery side married a daughter of an Indian chief, Pequot or Narragansett, he thought the former, and that so we were descended from the oldest families in the country. At all events, his face and bearing and his very black, straight hair, would put any man in mind of an Indian of the best kind. He also had Indian traits of character, one of which was a disposition to take his own part. My own notably unpugilistic nature must have omitted most of the Pequot, but I was proud of the line of descent. I had also kept my stone arrowheads and now added several more to my collection. Moreover, my interest in rocks increased, spurred a little, if I remember correctly, by my learned friend Mr. Corning, and I began to gather specimens. Among these, in the course of time, were a number of rare fossils from the famous Onondaga limestone formation. A geologist told me, once, that I had the only perfect trilobite he had ever seen, whatever that unusual bird of chaos may happen to be. To these were added, by way of ornament, a quantity of the lime crystals which are often formed to perfection in the process of the solar evaporation of salt water.



There was one feature of my collection which was a kind of testimonial to my mother's zeal and ability in sustaining foreign mission work. One of her early friends had become a somewhat noted missionary in India and he came home on a visit while we were in Homer. He brought with him a number of oriental prizes in which I took an especial interest. In acknowledgement of her zeal, rather than mine, I may suppose, he made me the happy owner of a genuine Hindoo idol. It was a statue of Godama, sitting down cross-legged, carved elegantly in sandalwood and richly gilded. With it came a curious specimen of a Hindoo "shastra," or sacred book. It was a manuscript on heavy, dark blue paper, about fourteen inches wide and unfolding to a length of eight or nine feet. The handwriting was white, large and beautifully uniform. These were things which I was proud to show to my friend Mr. Corning, to convince him that I also was beginning to be an oriental scholar. What became of them when at last our household broke up, I do not know. On the whole, my little front bedroom, over the front door, was beginning to be a curious kind of an affair and I was all the while on the lookout for further works of art and ornament.



## Chapter Eleventh.

## Hoyt's School.

I think it was at about the end of my twelfth year that the school enterprise of Mr. Weld ended. He may have had a call to some church or other, but at all events, Syracuse was once more without an "academy." Several gentlemen who were encumbered with boys took the matter up and decided to have a firstclass select school, -very select,- of their own. The number of students was at first limited to sixteen, but afterwards three or four additional fortunates were grudgingly admitted. The basement of the Congregational church, opposite the Park, was obtained for the schoolroom and was neatly fitted up with desks and benches. They were exceedingly fortunate in their selection of a teacher. He was a tall, handsome, pleasant mannered young man, named Hoyt, and a more skilful instructor for such boys as we were it would be hard to find. From the very beginning, he enforced upon us the idea that we were distinctively "young gentlemen" and that we must never say or do or think anything ungentlemanly. Any boy who could not or would not live up to that hard rule had only one thing before him. He might expect to gather up his books and walk out of the schoolroom as a fellow who was unfit to be in it. At the same time, Mr. Hoyt possessed a rare talent for getting young brains at work to the best advantage. He did his whole duty by us and made his mark upon every one of us. It is my opinion that the remarkable record of the boys of that school, selected material as they were, was largely due to the stimulus and direction which they received while under his care. I can sit at my desk, now, and



look around that schoolroom and I cannot find one failure in it. Yonder, in front, is our star boy, Andrew D. White, foreign minister and educator. Just behind him are sitting three successful leading editors. There is a notably skilful surgeon. Across from him is an United States Court Judge. There are two army colonels. There is a prime good preacher. The rest are business men, lawyers, authors and so forth, and among them all is but one hard case. He began brightly but he did not end well. I must sadly correct my assertion, for he, with fine abilities, was a failure, because he rejected the wise counsels of Mr. Hoyt and forgot to be a gentleman, for the Golden Rule and the TEN Commandments were made to us the fundamental thing in the idea we were to form of what might become a gentleman.

One of our lines of instruction, from the first, was in journalism, and our Saturday elocutionary exercises were varied by "compositions" and weekly journals, prepared, edited and read by ourselves, each periodical having but one editor. The name of my own was "The Frolic Manual," wherever I found such a name, and I obtained printed heads for it at a newspaper office. Immediately my invention was stolen, for the other editors went to the printers also. What made my own enterprise peculiar and somewhat celebrated as well as made fun of, was the fact that I was beginning to manufacture verses and each week found one or more strictly original poems in the columns of the "Manual," to be read before the school by the unabashed author. By the way, it need not be out of sight that our select school was considered to be a "Park Boys" affair, no matter what part of the village any member of it might come from, and it was a rival,





somewhat at war, of the Parochial School of St. Paul's Church, of which we formed a poor opinion for it did not have any periodical press.

Our Saturday exercises were a great affair and were attended by our mothers and our sisters and our cousins and our aunts to an extent which turned them into a kind of social gathering and made us think very well of ourselves. Our games, ball and races and wrestlings and so forth, were much the same as those of all other schoolboys, everywhere, and I discovered that my somewhat peculiar physical education, as cowboy, boatman and sportsman, had developed in me an unusual degree of toughness. No boy of my own size in the school could throw me and my running jump was as good as any other fellow's but, to my great chagrin, a slender, handsome chap named Jacob Arnold, who was with us only for a few months, could run right away from me. All the while, my chicken business went along with good success and my "game" reputation grew until it was uncomfortable. At the beginning of the next Summer vacation, Mr. Hoyt invited the whole school to a grand fishing excursion and sail on Oneida lake. We went in two hacks and an omnibus and we caught many fish. The really large and goodlooking sloop that carried us on the lake gave me my first ideas of the rolling ocean and of the wide, wide sea. Another year went by, and it was to me one of an exceedingly useful character. I was doing well at school and my early beginning in Latin, under Professor Dewey, at Rochester, came to my help remarkably. So did my early arithmetic and mathematics. All the while, too, I was fairly devouring books at home, in all the intervals between the demands of my other miscellaneous avocations. It was in that vacation



that I founded "The Rambler's Club," for general pedestrian expeditions into the surrounding country. Its membership was somewhat variable and its trips were of all sorts, including **hunting** and small fishing. It was not uncommon for us to make from fifteen to twenty miles a day, before the end of the following Autumn. With me, alone or in company, a favorite jaunt was to Fayetteville, eight miles out, and this was the village in which Grover Cleveland had his early experiences. My knowledge of its topography aided me afterwards in writing my "Crowded Out o' Crowfield," which is the other name for Fayetteville. A year went by and we knew that Andrew White was to leave us and go to Geneva College, afterwards Hobart Free College, to prepare for Yale. None of the rest of us were yet old enough to think of college at once, but a strong determination grew in my mind that I would go, some day or other. It was not until just as the term was ending that we were informed by Mr. Hoyt, to our great grief, that he must say good bye to us. Our banner school had come to an end and we were to see him no more. We had grown to regard him as our personal friend, to each of us individually, and there were some of the boys who actually cried at their desks. As for me, I went back to the Rambler's Club, fowls, Onondaga lake and my books, with frequent visits to the bookstore, with all the appointments of which I had become thoroughly familiar. I do not mean that "our crowd" went to pieces. By no means, and one of our favorite ball grounds was the wide, gravelly open in front of the City Hall. Here we could play match games with even the boys of the Parochial School and chance comers from the village. Among these, however were the usual



allowance of rougns and toughs, who were disposed to regard us with more or less contempt on account of our disposition to wear good clothes and all that sort of thing. I must confess that we, on our part, had generally imbibed an impression that such fellows were the bodily superiors of our sort. They soon began to invade us, in various ways, and we understood that there might be trouble coming. Especially were we bidden to stand in awe of a certain marvelous young boxer who had earned the proud name of "Buffalo Jack" and was said to be a ferociously merciless fighter. So he may have been and he should not have interfered with a peaceable fellow like me. He did so, however, one day when we were playing baseball. I was at the bat when a number of unbeautiful fellows came around the nearest corner and rushed in upon the ballground, with a yell. They were headed by the dreaded prizefighter and he made a set upon me, attempting to take away the bat. I am afraid that my mild temper gave way, for I threw the bat behind me and went for him. I knew that he must be the better boxer, and after a few swift exchanges I managed to close with him, for we were of about the same size. Almost to my astonishment, I quickly discovered that however good a boxer he might be, he was not a champion wrestler. I, on the other hand, had been in constant practice and had acquired some fine lessons at the expense of heavy falls. All the other boys had suspended operations, to watch the result, and I do not believe one of the Park boys really expected for me anything but defeat, although they knew that I had thrown every one of them. It was a test of strength, for a minute's grapple, but then I was under his weight and up he came, over my



right hip and down upon the gravel, so heavily that all the fight was banged out of him. It was a surprise and I was glad that he was not badly hurt, but I was ready for the next when they all, with one accord, walked away from the ballground, for their confidence had been in their leader and he was out of the muss. I do not remember that we ever were interfered with again. It is also my impression that I must amend my chronology and explain why we were all down there at the City Hall, for that is an important part of my story.

On the corner west of the City Hall Square was a large, four story brick building, known as the Frazee block. The upper story of this building had been arranged for the meetings of the Odd Fellows and Free Masons and was therefore, with its main hall and ante-rooms, just the thing for educational purposes. The gentlemen who had presided as the originators of the Hoyt school had consulted with themselves and others and had determined upon another academical experiment. They had organized, to a certain extent, and had selected a board of Trustees, of which my father was a member. They had also secured the services of a learned gentleman named Caruth, a Presbyterian clergyman, and the number of pupils was no longer limited. It included, however, nearly all of the boys of the old concern. There may have been forty, in all, at the outset, and the gravelly desert in front of the Hall was our natural playground. Before going on into the brief, peculiar history of Mr. Caruth's enterprise, I must say something more about that Summer. More of my time than ever before had been spent in the bookstore, for which I had imbibed a strong





liking. It was really as large and miscellaneous a library as any young bookworm need have asked for. It was also a place where all the odd characters of several kinds had formed a habit of drifting in and a fellow might see them to advantage if he took the interest in them that I did. I cannot now precisely remember, as to dates, but it seems to me that it was during that vacation that I first became aware of the presence and very strong personality of a gentleman by the name of Wells, an old particular friend of my father, who was making frequent visits at the store and was able to tell stories to any crew he found there. He had great confidence in my father and a son of his shortly afterwards came into his care as a kind of guardian, for Mr. Wells himself had become a perpetual traveler. He had formed a wild idea of his own that, now the railroads were becoming hitched together at their ends, with Hudson river connections, there might be formed a system of small-package deliveries in all the towns along the lines. He called it an "Express," whatever that might be, and my father agreed with him as to the practicability of the notion, although cautious and critical men of business shook their heads and said that it could never be made to work, not to any paying extent. Now, our store was a deep one, with an irregular jog at the rear, caused by the ins and outs of the hotel alongside. The width of the store at that end was diminished to nine feet and the length of that narrowness about twenty feet. When a coop at the far end was cut off by a high desk, that was just the place for an Express office. There, therefore, did Mr. Wells begin his crackbrained experiment, so far as Syracuse was concerned.



Before he had any office at all, I had seen him come striding in, carrying a heavy satchel, containing packages of value which he delivered in person. He was an industrious and cheerful man, with much fun in him and a tendency toward practical jokes. As soon as the packages began to come in any quantity, somebody had to take them to their destinations and I was that somebody, for I could charge from two to five cents for lugging the small merchandise and I was always in need of pocketmoney. It was in this way that I became the very first Express Messenger of Syracuse. It was not long before Mr. Wells took in a partner by the name of Fargo and there were endless puns upon that nomen and his, but I have since heard that the enterprise succeeded fairly well in spite of the prophets who averred that it would neither go far nor well.

After the opening of the Caruth School, I was, for a few weeks only, cut down to morning and evening carrier work. I did take hold of my school books again with energy, but it quickly became evident that our new teacher was not by any means a good copy of Mr. Hoyt. He may have been both learned and experienced, but he knew very little about boys. He devoutly believed in the old and pernicious idea that all boys required more or less flogging. None of us felt any suspicions when he put into his desk what seemed an unnecessary allowance of flat rulers, but there was an inaudible buzz all over the room on the morning when he somewhat ostentatiously added to these a three feet cowhide. My own blood rose to the danger line at once and I was ready for mischief. I did not say anything at first



except to some of our Park fellows, but I had my eye on "old Caruth." It was in the third week of the existence of that institution of learning that Joe May, son of Rev. Dr. Samuel J. May, by all odds one of the very best behaved and studious boys in the school, was unjustly and severely punished with a ruler. That was shortly followed by a few strokes of the cowhide upon another chap, a new comer, who may have been somewhat out of order. The next day, I came to school with a burning in my face but all went quietly until the class in algebra was on the long recitation bench. Mr. Caruth had adopted the unwise precaution of carrying his cowhide with him, under his left arm, as a kind of intimidation or doleful warning. He was pacing dignifiedly up and down in front of the class and I was watching him. Suddenly he paused in his march and began to administer terrible cuts over the head and shoulders of a boy in the middle of the bench. It was Matthew Myers, son of another Presbyterian clergyman and an old boy of Hoyt's school. I heard Matt. call out "O! Moses!"- something or other- and I sprang forward, for the blows were again falling. Some of them actually drew blood and there were red marks upon his neck. It was afterwards stated by Mr. Caruth that Matt. "looked at him disrespectfully." I must have done at least that, for I was not standing in front of him, storming at the top of my lungs and forbidding him to strike another blow at any boy in that school. Strangely enough, he did not hit me, but turned and spoke to the whole crowd. Exactly what followed, I cannot now remember, but the school was in an uproar and several fellows whom he did go for were escaping across the desks and benches. It was a complete



rebellion and all that the poor man could do was to lock us all in, take the keys with him and go out upon a tour among the trustees to secure reinforcements. As soon as he was gone, the boys who were already marked out for punishment were put into one of the ante-rooms, so that as soon as he returned and opened the large outside door they could slip by him and get out. I myself did not cut out in that way for there was a stove in the room and the cowhide and the rulers had been left behind by their owner. They were all in the stove in a twinkling and they burned well. The trustees did come, but they had seen the gouts upon the neck of Mat. Myers and I believe they were mainly in sympathy with the rebellion. At all events, school was dismissed and it was never opened again. Of course, there were further efforts made for the education of all those youngsters, but I was to have no part in them. Whether or not it was at all as a consequence of my outrageous behavior on the flogging question, I do not know, but it was shortly decided that the proper place for me was in the bookstore as general clerk, salesman, messenger, and all-the-books reader.

This was a sudden change but it was not one to which I had any disinclination. I had been under Mr. Hoyt only a year and a half but when he went away I had already mastered all the Latin usually required in a Freshman class at college and all the mathematics, besides being well up in several other branches, but I had not touched Greek. I had reached the mature age of fourteen that September and it was now well on into the fall of the leaf. Tough as whipcord, full of fun and energy and ignorance, I was ready to march on into the future with little thought of what it might be.





## Chapter Twelfth.

## The Bookstore.

Speaking of corporeal punishment, I had an earlier experience than that under Mr. Caruth. I think it was at the beginning of my ninth year that my grandfather showed his good will to the common school system by starting me in the District School at our end of Homer instead of at the Academy. It may be that a change would be for my good and I never thought of rebelling, although I went sorely against my will. The presiding genius at the time was a stalwart young woman by the name of Hathaway, of a family whose house was half way up the hill on the road to our pasture. The school was pretty well crowded with all sorts and sizes and the whip was there as one of the educational instrumentalities, according to the received ideas of the time. All went well enough for a few weeks, more or less, but one morning I was bending over my book at my desk when down over my shoulders came several sharp cuts of a heavy switch. What it was for was not at once told me but I afterwards learned that another boy, name undiscovered, had been throwing "paper-balls," and it was necessary that somebody should suffer for it. That is the idea which lies at the bottom of most of the national declarations of war and the people who suffer are rarely the ones who were to blame. I never whimpered, but I quietly gathered up my books and went home. Nothing in the world could have made me go into that schoolroom again, but I forgave Miss Hathaway and afterwards went to a maple-sugar pull at her house in the most friendly manner. I was fond of peace and maple sugar and I went back to my old



place at the Academy.

During the years following our removal to Syracuse, I made several visits to Homer, generally in the company of my mother, but do not remember any occurrence worthy of especial record. There had also been a quiet process of political education going on. It was of several kinds. First, my family were all Whigs and were opposed to the annexation of Texas and to the war with Mexico. So was I, but when the war did come there was one Syracuse schoolboy who read all the newspaper reports and participated in all the battles. I was familiar with the name and achievements of all the heroes. Of our own family connection, I remember but one actual representative in the invading army. It was my cousin, Erastus W. Smith, a captain of Regulars, who served through the war with credit but died at New Orleans on his way home. The second line of instruction related to the tariff and its effects upon the prices of all sorts of things. Over and above all these, however, was the growing slavery question and I had a number of acquaintances among the colored people and the more prominent Abolitionists. It was my custom to attend the political conventions when they were held in Syracuse, as they generally were, on account of its central position. It was called Central City and Conventionville. Many a big speech had I already heard and such colored orators as Fred Douglas, an escaped slave from Maryland, were my especial favorites. I also had a strong personal liking for Rev. Samuel J. May who was a leading Abolitionist. There were to be consequences of that early training.

Counting in the express jog at the end, when it became so, the store



was said to be a hundred feet deep and the cellar under it had no jog. It was therefore a pretty large cellar. The stock in trade upstairs consisted of all manner of books and stationery and the business was large, for it was a wholesale as well as retail affair and we supplied a number of small dealers in the towns around, away from the railroads, even as far as Oswego and Cazenovia. There was publishing business enough to put us in connection with a prosperous bookbindery and among my first acquisitions was a knowledge of the way in which books are put together. I did not rest until I had actually bound a book. Of course, there were gilt edges to be put on and I saw how that mysterious thing was done. In another direction was the engraving of cards and the like, and we had a really skilful copperplate engraver. He was also a good wood engraver and already I had spent many an hour in his place, watching the movements of his "burin."

In the front part of the store were long glass cases, for the exhibition of fine stationery and fancy goods and there were show windows but the days of plate glass had not come and the panes were not enormously large. The lighting at evening was accomplished by means of large camphene lamps which were my detestation, for one of my many small duties was to clean, fill and light them. I also had to wash the windows and sweep the sidewalk to the middle of the street. As for camphene, it was a villanously dangerous and explosive compound of alcohol and peril and was liable to flash at any moment. My special hate of it, however, grew out of the sad fact that my pretty friend and neighbor, Miss Sarah Corning, was burned



to death by the explosion of one of those camphene lamps, not long afterwards. They were the cause of half the great fires of that day. It was the fashion to speak of the stuff as "spirit gas," but it was a general blessing when coal gas came to take its place. The heating apparatus consisted of a huge coal stove in the rear which was also in my programme and sometimes it would warm the store and sometimes its effects were more comfortably perceptible when one was near enough to touch it.

I must not let go of my friend Mr. Caruth without one more record which did him credit. It showed that he was a Christian and had no malice. Not long after the break up of the school, so far as I was concerned, I was out in Onondaga Hollow, hunting, and encountered a remarkable milk snake. They are constrictors and not venomous and are a really handsome reptile. I carefully killed the snake and carried him home with me. What to do with him I did not know but was going down Warren street, intending to take him to our store for exhibition, when whom should I meet but Mr. Caruth. He was enthusiastic over my prize, for his fad was natural history and amateur taxidermy. He offered at once to stuff that bea for me, so that I might preserve him for future reference. He did so, and when we came to measure him, -the snake, not Mr. Caruth,- he was four feet and six inches long. He made a grand addition to the other attractions of my bedroom collection and I can remember now the customary yell with which each successive cadet in our long list of Irish or German help would make her first entry into that charming chamber. The first thing she would see was a dragon, coiled on the bureau and ready to go for her. That may have





had something to do with Draco's final disappearance from the scene of inaction.

There were two gold pen factories in Syracuse and we were agents for both of them, much to our profit, but at the time when my service began our most noteworthy specialty was not pens but ink. All the rear part of the cellar, from the foundation of the concern, had been devoted to the manufacture of "Smith's Gold Pen Ink," a blackness of much excellence. A queer customer was Smith, the inventor thereof, and it was his delight to tell me how good was his ink and how he made it. I never perfectly learned how and before long he removed to other parts of the earth. With him departed the ink factory and its place was filled in a most disagreeable manner. All the forward part of the cellar was assigned to our increasing business in paper hangings and these after a while became my own unpleasant specialty, compelling me to spend many toilsome hours below when I would rather have been above. The very back den of the cave, after Smith vanished, was given over to the collection of rags for the paper makers and these unsavory relics, gathered from all the region round about by the dirtiest of human beings, fell to my share of the book business. O! how I hated the entire economy of rag picking, storage, bagging, weighing and sending off. We were also agents for wrapping paper mills and I learned much about all manner of wrappers. My father had a good knowledge of fire insurance and had obtained the agency of one or two good companies, to add to his income the dollars which it much needed, for he was not an economical man and had ideas of his own as to what it became him to do, in his position. One con-



sequence, increasing as time went on, was the necessity I was under of making insurance surveys, knowing rates, delivering policies, collecting and the like, and of professionally attending all fires, by day or night.

Of course, I was a salesman and one of my first results here was a renewal of my old inquisitiveness concerning copper coins, whereof our money drawer was sure to have an unwieldy surplus, at all times. I found many curiosities, but one day there drifted in a queer, cent-sized wanderer, which puzzled me entirely. The characters upon it were such as I had never seen before and I carried it at once to my old friend Mr. Corning, the antiquarian scholar. I was entirely astonished at the interest which he took in my discovery. He pronounced it a Hebrew coin, of rare antiquity and of much value, - to him. In exchange for it, he gave me a vellum-bound copy of the book of Job, in Latin, to stimulate me in bibliology, and I had another splendid feature for my curiosity shop. No other boy in Syracuse had anything like that. I do not believe that a boy among them had a snake four feet and a half long.

One long counter was given up to paper covered novels and periodicals. Into the novels I was wading, with all enthusiasm, but with a growing taste for the best among them. I was becoming well acquainted with the current literature of the day, by swallowing loads of it, and knew what was the opinion of the received judges. As to the periodicals, among my earlier friends was the Knickerbocker Magazine, much written for by a tip top contributor by the name of Irving, - Washington Irving. He had also written several entire books in which I greatly delighted. So had a



Frenchman named Dumas, another named Victor Hugo and a pair of Englishmen, Bulwer and Kingsley, who wrote better novels than G. P. R. James himself. All of these writers, I am informed, obtained popularity, and I was already familiar with the works of J. Fenimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott. I think that the next periodical to make its appearance was a handsome thing, as big as a novel, called Harper's New Monthly Magazine. I knew it afterwards when it was no longer new. Then came Putnam's and the Atlantic Monthly, and in the latter I read whatever was written by a Boston physician named Holmes, - Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was a funny sort of fellow and he also became widely known, after awhile. There were several smaller monthlies, but I did not seem to take to them. Perhaps the others were enough. As to that counter, I can well remember the day when it and the floor in front of it were heaped with the rapidly disappearing piles of Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, the most daringly, incendiarily anti-slavery novel that anybody had ventured to write and print. At the first of my political teaching, however, there was a strong tide of conservatism sweeping over the country and it was almost like incipient treason to utter what one felt or thought upon the slavery question.

Under that tide was a yet stronger counter current which was bearing the country forward, for in it, unknown to themselves, were many thousands of peaceful young fellows like myself, who were studying, thinking, receiving impressions, and preparing for the days which were to come.

There were false prophets who now and then lifted their croaking voices, even in conventions, to tell us that the nation was marching on into



a bloody revolution, but they were always promptly silenced, for there could be no real trouble so long as the Abolitionists were kept under and nothing done or said to irritate the slaveholders or to interfere with their sacred right to own black men and women, half black, quarter black and sixteenth black, or white which might be called black. There was almost no military feeling among the masses, but the country had what it called a regiment and the village had the Syracuse Citizen's Corps, commanded by Captain Walrath, the gold pen maker. On the other hand, there was a fair amount of interest in athletics and a really extensive public gymnasium was set up and maintained. Its teacher was a fine swordsman. I joined the gymnasium as soon as it was opened and soon knew something about boxing and fencing which has since been of value to me. I never learned the proper management of the sabre, but I was still practising, now and then, with Andrew White's rifle.

The fact was that I was getting curious notions of the value of mere bodily strength and was all the while training myself with heavy boxes of merchandise, in the lifting of them, and was also boxing with reams of wrapping paper, down stairs, to see how far I could knock one. At all events I was developing a pretty hard pair of fists for any emergency. I did not at this time have to sleep at the store, that guardianship being in the hands of a fine young man named Gould. The bookkeeper, under my father, was also chief clerk and salesman. He was a very capable young business man named Hamilton, who was also a prime social favorite and connected with the best families in the county.





## Chapter Thirteenth.

## The New Garret.

There had been a garret over our Fayette street house, but I had made no manner of use of it. Our Onondaga street garret was for a while neglected but its day of usefulness came to it very soon. I was beginning, while at Hoyt's school, to take a deep interest in chemistry and that soon led on into a series of practical experiments in acids, gasses, combinations and electricities, in which I took more delight than I can tell. While I was in Homer, my cousin, Osborn Bright, had constructed a pretty good electric machine which would give shocks and even charge a Leyden jar, to torment the ignorant with. I did not now go as far as that but I made loads of hydrogen gas, to create explosions and lift paper balloons. It was somewhere about this time that a man by the name of Morse accomplished a kind of miracle. He actually invented a machine by means of which a fellow might write a letter in the town to which he sent it instead of putting it upon paper in his own place in the old way. I had no idea how much of my future life was to be related to telegraphic enterprises, but I went to see the first Morse telegraphic instrument that was set up in Syracuse and thought it a wonderful affair. Everybody said that Mr. Morse would make millions out of it, and perhaps he did, but, many a long year afterwards, sitting with him in his study, he intimated with a sufficient clearness, that he had made much less than the public gave him credit for and that he had subsequently lost much of what he did make in unprofitable enterprises. I was sorry to hear it and told him so.



If in this manner I was learning something about chemistry, in another I was obtaining ideas concerning journalism. I determined to print a periodical of my own. The first requisite, in my opinion, was a printing press, and I made one, taking the copperplate press in the engraving shop as my model, because it appeared to be easiest of construction. With a great deal of toil and with a rolling pin for a roller, I set up my press. Then I went for type and obtained a lot of second hand stuff at the Standard office, where the foreman was jocularly disposed to encourage me. It was a long, hard job to set up the first and only number of "The Gem," but I succeeded in doing so and acquired my first knowledge of the noble art of typesetting. A number of copies were laboriously struck off and there the matter rested for I had learned my lesson and had no more time or enthusiasm to waste in that direction. It was better to allow the other journals to go on without competition. Possibly the next occupants of the garret may have wondered what on earth that queer machine was made for.

They did not find many relics of my laboratory, for I used Florence flasks for retorts and they would break. As to glass in any shape, however, I already knew something. Among the odd character citizens of Syracuse at the time of my arrival had been an old Englishman who made thermometers. He and his fat wife took a fancy to me, because of my intense interest in his continual experiments with glassblowing. He could spin glass into fine down and do a great many other wonderful things and I liked to come and watch him doing it and carry home specimens for my collection of rarities. The garret was less frequently a workshop after I became settled in the



book-ink-rags-paperhangings-insurance-stationery and express business.

There were still occasional games with the Park boys and now and then the Rambler's Club would make an adventurous excursion, but my strongest alliance with my old friends grew out of music and social rivalries. On the demise of the Allen and Stebbins Academy, as I have said, Professor Allen went altogether into music. One of his grandest musical ideas was the formation of a perpetual class in vocal music and it became a success. I attended those classes, somewhat irregularly, although I had but little genuine musical genius. I preferred to hear it rather than to make it, but there was one feature in Professor Allen's programme in which I took the deepest interest. This was the annual May Day Festival performance and the election and crowning of the May Queen. The elections were held in the basement of the Congregational church, on the Park, and all the recognized musical scholars were entitled to vote. I was an attentive scholar for some time prior to the election and so was my friend Carroll E. Smith, one of the Hoyt School boys and afterwards a well known editor and politician. His father was at that time editor and part proprietor of the Daily Journal and was also Superintendent of the salt springs. Carroll and I considered the matter and decided that the right Park girl for queen was my beautiful friend Mary Butler, whose mother was so good a woman and whose brother John, afterwards a colonel in the army, was about our nearest friend. What the professor's views were, we did not inquire but when the election came off, every small voter that we could reach had a ticket already provided, under a solemn promise not



to vote any other. Of course, our candidate was elected, but I noticed that it was with some difficulty that I obtained a post of honor as one of the flowery "Heralds" at the great exhibition and that the professor looked sidewise at me as if I had meddled with some of his plans.

Another of my remaining school adventures grew out of the fact that I had been considered the best speller in the Hoyt school. Up at the left of Onondaga Lake was a small old village called Geddes, after its founder, or he may have been the man who found it. Here was a large and exceedingly ambitious public school, larger than any in Syracuse and ready to consider itself famous. Its faculty laid great stress upon the proficiency which their pupils had obtained in spelling, and they issued a challenge to all the world, including Syracuse, for a grand Spelling Match, to take place in the large hall of their big institution upon a certain winter evening. Syracuse and other villages took up the challenge, but when the time for the fight arrived, a carriage came to the store after me and I was conveyed to Geddes as one of the schoolboys of the Central City. It was really a grand affair and the hall was crowded. My claims to entry were not disputed and the match began. Down went boy after boy and girl after girl, until of the two long lines which had stood in the middle of the hall at first only two remained, one on each side. Opposite me was a bright looking, red headed girl, of about my own age, and she stood up finely to the reputation she had won as the best speller in all Geddes. The school faculty were manifestly disturbed in their minds but they should have fought it out fairly. They did not do so, however, for I was





turned down upon an asserted error which I did not make. I said so and I think the audience agreed with me. So did all the Syracuse boys, while the country fellows bitterly resented the insinuation. The consequence was that we had to almost fight our way to the hacks which had brought us and I had opportunities for showing how much I had learned from the boxing teacher at the Syracuse gymnasium. The next day, the entire population of our village was ready to aver that their champion could not possibly have spelled "beryl" with two "r"s.

Yet another important change was coming to me and it was a sort of consequence of my father's church relations and his ambition. He was the managing deacon of the First Baptist church, in which also my mother was by all odds the most influential woman. Both of them paid very dearly for their usefulness and zeal in the course of time but their church troubles had not yet come. At the time of our arrival, the Baptist meetinghouse, centrally located on West Genesee street, west of the middle of the village, was an old, unhandsome, frame building, not by any means a credit to the denomination or an ornament to the municipality. Its meetings were well attended, although the larger part of its membership lived out of town. It did not contain any bankers, merchants or lawyers, and its finances were left largely in my father's hands, to his great detriment. At an early day, he determined that a new and elegant structure ought to take the place of the old, and it was there that the worry began. Some of the old stagers, after an unanimous vote had declared for the new building, declared that the old lot itself was in a manner consecrated



ground and must be used over again, although it was not large enough for the building plan adopted and although a much better lot was to be had a number of rods eastward. My father carried his point and the old concern was sold to pecuniary advantage. That might possibly have been forgiven if a vast profanity had not been deftly hidden behind the deed of sale. It was but a few weeks before the faithful were informed that their former house of worship, in which they had been so extraordinarily religious, was in process of being transformed into that prime instrumentality of Satan, a Theatre! Words cannot describe the shock to all the Baptist sensibilities and I believe that in the minds of some of the sisters and brethren my father was looked upon as in a manner the founder of the first theatre which had ever been known in the highly moral village of Syracuse. He really had nothing to do with it and he was as much opposed to theatres as anybody needed to be.

The building of the new church began and was vigorously prosecuted to its completion. At the same time, the Presbyterians, with much larger financial resources, were erecting a fine new edifice on Salina street, on the site of the old American House, in which I had eaten my nine years old first dinner. If I remember correctly, its stone spire was to be 187 feet in height, while our more ambitious steeple, of wood, was to tower up to 193, including the lightning rod. Ours was done first, while yet its stone rival lacked about forty feet of its intended grandeur, but there were envious tongues that unkindly asserted the insecurity of our tapering woodwork. They had seen it weave back and forth in a gale of



wind. Some day or other, the whole structure would come tumbling down to kill people. Wild was my indignation at such an aspersion upon my own meetinghouse. Had I not watched the digging of the cellar for it and every brick of its subsequent progress toward completion? Had I not been a Sunday school scholar in the old concern and did I not intend to be one of the most active fellows in this? It was at all events as strong as was the Presbyterian spire, besides being higher. Well, there came a tremendous gale and there were men in the street, watching my steeple. Some said it swung back and forth and some said that it did not do so and had no intention of doing so. As for myself, I at once declared that I could settle that matter. I somehow obtained possession of the key and went in, then it was nothing but steep stair climbing, as far up as the belfry, in which had been placed a bell which was my pride for its tone and ring. In the belfry, however, I was a little set back, for, on looking up, I discovered that there were no more stairs. Only the wooden cleats nailed across from timber to timber on the sides. They did not even form a good ladder. I believed that I could use them, at all events, and I did so. Up I went, at a serious risk to my neck, until I came to a sort of landing, at the base of the upper, slender needle, which arose perhaps thirty feet above me. There was no means whatever of creeping up into that needle, but I could look out at the small, unglazed apertures on the sides and shout down to the men in the street. I did so, at the top of my voice but I was all the while holding on hard for here I had indeed settled the problem. The steeple did weave, back and forth, and I may have had



exaggerated conceptions of the number of feet to which it swung, this way and that way. It was a pokerish place to be in and I remained only long enough to show that I was not in the least afraid,- that I would let go of those cross pieces. Then I made the best of my way down, to be severely scolded, even by my father, who was glad to know the truth, that the steeple needed further fastening. The fame of the reckless feat of climbing went the rounds, of course, and it at once stirred to emulation a Parochial schoolboy who had been a kind of rival of mine. Time had been when he had thrown me five times running, at a wrestling match, and if I afterwards threw him as many, it left him with a sense of jealousy which now came to the front. He was of my own age and size and if he was not my equal in main strength, he was in agility and pluck. He tried on his own experiment, next day, by getting into the Presbyterian building at noon, when the workmen were at their dinners. There were still the wooden stairs here that were required by the workmen, and they carried him up to the opening at the top of the uncompleted stone spire. Here there was a derrick, reaching out over the street, and out went Jim Lawrence upon that derrick, to the great terror of all who saw him. He went back and came down in safety and I was beaten for he had undoubtedly done a more fool-hardy thing than I had,- with no use whatever.

All this preliminary talk about the church only brings me back to the subject I began to begin with. My father was now doing well in a business way, and he was ready to purchase the old Slocum residence, only one lot west of the new church, and be nearer to his pet project and its duties.





He shortly afterwards purchased also what was called the Montgomery house, a smaller residence just west of his own. Beyond that was an alley and then came what the wicked people were vexatiously in the habit of describing as "the Baptist theatre."

For my own part, I had very little sentimental regret at leaving the Onondaga street home. The millpond had long since disappeared. Will Corn- ing was all the while away at boarding school and there were other personal changes in the neighborhood. Besides, our new house was nearer to both the church and the store and it had much more land around it and was in some respects more comfortable. Over and above all that, probably, was a boyish excitement at the idea of a change into a new country, half a mile nearer to the saltworks and the lake.

This was a time when politics were once more beginning to run high. The Mexican war was a thing of the past. Texas had been annexed, rightly or wrongly, and it was said that many vexed questions had been forever settled. They may have been, the questions, but a great many vexed people had not by any means been settled. In the Gen. Taylor campaign of 1848, my only interest had been that of a young Whig who wished to see the victor of Buena Vista made President, and some hundreds of thousands of votes may have been cast for him on war account. At all events, they and I elected him and in a few weeks he was succeeded by that exceedingly excellent gentleman, patriot and statesman, Millard Fillmore, for whom my esteem grew stronger in after years, when I knew more about him. Nevertheless, before long, his name became combined with that of Daniel



Webster and other leaders as being responsible for what were called, in a curious lump phrase, "the Compromise Measures," and offensively foremost among these was the obnoxious Fugitive Slave Law, concerning which and its workings we Syracuse people were before long to know a deal more than we did at the time of its passage.

The new home was a frame building, large, well built, roomy, with a good rear addition, woodshed and soforth. The lot was four or five rods wide by about ten or eleven rods depth. There was a fence at the middle of it and behind that was a garden the soil of which was none the worse because it had formerly been a barnyard for two generations of cattle and horses. I was truly delighted with my house and my room in it, and I had transferred every stick of my hencoops to a good place in the rear. Every fowl had also been transferred and they did not seem discontented. Perhaps I was less so because of the fact that my old friend the Onondaga Creek, after several windings, was now even nearer than formerly. It also had a slower current and was wider, deeper, as it went on towards the lake which was its destination. Our lot ran through to Church street and that thoroughfare came to a sharp end at the point where it joined West Genesee street, a few doors beyond the Baptist Theatre. It was to me a striking characteristic of our house that it had no garret to speak of and it may have been equally remarkable that I no longer cared to have one. My garret days were over and I was becoming an exceedingly active young churchman and business man, with sporting tendencies.



## Chapter Fourteenth.

### The Church.

Between our house and the church was but one dwelling, a large frame building, then, for awhile, occupied by the Slocum family. Behind it was another dwelling that fronted on Church street. Our lot had a back gate, so that my brothers and sisters might go through by that way to the public schoolhouse at a little distance. By the way, the Syracuse public institutions were now attaining a degree of excellence of which our citizens were justly proud and which rendered private educational enterprises of less account. My older sister, Julia, had now become a young woman of whose loveliness of character I could not say too much. She was of a gentle, affectionate nature, with a bright intellect which was expanding well under the direction of my mother. She was away at her boardingschool much of her time and her vacations at home were especial treats to us all. The meetinghouse was as yet unfinished and only the ample "conference meetingroom," in the rear, was available. It was really a well finished and handsome room and the church was in a prosperous condition. The pastor who had ruled in the old affair, a Rev. Mr. Taggart, had left us and we had succeeded in replacing him with Rev. Robert R. Raymond, a gentleman of exceptional ability and culture. He was an eloquent preacher, a fine elocutionist, and his social qualities were of a high order. It was our good fortune that he was not at first prepared to bring on his family, no proper residence having been secured for them, and during nearly six months he was an inmate of our own family. Among his accomplishments was



vocal music, for which he possessed a rich tenor voice, and it was our delight, and his, to get him seated at the piano. His repertoire included all of Moore's Melodies, a long list of old English songs, Jacobite and other, and I then heard a great many grand old songs which have somehow been left behind, nowadays. There was much music in them. Of course, the church had a Sunday school and it had a library and I was instilled as librarian. Was I not a clerk in a bookstore and did I not know just what to do with books? At all events, I discovered that a certain line of fiction, including "Edwards on the will," and "Baxter's Saint's Rest," appeared to be as fresh and new as when, years before, they had first made their interesting way into that library, while another kind of literature was sufficiently thumbed to call for new copies at an early day.

The cost of completing the church edifice appeared to grow from day to day and my father's responsibilities were increasing upon his hands, for there were church promissory notes out upon which his name appeared as an endorser and it was hurting his credit at the banks. He was a good manager of such things, however, and all seemed to be going along pretty well.

It may be that one of the early difficulties of that meetinghouse was pigeons. I had undertaken to add them to my stock of feathered curiosities and had taken a little back loft over the woodhouse as my dovecote. It should have been enough to satisfy any reasonable birds, but the perverse creatures had religious tendencies. Moreover, they had explored the steeple and had found the small, unglazed apertures at the foot of the upper needle. In they had gone and all the upper part of our proud spire, before





long, all the steeple above the belfry, was little better than a pigeon roost. So was the roof of the building, and so were the roofs of other houses near by and I was commanded to make an end of my enterprise. I did so with regret, but I shot forty-four of my own birds as they flew over our yard, every one of them falling within our fence. More help than mine was required to finish the work of finally obliterating them from the steeple but the task was fully accomplished and I gave up the pigeon business.

The garden, from the outset, was an especial field of enterprise. There had been a good one behind the old house in Homer, and this was to be made the equal of that. It soon became, for its size, greatly superior, with a better soil and a more favorable climate. My father added to the vines on the trellises, but one enormous, unbearing vine, which covered half the side of the house, had to come down. He set out a number of pear and cherry trees which prospered amazingly. In the back corner of the front yard, we had found an ancient, tangled Damascus plum tree, and it also was to have been cut down, but I begged for its life and for an opportunity of testing the virtues of pruning. Consent was given, although I was assured that there had been no fruit upon that tree for years. At it I went, with saw and knife, and it was soon only a skeleton of what it had been. Nevertheless, in the next season, its outreaching branches required strong propping, so very abundant was its yield, and it was permitted to continue its existence.

I must not forget to record, while it is in my mind, one pleasant



incident at the end of my first summer in that house. My old friend Andrew White went to Geneva College on leaving the care of Mr. Hoyt. There he remained for a year and then went to Yale. At the end of his Freshman year, if I remember the dates correctly, he spent his whole summer in Europe, making quite an extensive pilgrimage. On his return and just before once more setting out for New Haven, he made his appearance in the store, one afternoon, and I was glad enough to see him. He had an especial errand however. After giving me a sketch of his wanderings in the old world, he told me of what quantities of odd things he had collected. He was well aware of my own weakness in that direction and he said:

"Now, Will, they are all arrived at the house and I haven't opened them. You are the only fellow I know that can appreciate them. Come up and spend the evening with me and we'll have a real good time of it."

I was ready to jump at the offer of such a treat as that and I went. I think it was a pretty late evening before we gave up opening and admiring the decidedly miscellaneous gathering of all sorts which was the fruit of Andrew's travels in Europe. In after years, his tendency to make collections remained with him, strengthening as he went onward, and more than one college library is the richer for the taste, good judgment and liberality with which he has gathered and given away. From that day forward I was to see less and less of him, but the boyhood friendship remains unbroken and I am as proud as ever of the star boy of the Hoyt school, my earliest friend in Syracuse. We are old, now, but once in awhile I get from him a reminder that all his cares and troubles and great public uses



have not chilled in him the warm heart which made us all so much attached to him. He has had trouble enough, poor fellow!

The church enterprise struggled on until we were actually in the main body of the edifice, and shortly after we did so a disagreeable experience came to me. Mr. Raymond was still our pastor but he had purchased a residence away up on Foot street, now renamed James street. There had been little squabbles in the church and our old sexton had left us. I cared less for that during pleasant weather, for I could sweep any church of that size and I was angrily proud to do so. The bell was a trial, at first, for it had a perverse tendency to swing my small weight up with it, as it rolled around in ringing. When that difficulty was mastered, and the art of tolling, there were unkind critics to say that I did not ring it loudly enough, not one of them being aware that the ringer did not make the bell. After ringing the bell, I was needed in the small choir, for I could sing,- to a certain extent. Then came my duties in the Sunday school, but yet another sadness was before me. Cold weather came and I had mastered the mysteries of the huge furnace in the cellar. If I was to be regarded as volunteer sexton, that also was within my province and I went at it bravely. Much heavy sized coal was required to even start it and the fire had to be well going at daylight, if the audience room was to be warmed in time for morning worshippers, coming in half frozen, for it was an exceptionally severe winter. It was the hardest kind of work and it brought me no praise whatever, for all the shortcomings of the furnace or the thermometer were charged upon the bungling of the young sexton. In



fact, there was a rebellion and before the winter was over the church hired a grown up fellow from its own membership to take my place. To be sure, he succeeded, for, as the weather grew warmer the furnace lid better. Still, as time went on, I had my revenge upon him for being an Old Hunker Pro-Slavery Democrat, as the critics went for him in his turn. At the first, moreover, I was O! so glad to see him at that bell.

I think it was in that Spring that the second of Professor Allen's May Festivals came off. He had formed a numerous class, largely composed of small boys and even smaller girls, and the Congregational Church was again the scene of action. Among his best singers, of course, were Carroll E. Smith and myself, although we were well aware that neither of us was a favorite performer. As the day for the election drew near, we were once more in consultation as a pair of gloomy conspirators. Carroll came to the store one day with a bit of secret information and a beautiful electioneering plan of his own invention. Professor Allen had announced with smiling emphasis that the election was to be entirely at the disposal of his pupils, by a majority vote, and that there would be no interference with their selection of a May queen. Now Carroll was a printer's son and he had surreptitiously discovered that the Professor had already made his own selection. He had even had an abundance of tickets printed, with her name upon them, for distribution at the election. His choice was a very pretty, stylish young lady, living on Salina street, whose father was a prominent lawyer. He was also a Democrat and we were Whig Abolitionists. Carroll had one of the tickets to show me and it looked as if the profes-





sor was sure to succeed. It must have been understood that my action was of some importance, for even Will Hamilton, our chief clerk, came to me and urged me to support the regular ticket. But then he too was an Old Hunker Democrat. There was more than that to be considered. It might not do to select one of the Park girls as a candidate, for fear of exciting local feeling. The only way was to have a candidate ready without announcing her to anybody and so we did. Living a little above the Park was a bright and pretty girl named Amelia Bassett. I was but slightly acquainted with her and Carroll was only on speaking terms with her, but we decided that she would do. The next thing was the tickets and he said he could get them printed at the Journal office. There was where my part came in for I called attention to the small, neat white ticket he showed me and said that we must beat that. We went to the card drawer in our store but it contained nothing which caught our conspiring eyes. Away we went, therefore, to Redfield's small bookstore, on Canal street, and there we were in luck for we found and purchased a quantity of highly embossed, brightly colored cards, half as large as your hand. They were gorgeous and they became more so when they were printed with Miss Bassett's name in glowing bronze which was as good as gold. Not a word did we let out except to the foreman of the printing office, who went right in with us as soon as he understood that we were packing a primary. When the evening set down for the election arrived, there were we and there were all the Park boys, ready to distribute tickets with phenomenal celerity. The plan was a good one. The small people were the vast majority of the voters. Each of them



was to receive two tickets, one to be voted and one to be kept as a lovely souvenir of the occasion. They all had the Professor's small, pretty white tickets, also, and these they were instructed to retain with ours and so have double keepsakes. They kept them and when the votes were counted our candidate, to her great surprise, was chosen by an overwhelming majority, from which there was no appeal. The Festival went off with complete success, but I believe it was about the last of its kind in Syracuse. Perhaps that was because soon afterwards Professor Allen sold out his music store to a very pleasant gentleman by the name of Timothy Hough, who was not disposed to take up the May Queen business. He prospered well otherwise, however, and a daughter of his is now a niece of mine, having married my nephew, Henry Gibson. I do not know that Carroll Smith and I had anything to do with the sale of the music store, but there was a great deal of astonishment expressed, publicly and privately, at the unexpected result of that election. It was the pretty tickets that did it, and all political parties have since tried their best to steal our invention and provide their voting machinery with something attractive, the names on the tickets being as little known to the voters, sometimes, as was that of the fair maiden who lived just above the Park and was just the girl to win with against Professor Allen.

Speaking of politics, I must not forget the General Winfield Scott campaign. He was defeated, as all men know, and the main cause of his defeat was that he was suspected of being somewhat unsound upon the slavery question. That aroused all the timid conservatism of the North against him.



During the campaign, he passed through Syracuse and made a brief speech from the rear platform of a railway car. There was a large crowd gathered to hear, but I managed to squeeze in and get a good place, pretty near that old hero. I had never seen him before and was not to look him in the face again until a far different occasion which I will talk of when I come to it. For that matter, I had long since developed a strong curiosity concerning public or prominent men, and never missed an opportunity for seeing and studying one. It may have been this which made me an outside member of so many political conventions, and the time came when it was to exercise an important influence upon my course in life. The results of that presidential election left behind them a strengthening feeling among the anti-slavery men, and the debates of Congress that Winter, upon the Compromise Measures, were read as few debates had ever been before. The administration of President Franklin Pierce began, with all apparent guarantees provided for the continued peace of the country and for the all but absolute supremacy of the Slave Power. There was all the while a rumbling and grumbling, however, and such statesmen as Daniel Webster were well aware of it. So had been Millard Fillmore and he had earnestly pointed out the perils into which the nation was surely drifting, while he had no power to stay the tide. It was reserved for Mr. Webster himself to imprudently set and light a slow match and to prepare for a destructive explosion, but the story of the Jerry Rescue Riot deserves a chapter for itself.



## Chapter Fifteenth.

## The Jerry Rescue Riot.

For reasonable condensation, mere matters of dates and small minutenesses may be omitted, reference being had to public records and printed books, but there came a day when the citizens of Syracuse were startled by the announcement that the great statesman, Daniel Webster, was coming to address them upon the questions of the day. He had selected the Convention City as the proper place for the delivery of one of his most important public utterances. Due preparations were made for his reception and the open space in front of the City Hall was made ready for the speech which was to come. An ample platform was provided for the speaker and the local great men who were to sit behind him and start the rounds of applause. Just in front of the platform was a wooden arrangement for the necessary brass band, for he was to have music as well as applause. I read all that the newspapers had to say and they said enough to set me on fire, let alone my determination to have a close look at the Great Expounder and to hear his eloquence.

When the day came, it brought bright sunshine for the occasion and the town was astir early. Mr. Webster was to be escorted to his platform by the Syracuse Citizens Corps and these warriors, as a guard of honor, were to stand at parade rest in front of the speaker's stand. I knew that beforehand and my selected, but with difficulty obtained position, was just in front of the foremost line of soldiers. I did it by going early and waiting and then by keeping step with a soldier so closely that I jostled him. The preliminaries were tediously over and then Mr. Webster arose and came





forward, amid all the cheering any man need have asked for. He was indeed a noble presence, all that his pictures had taught me to expect, and when he slowly turned and looked around upon the crowd he appeared to be a very impersonation of political dignity, if not of national authority. He wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, and then his deep, mellow, sonorous voice rolled out, as it may have done when in the United States Senate he replied to Hayne of South Carolina.

"Fel-low Cit-i-zens of Syr-a-cuse and On-on-daga County," he began, with impressive deliberation, and the stillness became breathless. Shortly he said things concerning patriotism and the Constitution and the great country in which we live, and its future prosperity, which were cheered with sufficient heartiness but at last he came to his dangerous ground and he walked on into it with only too much courageous statesmanship.

"Fellow citizens, The Fugitive Slave Law will be enforced! It will be enforced everywhere and at all hazards! It will be enforced even in Syr-cuse and even if the Abolitionist Convention shall be here in session at the time."

He said it slowly, solemnly, with tremendous emphasis, but his words were greeted by silence only, for something like an electric shock went through the crowd. On he went, after a brief pause, and he had no idea that he had been making a proclamation of war which hundreds of his hearers were mentally accepting. The speech ended, the brass band played patriotic music, the crowd dispersed and so did Mr. Webster, but an untellable amount of out and out mischief had been unnecessarily done. The



average American is an unhandy man to threaten and we all felt that the great orator had left a threat behind him which it might be well for us to remember. Never, to that day, had any black fugitive been troubled in our city or county, although many were there and I know some of them. Among them was a large, brawny, not ill looking and entirely peaceable mulatto who worked in the furniture store of Ashley & Williston, opposite our own store. I had seen him, often. He had a weakness for whiskey which now and then brought him before the police court and a mere arrest was to him no occasion for resistance or ill feeling.

When the time came for the assembling of the Abolition Convention, Mr. Webster's words were called to mind and men spoke about them, but there was really no general expectation that there would be any attempt to carry out the unpleasant threat. The too eager servants of "Conservatism," however, were taking a different view of the matter and their plans were all laid beforehand. Jerry, whose rightful owner was said to be a Marylander, was selected for the victim and he was to be seized and carried away before the elements of rebellion and sedition could have any opportunity for rallying. "The best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft a-glee," as has been remarked by a Scotch fellow by the name of Burns. It was easy enough to arrest poor Jerry, leaving him under the impression that this was only one of his accustomed affairs, whereof he declared, as usual, that he was entirely guiltless, but when men saw Deputy United States Marshals leading him to the office of the United States Commissioner, there were yells and shouts all up and down the street. For a perfect



rendering of the affair, the topography must be given. Going up toward the street, Salina street, from our store toward the bridge over the canal, on the right or eastern corner was the old Syracuse House, and I knew a man whose bars to his cow pasture had once let down where was now the main entrance of that celebrated tavern. Around that corner, down Water street, three long blocks, was the City Hall in which the Convention was at that hour debating. Across the street to the left, on the corner, was a large, dingy, brick building, the hardware concern of Horace and Charles A. Wheaton. Both of the Wheaton families were close friends of mine. Ed. Wheaton, son of Charles, was one of my cronies and his mother was an ally of my own. She had been a Miss Birdseye and was a sister of Judge Lucien Birdseye who in after time was for twenty years and more my law counsel and in some things my business partner in New York. One of Mrs. Wheaton's younger sisters was the intimate friend of my sister Julia. Charles A. Wheaton owned about the finest span of three minute sorrel trotters in the county and they, like him, were staunch Abolitionists.

Around that corner, to the left, on Water street, was the stone faced Townsend Block, reaching on to Clinton street, which had another bridge over the canal. Beyond the bridge was a long row of brick warehouses and in the front of the one of these at the bridge was a room large enough for a country store but which was now used as the Police court room and temporary station house. Ten feet in the rear of it had been planked off by strong partition to make a jail or calaboose of it. In front of the building was a broad platform, about level with the bridgeway.



In the middle of the Townsend Block was an ample entrance and stairway, leading up to a suite of offices on the next floor, occupied by his honor, Judge Sabine, the United States Commissioner, upon whom fell the duty of returning fugitive slaves to their asserted owners. Up this flight of stairs and into Sabine's office had Jerry been conducted, but he was now powerless to resist, for he was handcuffed. He was not yet manacled. Behind him and his captors as they went up, followed a growing pressure of excited men, of both political parties, and among the foremost of them was a boy who had heard Daniel Webster and had come to see about it. I can see the picture. There stood Jerry, in his handcuffs, and just this side of him stood a stalwart policeman, grinning defiantly at the crowd. Even while the Judge was reading something aloud, it may have been a warrant, that guardian of the public peace said taunting words to those in front of him but he had not taken due note of a tall, country looking chap who had suddenly slipped past him. I saw a long arm flash out and a set of hard knuckles smote the unwise officer on the side of his head. Down he went and over his prostrate form, and that, it may be of the Fugitive Slave Law, sprang Jerry. All made way for him and down the stairs he went, for he had no enemies at that point. Of course, I experienced some delay in being squeezed out of the courtroom, but I gained the street, at last, only to see a huge crowd surging along back from some distance down Canal street, for Jerry had been retaken. He had been instructed to run for the City Hall and he might have reached it but for some Hunker who ran in front of him and tripped him up. Before he could regain his feet, his pur-





suers were upon him and his last chance for liberty seemed to have departed. I needed no one to tell me that they would take him to the police office and I started for it at once. When I reached it, there were policemen already busy in strengthening its defences. They were spiking heavy wooden bars across the windows, in view of a possible storming party.

Nearer came the yelling crowd, the captors and the captive. A cart had been impressed into the service of its country and prone upon that lay Jerry. He had struggled furiously and several men seemed to be kneeling upon him, to keep him down, while others were beating off the crowd with the cart stakes. Wager to see all, I clambered up the wooden bars in front of one of the windows. I had but a moment for my observations, however. I looked down and saw the mulatto, now half naked, bruised, bloody. I saw the men who were swinging the clubs, and then I was seized by a superserviceable policeman and thrown out upon the heads and shoulders of the dense throng which now packed the wide platform. It was not easy to get to my feet, but I did so, other fellows being too excited to even hit me. Something else had hit me, for the whole devilishness of human slavery went through my mind like a red hot flash and I had been taught all I needed to know of it by that grim object lesson. Jerry had been guilty of no crime but that of being a colored man, but on that account he must be seized as a criminal, convicted of his color and sentenced to lose his freedom. Mere burglars had to go for a term of years, but the black man's sentence was invariably for life. I did not care ten cents for Daniel Webster and the Compromisers and there were others like me.



The colored culprit was safely landed inside of the police office and then locked up in the inner prison. It appeared to be all day with him, for there was no known power to come to his assistance and the evidence against him was overwhelming. Nevertheless, the whole town was in an uproar. Stores and hotels were crowded with angry disputants and the supporters of Webster and Conservatism and the Constitution seemed to be in the majority. There were fierce orators at work at the Convention, both male and female, and the news of the affair was going out into the country, far and wide. This was in the afternoon, and before long all our ears were startled by the sound of bells. Bell after bell took it up, as if they were answering one another, until every steeple in Syracuse was sending out a tocsin of warning. It was not a ring but a toll. The bell would toll slowly, as for a funeral, a minute or so, and then pause as long to think the matter over before he began again. It was what was long known in Syracuse as "the Jerry bell." Perhaps one of the maddest men to be found was the Hunker Democratic sexton of the Baptist church, for his bell was tolling like the rest and he could not get in to stop it. The fact was that the church key was kept at our house and I cannot swear positively that Rev. Robert B. Raymond went and obtained it of my mother. If he did and got in, he left a more muscular man than he was to do the tolling and went off to the Convention. I had to be on duty at the store, even after supper, but I had an idea that all the bells in the surrounding villages must be tolling also, for the country people were pouring in, in streams, afoot and on horseback and in wagons. Hardly did the darkness



fall before there were bonfires blazing in many places and there was a demand for tar-barrels as if it had been Fourth of July. Of course it was the duty of the County Sheriff to call out the military, for the first time in the history of the county, and the police authorities were busily swearing in extra constables and deputy sheriffs and deputy marshals. Just here was a break in the Conservative calculations, for Colonel Origen Vandenburg, of the Fifty First, was not in sympathy with the Fugitive Slave Law. He was a very popular fellow and a strong friend of my father. He afterwards, for years, had his lawyer desk in my father's office. On this occasion, it was said that after some of the captains of companies had gathered their men, by command of the Sheriff, he followed up that mere civilian and stormed at his subordinates for receiving orders, irregularly, from anybody but their commander. He ordered them to disperse their men and wait for orders from him. Then he went and shut himself up in the Syracuse House, with proper provisions for a siege, and threatened to shoot any man who should be unwise enough to discover his hiding place. The United States Commissioner, however, appeared to have done enough when he had gathered in a hundred or so of the roughest fighting men of Salt Point, professional pugilists and all. They were gathered at the Police office, inside and outside, and threatened to smash entirely any blessed Abolition mob which might dare to come foolishing around their wooden barred fort. I do not now remember how my own warning came, but at about nine o'clock I suddenly darted out of the store and ran for the Syracuse House corner, locking down Water street, toward the City Hall,



I saw a torrent of men coming. Looking across Salina street, I saw a pile of crowbars, axes, axe-helves and other agricultural implements piled upon the sidewalk, and Charles A. Wheaton's men were bringing out more from the hardware store. I saw what was up and wheeled away with the tide toward the police office. It was easier to keep ahead, for the foremost of those men stopped to pick up the axes and things, which may have been put there for them. On we went, and I have heard that crowd estimated at three thousand men. It may have been so, for it contained both parties, to a certain extent, and the friends of Law were rallying fast. They were too late. As we surged onward, I saw several hack carriages, standing just beyond the Clinton street crossing, at the curbstone, and among them was Charley Wheaton's team of fast trotters, and a top buggy. What it was there for, I did not know, and then followed a few minutes of the most utter confusion you ever saw or heard of. I was lost in the rush but I was close enough to see the axes and crowbars go up and down upon those wooden window bars. It poured the mob, for that is what we were called, and there was only a brief struggle against such overpowering numbers. The whole concern was cleaned out so perfectly that when I visited it again, next morning, it reminded me of a fire without any fire. There was neither furniture, partition, dock or window sash left. Just then, however, I was hearing crashes and being swept almost off my feet by the returning tide of angry men. Nobody had been killed, although quite a number had been severely bruised. One black man had a pistol bullet in his thigh and the chief Deputy Marshal had been lifted bodily and dropped over upon the heel path of the canal, the fall





breaking an arm for him. The next thing, I saw the several hacks set out in different directions, but I saw no more of Charley Wheaton's sorrel team. Some of the supposable Fugitive Slave Law men pursued those hacks, but cunning was at work and at several places in the crowd might distinctly be heard the clanking of chains, as if to invite all sorts to follow that racket and seize or rescue Jerry. I was among the largest of these half crazy congregations and cannot tell how on earth it wandered down Water to Warren street and how it got in front of St. Paul's church. There had been all sorts of fighting in that crowd. Now the good Episcopal people had been repairing their house of worship and a great heap of plaster, lime, fragments of lumber and old bricks lay in the road. It was just at that heap that I was hitting out at somebody unknown when something or other unknown, but strongly resembling a set of knuckles, hit me on the shoulder. Down I went, into the plaster, and I and my hat were badly stepped upon before I could regain my feet. I had had enough, and a little more, and I set out for the store. The blinds were up but the store was open and I went in triumphantly. Not until that moment did I know what a mobbish figure I was cutting, for Will Hamilton from the rear, sang out:

"There, Willie! I'm glad of it! served you right!"

It may have done so for I was a sight to see, but I cheerfully responded:

"Well! I don't care! We got the nigger!"

So we had, for he was on his way to Oswego behind Wheaton's trotters and there a schooner took him over to Canada. I brushed myself as well as I could and then Jim Lawrence and I went the rounds of the hotels to see



and hear a great many things. The next day the exciting news was going out all over the United States and elsewhere and nobody then had as clear an idea as might now be formed that the storming of that police station was, after a fashion, the first skirmish of the Civil War. John Brown's raid into Virginia was the next, and then came a number of others which are forgotten now, but which were really the beginning of violence and of an appeal to arms for the settlement of the Slavery Question. At all events, it was days and days before Syracuse settled down to its customary quiet and it contained one boy who was rather proud than otherwise of any bruises which he had sustained in rescuing Jerry.



## Chapter Sixteenth.

## Miscellaneous.

At the time of the Riot, we had emerged from the Sunday school room into the body of the church and Mr. Raymond was preaching with great acceptance, so far as the greater part of his congregation was concerned, but his politics and some of his liberal ideas had made him enemies among an old and somewhat influential clique. The fact was that the church was out of date, a little. It contained few men of brains or cultivation. Among these I must mention our family physician, Dr. Richardson, one of the best of men, for whom I formed a strong liking, but then, after losing his first partner, a good Presbyterian named Clary, he had taken in a fine looking, scientific gentleman, who was looked at with horror by the good as being a "Swedenborgian," whatever that monster might be, and not one of them could have told, except that it was a kind of Parsee and Mahometan and Infidel who believed in ghosts. As a consequence, perhaps, of the shortage of men, the prayer meetings were largely dependent upon the women and of these we were not by any means destitute. They were the strength of the church and, in spite of the misrenderings of St. Paul, I was confident that not one man in the meetings was at all the superior, if he was at all the equal, of my own mother. She never appeared more graceful, dignified, and altogether in her right place, than when she was addressing a crowded assemblage of men and women.

The drift of events went on, after a troublesome fashion to my father



and some other people, and the day came when Mr. Raymond gave it up and left the pulpit to take charge of the Daily Chronicle, a journal with pronounced anti-slavery tendencies, which was only a few years too far in advance of the times for pecuniary success. It was, at least, an out and out good paper and had a good circulation to begin with, but it had no party behind it, for the Republican Party was as yet unborn.

At the close of that summer, I had been in the bookstore a year and a half. Aided by my other enterprises, as to pocket money, I had been able to lay up nearly two thirds of my vast salary of seventy five dollars per annum. It was the year of the first World's Fair in America, and the wonderful Crystal Palace had been built for it in the city of New York. My father promptly consented when I proposed to him to go and see that palace and to travel elsewhere, as far as my money would take me, especially to see our relatives in Connecticut and the old family places. My wardrobe was in good condition and filled a small, old, hair trunk, while my plans and expectations would have filled several larger caskets than that. I went as far as Albany by rail and the baggage management of the Albany and Schenectady road was emphasized by the fact that I did not see my trunk delivered as its check required. On going the rounds to hunt for it, I found it in a corner of the Depot at Albany, where it had been forgotten by the careful baggage master. The reason for my watchfulness had been that I had heard that similar forgetfulness had been even chronic and that a number of trunks theretofore missing had never been found at all.





My trip down the river was performed by boat for two good reasons. One was that I wished to see the Hudson river, and the other was that rival steamboats were running a fierce competition and that the fare was only one York shilling. They may have been losing less money from the fact that both boats were floating restaurants and did not give away their provisions. On arriving at the city, I went over to Brooklyn, to visit with the two boys of my father's oldtime Richmond partner, Mr. Heaton. They were prime good fellows and we went and caught a mountain of crabs in what was then Gowanus Bay and is now covered by blocks of buildings. I also went to see Mr. Rollo, at A. S. Barnes & Co.'s, and as I entered the store he came forward to meet me, saying, "How are you, Willie!" He had not seen me since I was seven, but explained that it was one of his peculiarities to never forget a face he had once seen. Most of my time, after that, was for several days passed at The Crystal Palace, and a grand affair it was. With the aid of a guide book, to get the spellings right, I wrote a long account of what I saw and sent it to the Syracuse Chronicle. As my young eyes had been caught, of course, by the more striking objects, my story was a good one and it was printed in full. That was my first considerable venture in journalism and it brought me much feathers among my old schoolfellows. After that was done, I diligently explored the city going as far up out of town as the recently erected Bible House. There were residences all the way up Broadway and Bond street was the fashion. Down town, I had the great good luck to fall in with an old citizen, a handsome man and stylishly dressed, who caught me spying around his vil-



lage. After laughing at my countryboy enthusiasm, he told me all sorts of things, showed me the Bowling Green and told me of the melting down of the leaden statue of George Third, which once stood there. He explained to me the Battery and the Washington's Headquarters, and Wall street and any amount of colonial and Revolutionary history, so that my education as a New Yorker was fairly begun.

My stay in the city ended by a calculation of my cash resources, for I had carefully husbanded them and I went on to New London by boat. There I was splendidly received by my uncle Enoch V. Stoddard and his family and struck up a strong friendship with the young people. It seemed to me that all New London was full of cousins of mine, of several names, and I took them all in. We went over to see the forts, Trumbull and Griswold, and the monument of the Arnold massacre, on which were four names of my Revolutionary kindred. When I had finished New London, including a tremendous bluefishing expedition, as far out as Point Judith, in my uncle's own sailboat, I went over to Noank to see my Grandparents. Enoch and I stayed there several days and had a grand time. We went out fishing and caught no end of porgies, blackfish and other fish which were as new to me as the bluefish which had so tired my arms in the sailboat. Of them I had hauled in a round dozen and was proud of it. In all the intervals of other excitements, Grandmother Stoddard told me stories of ancient days, which were enough to set me on fire. For instance, when she was a girl just entering her 'teens, she and all her family were driven from home one day, and had to stand on the hill and look on while Benedict Arnold's



marauders burned New London, her house included, and while her kindred and mine were being slaughtered in the fort. I formed a bad opinion of Arnold but I was glad to know that all my forefather people had been fighting men. I was especially proud to know that my grandfather's father had been an Old Continental, one of Israel Putnam's men, and that he had been shot down at the battle of White Plains, in New York. We got well again but I could learn very little of his further exploits. I had been an admirer of Nathan Hale and it was wonderful to know that Captain Hale's own company had been recruited from among my own kith and kin and their near neighbors. I feel as if he also were a kind of cousin of mine, - and he may have been.

From New London I went over to Providence, to visit with my cousins the Smiths, the great mercantile house of Amos & James Y. Smith. One of them was Governor of Rhode Island. I had a fine time there and went on to Boston in a steamer that sailed through a storm which was exceedingly interesting for I had had an ambition to be in a real storm at sea, the salt sea.

My visit in Boston was with my uncle Bright's family, and they did me up in the most splendid manner. Osborn went with me to see all sorts of places and I saw more alone. Among them were the Bunker Hill monument and where my ancestors under Putnam fought the British under Howe. I went all over the Common and remembered all the stories I had ever heard of it. I had another family of relatives, the Buttons, of the great clothing concern of Button, Call & Co. Mrs. Button was a sister of Mrs. Sarah Allen Stoddard, Enoch's wife, and she took to me. She had a "one hoss Shay,"



such as Dr. Holmes writes about, and as I could drive she took me everywhere in that shay. One day we drove out to Mount Auburn Cometary, and I found it a beautiful place but did not know until afterwards that her especial errand that day was to arrange for the funeral of a Rev. Mr. Rolles, who had married a cousin of hers and mine by the name of Smith. Neither did I dream that the widow Rolles, for whose husband's funeral Aunt Button and I were arranging, was in time to become my own stepmother.

From Boston, after a bewildering time of it, I went to New Haven, to see my step uncle, Gilbert A. Smith and his family. He was a paper manufacturer but I cared less for his factory than I did for the pleasure of climbing Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom and seeing the Connecticut river.

After this it was time for me to go home and it hardly need be said that I reached Syracuse without a cent in my pocket. In return for my expended savings, however, I had been to a great school for a boy of my age and came back with a vast number of new things in my head.

I must not forget to say, before I lose sight of it again, that while we were living on Onondaga street my grandfather and grandmother Osborn came to live with us for a number of months, their own house in Homer being rented. I was with my grandfather as much as possible and we even went fishing together in the lake. He was in feeble health, much of the time, confined to his bed, and he loved to have me come and read to him. His especial favorite was the sermons of Rev. John Newton, and I all but finished a thick volume of them. Then they went back to Homer and I never saw him again except upon one visit, a little later.





I was still writing poetry in those days, and my success as a newspaper correspondent stimulated me to attempt another appearance in print. It was a small item of some kind and then it was a poem. Carroll Smith got them into the Journal for me, but the roguish typos beat him on the poem. They set it up without remorse and printed it without correcting the proof. Such a hash as they made of it, you never saw, and I did not tempt them again. I had another string to my bow, however, for I believed that I could deliver an oration. There was organized what is called a Debating Society. It contained all the young lawyers and several politicians and I cannot say just why they elected me Secretary. So I was, however, and my oratorical ambition burned high within me. At each meeting some especial subject, generally political, was up to be torn in pieces, and I studiously prepared myself for one after another of those forensic contests. Each time, nevertheless, my courage failed me and the audience lost me, until an evening came when I daringly arose in the middle of a long pause. I was greeted with moderate applause and I managed to say "Mr. Speaker." There, however, all my ideas took wing and my head was empty. After some delay, I made out to say once more, "Mr. Speaker," but there I broke down and the audience cheered uproariously. I sat down for that evening, but not long afterwards I tried it again and succeeded in making my speech. During years which followed, the experience of my first effort hampered me and it was only with the greatest exertion of will and courage that I could get upon my feet, even in a church meeting.

There were sad changes coming for me at that time and although their



coming was slow it was only too sure. During two whole years, my idolized mother was slowly fading away with consumption. She withstood it bravely and never complained but her strength went away from month to month. It seemed to me, and I am glad to remember it now, that all the while she appeared to draw nearer to me and to lean upon me. I was more and more her companion in drives and visits and at home she loved to have me near her, for I was her oldest son and my father was more and more confined by the harassing cares of his business. Soon after Mr. Raymond's departure, the church obtained the services of Rev. Mr. Palmer. At first, the Palmer family lived next door, between us and the church, and afterwards on Church street, very near. This made them our neighbors as well as church connections. The oldest son was Albert M. Palmer, afterwards noted as a theatrical manager in New York, and with whom my early friendship continues to this day unbroken. Well, I will not now recall a long period when I was sadly watching and vainly hoping, but there came a dark day, at last. My mother, as a last resort, was under the care of a specialist whose office was at a distance, on the hill by the Orphan Asylum. I went there in the morning to obtain a supply of the medicine he was administering. On leaving the house, my mother was in her room on the ground floor, appearing much as usual, and I had no idea that she was in immediate danger. I have sometimes thought that she sent me away purposely, for she was as calm and smiling as ever and yet must have known. All the way as I went and came, however, my mind was in a remarkable inner process which I have never been able to understand. I saw without seeing. I saw myself return-



ing and being met at the gate by Mr. Palmer with the announcement of my mother's departure. Then followed a panorama of the next few days, as distinctly as if I were looking at visible objects on the earth. I did reach home and was met at the gate by Mr. Palmer.

"Willie!" he exclaimed, "Your mother is gone!"

"I know it!" I replied and from that moment onward I was as one in a dream. Whatever occurred, I seemed to myself to have seen it all and heard it all before. My Aunt Adeline Bright came on to attend the funeral. I had allowed nobody but myself to watch by the coffin at night, as was then the custom, but the last night before the funeral Aunt Adeline watched with me. It was an old custom, and for some reason or other I had often before been a watcher. Perhaps it was because I was considered a good nurse and was continually in demand to watch by the sick and the dying. It was a strange reputation to have been won by so young a boy. All went on until we were gathered in the parlor for the funeral, but I had not so much as shed one tear. I could not weep and hardly was conscious of a feeling of grief. Night there, however, relief came, for a torrent of blood burst out at my nose and mouth and I had to leave the room. A blood vessel had broken under the pressure upon my brain and this was the escape from the awful weight I was enduring. This was my first great sorrow and it was also the first and greatest possible change for our entire family. From that time forward the strong will, clear brain, unselfish love, which had been the jewels of our house, were lost to us and there were to be sad consequences, as the years went on.



I may as well set forth a few of them here, to clear the record. My grandfather was in Homer at the time of my mother's death. She had been his favorite daughter and her loss was a severe blow to him. He began to run down and lose his hold on life. His own house was rented, as he no longer cared to be burdened with it, and he went to board with his old friend Mr. Ford, then occupying one of the dwellings in the "big Building." Here, a few months later, he met with an accident, a fall on the stairs, and in a day or so he passed away. I was not able to attend the funeral, but was told that such another had never been seen in Courtland County. It seemed, men said, as if all the old people had come out of their graves to say how grieved they were at the death of their honored and trusted friend. He left behind him no money but instead of it he left a memory which all his descendants might thank God for.

My grandmother came to live with us in Syracuse, but she did not long survive her husband. She was taken to Homer for burial. So the old time associations passed away and new ones were rapidly forming.

During all these years, our social position had been all we could have asked for. Owing to my sister Julia's need of company, perhaps, I was in the habit of attending sociables and parties where the rest of the company were older, as well as all the gatherings of my own age and set. I was therefore somewhat older, on that account, and hardly regarded myself as a boy. With reference to one party that I remember, there was a decidedly unexpected incident. It was to be at the Outwater place, on the Park, and was given by Miss Mary Outwater, afterwards Mrs. Andrew D. White.





It was in the last week of March and the ice had but just floated out of the lake. Now, there had been a theory that the fish were under the ice all winter but cleared out into the Oswego river and lake Ontario in the Spring, to escape the too numerous fishermen of Salt Point. Ed Wheaton and I discussed the matter and determined to try it on. We went, early in that day, to Salina, and secured a small, rather insecure, sailboat. It was a sunny day and the water was icewater. But we sailed, toward the western shore, and anchored our boat for a trial of the fishing all the sooner because of a dead calm which forbade us to sail any farther. We did not intend to remain there and lazily left the sail up. I was stretched out in the stern, watching my useless line, when I saw Ed get up in the prow. He wished to go to the other side of the boat and the sail was in his way. I saw him try to step around in front of the mast, rather than crawl under the boom. In an instant the boat began to tip, as his weight and his grip on the mast carried it over. There was but one thing for me to do, if I would not be carried under in the probable capsizing, and I sprang out into the water. Ed was in it when I came to the surface and he called out to me as to what we were to do, under these chilling circumstances. I told him to cut the anchor rope and he did so, putting his knife back into his pocket with the coolness of a veteran. Then we tried to right the boat, but the sail was still up and it did not swing over and come down upon us, driving us under water. "Cut the halliards!" I shouted, and he did so and then we were able to bring our wreck to a level, with the water an inch over her gunwale, so that bailing was out of the



question. We determined, nevertheless, to take her ashore, for we were both good swimmers and the land was only a half mile away. One would swim in front and tug at the painter and the other would push behind and we divided the work fairly. Our mishap had been noted on shore, as far away as Salina, and the news of it was spreading fast. Right near us was a party of sportsmen and they tried the water but decided that it was too long a swim for them in fluid of that temperature. All that they could do was to wait for us and see us come to them. We did so, but we were so chilled through that they had to pull us out of the lake, nearly insensible. Like good fellows as they were, they took off our clothes and rubbed us in the regular way prescribed for the resuscitation of the drowned. We both were dreadfully sick before we came to life again and could stand up. Then along came a rowboat and into it we went while our rescuers, or rubbers, followed with the sailboat. The exercise of rowing to Salina was good for us and there a carriage was waiting to take our corpses home. We went to my house first, and found and drank all there was left in my father's bottle of old Madeira wine. Then Ed went to his own house and I took another rub, of my own making. That evening, at the outdoor party, for some reason, the gathered crowd was still in ignorance of our escape. Many had but just heard the sad news of our unfortunate drowning and all were ready to greet us enthusiastically when we came marching in to tell them that we, like John Quincy Adams, "still lived." The last I heard of Ed., he was in San Francisco, in charge of important business interests.



One change that came a few months after my mother's departure was not so much a change as the formal doing of a known duty. I had not yet been baptized into church membership and it was so mainly because of a confused idea in my mind as to what was called "conversion." I had been led to believe that it was a sudden change of mind or soul, to be accompanied by much pain of conscience, remorse, and what was vaguely described as "Repentance." I was serious enough in the inquiries I made of a number of older church members, but not one of them, minister or other, could give me any satisfactory information on the points in my troubled understanding. At last, my own mind was made up and I came before the church, at a regular meeting, to say: "I believe and I wish to be baptized." Some of the older members put me through a severe cross examination as to my experiences and emotions. Of the latter, I frankly told them that I had none at all. On consultation, they consented to admit me, although it appeared to be an unusual case, where a young man merely wished to obey the divine command to "believe and be baptized." At all events, most of them had known me a long time and knew I had been in the Sunday school and had rung the bell and kindled the church fires. It had been many a long day since there had been a baptism. I was the first candidate in the new edifice and in the elegant new font, under the pulpit. The Sunday came and the weather was bitterly cold. The ice in the font was half an inch thick and had to be broken. Pieces of it were floating around my head when I went under, but I did not feel the chill of that water, for all over me was a strange glow and I astonished good Mr. Palmer by smiling in his face when



we went out into the ante-room to dress. It was too solemn a time for smiling, in his evident opinion, but I was glad that I had done what I believed to be my duty. It is my belief, now, that I was led of God and that He whom I was so determinedly obeying took note of it for me. There had been a more than usually large attendance and I found that my position had changed in the opinion of many men. Among these was my father's partner, Mr. Edward Babcock, and he at once took me in as a teacher in a mission school which he had established in the First Ward, formerly Salina, for Syracuse had now become a city and had annexed its old neighbor. Also, I was made a teacher in the church Sunday school and was expected to take an active part in the meetings,- and there, at least, one more worker was much needed.

So, if you please, we will close up this miscellaneous chapter and pass on into the new life which was opening before me, as I found myself more and more compelled to be my own master and to decide important questions of life and conduct for myself and not by the direction of others.





## Chapter Seventeenth.

## Going to College.

Something or other has made me think, just now, of army affairs. There was always a kind of military colony in Syracuse. On the Park corner was the house of old Major Burnet, a retired army officer for whom I had vast respect. One of my first friends and playfellows was Win Sumner, whose father was a colonel. His became Col. E. V. Sumner, the distinguished cavalry commander, in due time, while his father was a corps commander in the Army of the Potomac. So, for a while, was our neighbor Major J. J. Beck, of the regulars. An equally notable example was Major General H. W. Slocum, who afterwards commanded the left wing of General Sherman's army in the west. When I first knew him, he was our county clerk, having graduated at West Point without any immediate army service of importance. Another, one of our bright district schoolboys who worked his own way up to the rank of schoolteacher, before the war, was Major General Henry Barnum, who obtained his double stars by leading the assault at the battle of Lookout Mountain. It was said that no other village of our size sent into the Civil War as many as four major generals, three of them corps commanders. Besides them were many minor officers, from the rank of colonel and under. At the same time, we were apparently short of statesmen and I had to watch for my great men and orators at the conventions. Just how many really great ones I found, I do not know, for the world knows nothing of its greatest men, but I certainly did manage to turn up a large number of remarkable looking men and women and wish, now, that I had their kodaks to show.



Among the changes which had already arrived was one in my father's affairs. By the end of my second year in the store, the burden of the church debt had proved too much for him. It did not bankrupt him, but it compelled him to sell out his business to Mr. Babcock and try something else. The new firm included William T. Hamilton and the style was F. H. Babcock & Co. The Express office had removed to larger quarters and young Mr. Wells had gone away. I believe the next title of that concern was Livingstone & Wells, afterwards Wells & Fargo. My father was a man of resources and he turned to his insurance business, which was already pretty good. He readily obtained other companies, rapidly, until, I think he had as many as fifteen, Fire, Life and Marine. He even invented a "Health Insurance Company," on the mutual plan, but it did not work well. It seemed that as soon as any man became insured he "took sick" and became a pensioner, while the other subscribers were slow in making payments. With great energy, however, my father went ahead, until he had the largest insurance business in central New York and an income of three or four thousand dollars a year. His office was in the Malcolm block, across the street from our store. He was guardian for Young Malcolm, one of the heirs of that property. We made it one of the handsomest offices in Syracuse and my duties at fires were increased considerably. In that connection, I must mention another member of our family, - two of them. Charles and John were still at school but, before long, Harry went into the Onondaga County Bank, under Mr. Morsace White, Andrew's father. With him went our very remarkable dog, "Dash", one of the best known characters in the city. I



raised him from a pup, beginning on Onondaga street, and he had been my companion in many a hunt and ramble. He also insisted upon attending me at fires and answered every alarm bell, whether I did or not. Nothing could keep him in the house after he heard the fire signal and the moment he was let out he would run to a particular engine house and bark up the energies of that fire company. When the men set out, his place was at their head, barking furiously at every delay, and he never left them until their duties were over. They formally elected him a member of the company for it, like all the rest, was a "volunteer" organization. There were endless stories told of his sagacity and when Henry went into the bank he went along, deciding that his services were needed as guardian of the institution. I will only mention one point, for the study of the curious. He would lie in the President's office, eyes open, and would permit bank clerks and others whom he knew or approved of to pass the little half-door between the bank office itself and the outer entry, until the clock on the mantel struck "three." After that no man or boy might come in until he did so by command of a bank officer. Now! How did Desk know that the bank closed business at three o'clock and how did he distinguish human character? It was the same with other features of the office management: he obtained a knowledge of them and insisted upon their due observance.

Well! During all these years I had been an omnivorous reader. During part of the time, I had been required to sleep in a bunk under a bank counter, as night watchman, sweep and general regulator. My duties were miscellaneous and very exacting but I will not dwell upon them. Suffice it



to say that they began at six in the morning and did not end at all. Two other boys who, at different times, were put in to try it, broke down pretty soon. At the same time, my own strength appeared to increase with hard work and my training lift at the gymnasium rose to 160 pounds, or more than that of any other fellow of my weight. That, too, kept steadily at 144 and afterwards, in Rochester, arose to 157. I tried to vary my educational exercises. One effort related to anatomy, but when my father discovered that I was attending evening lectures and actual dissections at the Medical College, as it was called, he put a stop to it, declaring all that new fangled stuff needless. So he did an attempt at a Commercial School, with bookkeeping and a vein reaching out after the Law, whereof he seemed to have an especial dislike. Of one thing, however, I had made up my own mind. That Rochester was the place for me. I wanted to go to a New York house, Sheather's or Kollo's, for instance, but that was also voted down. At last I settled upon my old idea of college, long ago almost given up as impossible. It was strongly opposed by my step-uncle Gilbert and others, but it was supported by some of my father's Syracuse friends, including, I believe, the Whites and Mr. Fish, of the Mechanic's Bank. At all events, my father began to think well of it and to discuss the comparative advantages of Providence and Brown College, and the entirely new University at Rochester. At both places we had friends and relatives but I think the nearness of Rochester carried the day, with other considerations. If at that time I had gone to Brown, I might sooner have made the acquaint-





tance of one John May, for he would have been a classmate.

I must not forget to record that during my last winter in the book business I returned to authorship and invention. I made what I supposed was an improvement in watches, until Andrew White came to see me in his winter holidays. He pook-pooked it and I was convinced that the regular dealers were ahead of me. I had all the more pride in him because he had won the hundred dollar Sophomore Prize declamation medal at Yale and was a model college boy. As to the other matter, I wrote a long novel. It was during the time when the other candidates were occupying my old bunk under the counter at the store and I was sleeping in the little parlor bedroom at home, over the front door. It had no arrangements for heating and I remember writing at night until the ink froze in the inkstand and I had to quit until I could thaw it out in the morning. It was a work, I should say, of over 100,000 words and was in many ways remarkable but I never finished it to suit me and it was not sent to any publisher.

When the Spring months had fairly begun, I was informed that I might begin my preparations for college and I did so. My Latin began under a remarkable German ex-professor, who had left his native country for distinguished conduct in the revolution of 1848. He was a fine scholar but we disagreed, for he insisted that I employed what he called a "bridge," in my translations of Virgil. I rebelled against that and also against my very irregular chances of finding him in properly unlagged condition to read anything. My next tutor was a Professor Malthy, and I also crushed up my mathematics &c., but I made a note of it that on the Fourth of July



I had not yet touched the Greek alphabet. I was aware, however, that the professor in that ancient tongue at Rochester was Prof. Asahel Kendrick, the distinguished author of "Kendrick's Introduction," and several other schoolbooks of the kind. So I obtained a copy of the "Introduction" and committed it to memory, examples for translation and all. It was quite an undertaking, in hot weather, but I wish that I had retained the retentive memory I then was blest with. It would retain anything and it sometimes seemed to me that I remembered all the books I had ever read. I did not do so, for among them were all the octave copies of the English poets which were in the store, and there were large desert places, even in Byron himself, which I had voted not worth stacking away in my brain. As to all the minor branches set down on the schedule for examination, I felt no anxiety whatever and I went to Rochester in full confidence that I was sure to pass.

Some way or other, I have forgotten how, I was provided with a boarding-house at the start and took my small baggage into it. The next morning I set out for the University. I had settled on the extreme east of the town and the Institution was at the western end. I had, therefore, to patrol the entire length of the central avenue, Buffalo street, and about half way was the Genesee river and the bridge. Every foot of the distance appealed to my memory of my earlier childhood, for there, just off on Clinton street, was one of our residences. There was the Second Baptist Church, the first I had ever entered. There was the corner on which Julia and I had upset the baby wagon and spilled the molasses. There was the



bridge itself and Deacon Barton's axe factory and then I came to the corner of State street, to see my father's store with the Sign of Mr. Page on it instead of his, while across the way and away up was the sign of my childhood's puzzle, Mr. Job Printing. On I went, block after block, until I reached my destination. The new Institution had not yet been able to erect a building of its own and it had secured for educational purposes what had once been a considerable hotel. It stood near the Bridge over the canal and it was no longer of any use in that regard for the railway had ruthlessly killed the canal passenger business. It was a rainy, gloomy morning and I had been cultivating what was almost a fit of the blues, but anything like low spirits vanished the moment I made my way into the big hotel diningroom which was now employed as the university Chapel. The hour for opening exercises had not yet arrived but a large number of young candidates for examination had done so and they were standing all around, in various attitudes of discontent and apparent apprehension. Not a boy among them looked as if he expected to pass and some of them were even poring over text books, as if they were freshening their minds before facing their inquisitors. It struck the vein of fun that is in me, somewhere, and I was all right in a moment. It was my obvious duty to quiz and otherwise encourage that damp mob of homesick, troubled minded candidates for admission and I did so. Before long, a tall, handsome, curly headed fellow came lounging in, with a look of disgust on his face and I made for him viciously.

"Hullo!" I said. "Who are you? You're the first decent lookin' fellow



I've seen, "What's your name?"

"Hop Strong," he said, in a somewhat astonished manner, and a few other inquiries gave me the facts that not only was he a Rochester boy but that his father and mother had been early friends of mine.

"Come on!" I said. "Let's hunt up some other good fellows!"

The very next man we boned gave his name as Harris, "Will Harris," and his father Judge Ira Harris, of Albany, was Chancellor of the University. He was also a Homer boy who owed much to John Osborn, and he had married Miss Tubbs, my mother's intimate friend, boarding school chum, &c., so that Will was a sort of cousin of mine at once. The next man we cornered was Will Abbott, son of the esteemed missionary of that name, and we went on until we made up a squad of more than half a dozen and felt much better.

As soon as the Chapel exercises were over, the examinations began and I had first rate luck. My other branches were all right, of course, and when I came to my Greek I was in front of Professor Kendrick, answering his questions by quotations from Kendrick's Introduction. When the passages he gave me for translation were from a thin little book in his hand and I could translate them without looking at them, quoting them from my Kendrick in my memory. He was delighted with my proficiency and I started in his class with a fine reputation as one of the best prepared of the sixty odd candidates. Some of them were very old but fifty seven of them managed to squeeze through and the "Class of '52" was to begin its career as the most numerous that had as yet blessed the records of the Institution. It was afterwards to have a great reputation of its own.





I was exceedingly gratified by the evidences which I quickly received of the high esteem in which my father and mother had been held by their friends in Rochester. I was at once taken hold of and invited here and there in the most cordial manner. My father's step-brother, Erastus T. Smith, one of the handsomest men I ever saw and a great figurehead as the dignified chairman of public meetings, was ranked as my uncle. His daughter was Mrs. Dr. Dean, wife of a prominent physician, and their house became one of my Sunday dinner places. So did that of Mr. E. F. Smith, only a cousin, but his wife was also a cousin and we were the best of friends. Her maiden name was Barbour and I do not know how the relationship came in. Hop Strong's house was as the rest and so was that of his uncle Alvan Strong, editor and publisher of the Democrat. Hop's cousin Augustus was one of my first acquisitions. He afterwards became President of the Rochester Theological Seminary, after a career at Yale and in the ministry.

I need not make a catalogue of the many new friends who rapidly turned up. My boarding house was selected for reasons of economy, which I well knew I must exercise, and part of my agreement was that I was to provide and saw my own wood and attend to my own fires. My landlady was a good woman who was struggling hard to get along, but her husband was a quaker character. He was an enthusiastic local politician, of whom it was related that when Henry Clay was defeated for President, this admirer went and sat down by the Upper Genesee Falls and wept aloud. He shortly did me the honor to assure me that he "had read dixinaries 'fore you were born sir!" but he failed to tell me how many of them he had perused.



## Chapter Eighteenth.

## College Days.

If there is one occupation more than another to which I never took kindly, it is the sawing of wood. Chopping, on the other hand, I have really enjoyed and I have had plenty of it. I had more than plenty of wood sawing, that first winter in Rochester. My first room mate, for a short time only, was a young law student named Brand and after him came another, a rough country fellow, named Titus B. Eldredge. Of Brand's after career I never know much, but Eldredge went to New York, attained success, and I saw a great deal of him in later days.

Of the ordinary incidents of student life, there is very little to be said. They are of a well known pattern. The University was fairly well equipped, for a young one, and it had the foundations of a fine library in which were many books that were new to me. Among these were works on architecture and they opened a field of especial interest in which I dug pretty deeply. The Faculty were all first class men in their way, or ways. The President, Dr. Martin B. Anderson, was just the man for the extremely arduous task which he had undertaken, that of building up a brand new concern. My own studies never brought me under his personal care to any extent, except in History, of which he was the professor. He taught me how to read history, how to use a library, and put into me a good deal of enthusiasm concerning the old days of the world. By some accident or other, perhaps, my seat was just opposite his in the classroom, when I at last got up to it, and he formed a habit, at the beginning of each of his



admirable lectures, of half closing his eyes and calling upon me for a digest of the day's field of operation. The other boys voted that I was the most useful man in the class, for I delivered them all from the necessity of locking up their best books before they came in. It may be that he believed that I was more in sympathy with his father than that indicated. Professor Dewey, Chemistry, was no other than my old childhood veneration, the principal of the now departed "Institute," in which I had begun my Latin, at six, perched upon a high stool to reach the level of my desk. The Latin Professor Richardson, was full of that ancient tongue and any fellow might readily get it out of him. In Greek, the country was believed to contain few scholars who were at all the equals of Professor Asaiah Hendrick, and he did his teacher work faithfully. Our mathematical professor, Mr. Quinby, had been professor of mathematics at West Point and was all that could be asked for. He was afterwards a Major General in the army, during the Civil War. In modern languages, we had Tabor Nixon, said to be entirely competent, but I was under him but a short time, in French. During the vacation of that year and at the end of it, I was at home, aiding my father in his office, especially as a collector, in which line he was himself not any too good. The whole year passed in a continual effort to keep my expenditures within the limits of my limited and sadly irregular remittances, for my father was spending all he was making and was still carrying a heavy church load. One of the first of my college experiences was the customary search by the upper class men for members of their secret societies. I carried all of our crowd into the Alpha Delta



Phi and thereby earned much disapprobation from those who were left out and from the rival societies. In any merely electoral contest, I might thereafter count upon adverse votes enough to defeat me, but was consoled by the consideration that I could even more surely defeat anybody else. That society contest, however, brought me two lifelong friends, at least. One was John R. Hawood, afterwards of the firm of Ford, Howard & Hulbert, who published my "Lincoln." The other was Manton Marble, who became the editor and manager of the New York World. He was the somewhat too distinguished manager of Hon. Samuel J. Tilden's political campaign in the great historic contest for the presidency between him and Rutherford B. Hayes. Another member of my class very soon began to win peculiar distinction. It was a young fellow named Markness, who could write the finest hand you ever saw. We could put the Lord's Prayer inside of a five cent piece. What was more, he was a stenographer. One day he came into the Rhetoric room, all prepared to read his thesis. The professor, Dr. S. S. Cutting, was a sharp eyed, capable man, who had been an editor and whom I liked very much. We were warm friends to the day of his death. Well! We called upon Markness and the youngster arose, with the most solemn of faces and began to read something from a card which he held in his hand. Of course, that "Exercise" was bound to be a short one. So we all thought and there was even a cloud on the face of Professor Cutting, but the reading went on until half the recitation hour was consumed.

"Markness!" exclaimed the professor. "Let us see that thing!"

"I'm almost half through, sir," replied the reader, but he delivered





his remarkable manuscript and first another cloud and then a grin went over Dr. Cutting's countenance.

The essay, whatever it was, had been reduced to stenographic type and to the finest of penwork. It called for a microscope and an interpreter and Markness was allowed to take his seat without finishing the reading. He is now Professor Markness, the star finder, at the National Observatory at Washington.

Our especial crowd started a serenade and glee club, of course, and were soon known all over the university and the city itself as "The Quail." Among them, although a Sophomore, was Charles DeW. Bridgeman, who at last, to our surprise, attained eminence as a clergyman. I cannot mention all the good fellows who afterwards did well, for their names would have no value for the few eyes which will ever peruse these fragmentary records.

My Sophomore year began under about the same circumstances as at first except that I had by that time obtained a pretty firm place in my class rating. Perhaps it was partly due to incidents. In the Hoyt school my Drill had been thorough and it stood me in good stead now. I remember when I was first called up in mathematics. The arrangement was alphabetical and the letter "S" was not reached until the third or fourth day. When I was called, I stepped to the blackboard, drew my diagram and went through the required demonstration precisely as if this had been the Hoyt school instead of the university. As I turned away toward my seat, professor Quinby threw away a cud of tobacco and took a fresh one and remarked:

"Young gentlemen, that is the first recitation I have had!"



It was about the same in Greek, while in Latin we were reading books with which I was already entirely familiar. This gave me more time for the library and for many other things and I was beginning to enter into all social affairs with a great deal of zest.

With the new year came in a new Freshman class and there was another war between the rival societies. The Alpha Delta Phi won again and among our winnings were two fellows who at once became also enrolled as "Quails." One of these was Francis Macomber, my lifelong friend and a man of sterling worth. He was for many years an United States district Judge. The other, the drollest and dryest of prime good fellows, was Oscar, or "Ort" Folsom. He also became a success as a lawyer but was killed by an accident while District attorney of Erie County. He left a daughter who in due time became Mrs. Grover Cleveland and the lady of the White House at Washington. It was during my Sophomore year that I really began my work as a constant contributor to many periodicals. What I wrote did not amount to much but I was in good lines of training for the career which I was to follow and was actually acquiring some reputation. It was this that afterwards gave me my first start in life.

During all of my college days, I was a regular attendant at church, but we boys were in the habit of distributing our Sunday presence around among various houses of worship, according to circumstances. Perhaps some of the influential circumstances wore bonnets &c. and needed company to and from the meetinghouses,- at least, all the way home. It was a part of our duties, calling it so, that we did not at all neglect.



The most important change that came to me at the beginning of my second college year was a change of boarding house. At the far west end of the city, where the winds from Lake Ontario could get at it without any interruption, was a large house known as Halsted Hall. It had been put there by a medical genius of that name and had been used by him during many profitable years as a "water-cure" sanitarium. Its front part was of brick and comfortable. Its long rear extension, was of one story wood and was not comfortable except in moderate weather. Any of those rear rooms could freeze a thermometer in a lake wind of the kind that frequently came, that winter. My chum at Halsted Hall was Will Harris and in the concern, as a whole, was an exceedingly pleasant company. We had two professors, to begin with. One was our Rhetorical professor, Dr. John H. Raymond, and here I must correct my record of Dr. Cutting, for he did not take that post until the following year. Dr. Raymond was a brother of my old friend Rev. R. R. Raymond, of Syracuse, and an uncle of Jack Howard, who also was with us. So were two or three other good fellows of the Sophomore and upper classes, with variations. Dr. J. H. Raymond afterwards became President of Vassar College, retaining that place until his death. He was a fine elocutionist, and one of our enjoyments, that winter, was to gather in the parlor and hear him read Shakespeare &c. Dr. Kendrick was also with us, but his favorite reading was Byronic. The house was kept by the Misses Porter, three very cultivated and intelligent old maids, of the highest personal character. With them was their brother, Judge Porter, an eminent lawyer, and his family, and



their sister, Mrs. Farley and her husband and children. So the house was full. There was a fair bowling alley and there was a walk of a measured mile to the University which we turned into a running exercise pretty regularly, in order to improve our legs and get to chapel in time. The Misses Porter were arrant Abolitionists and Halsted Hall was one of the stations of what was then known as "the underground railroad" for the benefit of runaway slaves. I saw more than one dark face come flitting by. They were also in favor of "woman's rights" and I obtained some ideas from them on that head. Professor Raymond, by the way, encouraged my fad for studying successful men in a way of his own. For instance, when Wendel Philips was to lecture at Corinthian Hall, he advised us all to go and get a lesson in oratory. We went in a body but the Quail part of the body had young ladies who also needed lessons in elocution.

The Spring vacation of that year was spent by Will Harris and me in a visit to an aunt of his, Mrs. Guernsey, down on the west shore of Cayuga lake. It was a pleasant farmhouse and she was an exceedingly kindly woman. Her son Cyrus was a good fellow, too, but our announced object was catching fish and shooting wild fowl. I think we did more rowing around along the edges of the Cayuga marshes than anything else, but we had a prime vacation. When Summer came, I was invited to spend a few weeks of my vacation with the Harris family, at Albany. I do not know that I ever had a more entirely agreeable time. The family, in the absence of Judge Harris and his (second) wife at the seashore, consisted of his son, stepson and daughters. The step son, whom I liked very well, was Henry Rathbone and he after-





wards married the older of the daughters, Miss Clara Harris. I shall have more to say of them bye and bye. Will's aunt Clara Harris, his father's sister, lived at the farm, a few miles up the Hudson, with her widowed mother. I was out at the farm a great deal, for I formed a strong friendship for Aunt Clara. The other girls, Amanda and Louisa, tolerated me in the very best style, for they were stylish. Among the pleasant incidents of my visit was a whole day that we spent at the old Schuyler mansion. It was then in the possession of Mrs. Mackintosh, who afterwards married ex-President Millard Fillmore. She deserved anything good for she entered with all her soul into my revolutionary enthusiasm. She took me all over the house and grounds and filled me full of oldtime legends concerning General Philip Schuyler, the Tories, the Indians and all that sort of history, but I was never able to accept her kind invitation to come again. This may be the right place to record that Will Harris and I, in our next vacation, took a hunting jaunt into the Adirondack woods, by way of Gloversville, where I had previously visited with my cousins the Thomas family. I forgot to put that in at the right place but will record it now. I then became acquainted with my cousin Sara Thomas, now Mrs. Sara Randall, Harry's mother. Her mother much resembled what Sara is now. Her father was an excellent man. I learned a great deal about the making of gloves and I went to the Sir William Johnson mansion, away back in the woods. It was in good preservation, particularly the marks of the tomahawk of the angry Mohawk chief Brant, Tha-yen-da-ne-ga, on the massive rail and balusters of the great stairway. In Gloversville I then saw, for



the first and only time, my grandmother Osborn's two maiden sisters, the Misses Cotton, both quite old and neither of them as handsome as she was. The next year, Sara Randall came to visit us at Syracuse and was with us at the time of my grandmother's death.

To return to Rochester, the University had two "literary societies," the Delphic and Pithonian, and the debates and other exercises of these in their weekly gatherings were thought much of by the students. Toward the end of the Sophomore year, there were competitive debates in each society and the winner of each was the "Prize Debater" for his Society in the grand contest before the University. In the Pithonian, that year, there were eleven contestants and I was calmly informed by good authority that I had no chance whatever. That aroused my temper, somewhat, and so did an attempt to hiss me down when I began speaking, for I had made jealousies as well as friends. That temper was the making of me and I carried the prize, unanimously. Then followed the more important contest in the chapel, before a densely packed audience of all sorts. My opponent was Lemuel Moss, in later days Rev. Dr. Moss, of The National Baptist. It was a tough pull, for he was several years my senior, but the Faculty, sitting as judges, refused to decide between us, so that we both won it, just as Frank Stockton and I once both won a Harper prize, with the difference that Lem Moss and I received nothing but honor while Stockton and I received a hundred dollars apiece, which was more to the point. At the end of the Sophomore year came the grand Declamation contest in Corinthian Hall, and there were to be three prizes. Again I was confidently assured that I was no speaker



and that while my class standing compelled the faculty to put me on the list of competitors they did not expect me to win anything. If this was the opinion of even my friends, including Mant Marble, what a small show I must have had! The hall was crowded to suffocation and it was said to hold two thousand people. My temper was up again and when the debate was over the first prize fell to El Otis and me. The committee decided between us by flipping a copper. The cent turned up heads for Otis and he got it as No. One. He went on winning until he is now known in history as Major General Elwell S. Otis of the regular army, our first commander in the Philippines. He and I are good friends to this day.

There were trips to Lake Ontario. There were studies of the upper and lower falls of the Genesee, and once I failed entirely in a hairbrained attempt to swim that river at the rapids above the city. I discovered that a seemingly smooth current may be a dreadful hypocrite, running like mad and ready to sweep a reckless college boy over the upper fall. That failure cost me the oysters for six. There were drives in winter and summer, whenever I could get a horse and buggy or cutter and there were many social affairs. There were serenades and that sort of thing but I must not forget my first experience with the Spiritists. The Fox Girls had begun their experiments upon popular credulity and all the country was talking about the "Rochester Rappings." A congregation of Spiritists had formed and were holding regular meetings in a small hall over Sage's bookstore. One Sunday, Hop Strong and his cousin Henry, Will Abbott, Will Harris and I went to see and hear the performances.



With the termination of that Summer vacation came a most important event. My father told us children of his determination to marry again and it was really no news to me. Mrs. Frances M. Bolles, to whom he introduced us, was a woman of much intelligence and we all hoped that she would be a good companion for him, although I do not believe that any lot of grown up children ever took kindly to the idea of having a stepmother. It was, I think, easier for the boys, who were less at home, than it was for the girls. It may have been easiest of all for a fellow away at college, but I did what I could to keep peace in the family. That I did not succeed and that many troubles came is all that need be said in that connection, for we must let the dead past bury its own dead and that history may as well be forgotten.

The wedding took place at Pomfret, Conn., September 18th., 1856, and the bride and groom came to Syracuse without an extended wedding tour. Mrs. Stoddard was a fervent Episcopalian and it was not long before she led my father to join her in the communion of St. Paul's church. It was natural that both of them should wish the children to go with them, but at that point the lines of separation began to be drawn. It was a matter of continual discussion that was altogether out of order and so it produced disorder. With my stepmother came her very engaging and agreeable little daughter Fannie, for whom I readily formed a genuine brotherly affection. She in due time became the wife of Rev. Herbert Patterson but she has long since passed away, as has her mother. With the latter, I retained pleasant personal relations to the end of her life. You are all aware of her genealogical tendencies. She was a most remarkable preserver of all





manner of odds and ends of biographical lore, relating to the several families with which she was in any wise connected. She kept up a tremendous correspondence with kith and kin at all the ends of the earth and could tell, off hand, what had become of twigs and branches which other people had lost sight of.

My father's affairs now appeared to be in fair condition. The new Mrs. Stoddard was said to be a woman of some property, but that feature of the case turned out to be somewhat mythical, for it was little Fannie to whom the moderate estate belonged and in the keeping it up still another burden soon fell upon my father. One way and another, therefore, my own affairs were becoming unpleasantly restricted and the worry and fret of poverty, in an unpleasant form, began to tell upon me pretty severely.

On returning to Rochester, I did not again board with the Misses Porter. At first, for a while, I was an inmate of the Strong family, parents of my old friend Hop. Then a new idea, related to economy, took possession of me. I would take a room and board myself.

Away down on State street, half way to the railroad depot, had been put up a new brick building, somewhat ahead of the current demands. There were stores below, but almost all the upper part was empty and I secured a large back room at a merely nominal rental. Hop Strong joined me in the enterprise and was able to bring part of the furniture out of quantities which his family were not using. Nevertheless, my share was far the larger and put me sadly in debt. It was a well lighted, exceedingly cheerful kind of room and the heating was done by a wide mouthed "Franklin" stove,



burning bituminous coal. I slept upon a sofa bedstead which became mere sofa in the daytime. Over a round table in the middle was a gaslight chandelier, with a drop, and from the chandelier also hung a wide winged black hawk of whom I remember writing, "How like a ghost he swings, With the dust upon his wings. Like the phantom forms he seems, That float over us in dreams." That may have been so, after the gas was turned off, and a sort of remedy was to be obtained by brushing off the dust. Hop was musical and a friend of his loaned him a piano. There was also a guitar, big horse pistol, "used by Andrew Jackson at New Orleans," according to an inscription card tied to its neck, and there were many other oddities and semi-elegances. It was a room worth visiting and before long everybody who could find an excuse did so, including whole parties of our young lady friends. The fact was that it was so soon called "Quail's Nest" that we had a silver plate made for the door carrying that title. Not long was it before yet another idea came and in many a periodical, east and west, were printed the poems and stories of "The Quail o' Quail's Nest."



## Chapter Nineteenth.

## The Junior Year.

The political situation of the country had been steadily growing more and more cloudy, year after year. There were increasing evidences that both of the old parties, Whig and Democratic, were disintegrating, but it did not yet appear what was to take the place of them. In the year 1856, however, the discontented elements had gone far enough to organize what was known as The People's Party and of course I belonged to it. So did my father and I went home at election day to cast my first vote for Fremont and Dayton. It was a matter not without teaching that I was challenged at the polls and compelled to swear my vote in by an Irish Pro-Slavery "old Hunker" democrat who proved to have been in this country only about six weeks. From that time onward I paid more attention than ever to political affairs and was really beginning to know something about them,- but not a great deal, for the situation was a puzzle to older heads than mine.

I went back to Rochester with an assurance that now my finances would be regularly cared for, but only to find myself plunging deeper and deeper into difficulties which harrassed me dreadfully. Something worse than that was in store, however, for when I went home for the Winter holidays I found my beloved sister Julia apparently recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever but really drifting into the pitiless gripe of bronchial consumption. She lingered until February and I came home to be with her at the last. She died in my arms, with her head upon my shoulder, for I hardly had left her for a minute, day or night, and she appeared to depend on



me more than upon anybody else. She was at rest and poor Kate was left alone with many troubles before her. I returned to my studies almost broken hearted and it was some time before I recovered from the blow.

The long list of matters of a minor kind may well be omitted. There were changes among my associates at the university. Mant Marble had gone to New York, into Journalism. My friend Norman Fox, of the same class, had gone into the Theological Seminary. Will Harris had gone to West Point on his way to future distinguished Army service. By the way, after writing here, yesterday, I learned that my boyhood playmate, Win Sumner, is at this present Brigadier General Sumner, commanding in the Phillipines. One more general from Hoyt's school. How those picked boys did turn out!

During most of all this time, I was doing more or less in the Rochester Gymnasium, presided over by a short, cast iron genius by the name of Shadders from whom I did not learn a great deal, but then I was keeping up my muscles and activities pretty well and preparing for the hard service which was before me. On the whole, I was keeping up my reputation and my place in my class and winning the good opinion of the faculty, as their after action was to show. The Quails o' Quail's Nest were all the while a noted feature in the university life and I was more and more widely known as "The Quail," perhaps somewhat to my detriment in the eyes of the best of good people. Well, the end of the year came, at last, and I went home burdened with debt, discouraged and determined not to go back into that kind of torment again. I had nominally borrowed two hundred dollars from my stepmother, but it turned out to be from the "Bolles estate" and while





I gave my note for the whole and afterwards paid it, with interest, I only received actually one hundred and sixty for my college debts, so pressing were the requirements of the home affairs. I do not think my father was then any longer the good business man that he had been and his wife was anything but a good business woman. I looked over his affairs and decided that although his income was good and business flourishing, it was time for me to get out from under. That meant that I could not consent to stay in Syracuse, as he would have preferred. Indeed, he strongly urged me to go back to college but a condition precedent to that had to be the liquidation of my debts and as that was not to be had my mind was fixed and I would go west to seek my fortune as best I might.

Slowly and painfully the junior year dragged on to its close and I was at home in a state of mind that was anything but comfortable. I had been proud of my class standing and my college career and had hoped to go on to a completion which would aid me in a professional career. That would have been the law, beyond a doubt, although my father was unaccountably opposed to my adopting that profession,- or any other, for he had no substitute to propose and his position was peculiar. I say thus much to justify the independent and somewhat rebellious course which I actually took.

Before leaving Rochester I had sold out Quail's Nest, my books, &c., and had paid some of my most pressing debts, but there was a pile of them left, accumulated under continuously illusive promises of cash from home. I still had a few dollars remaining but not enough to carry me to the Far West,- that is, not very far.



There were many sadnesses connected with the giving up of Syracuse and my college course at the same time. There were the graves of my mother and sister, who had been to me as angels of God, and I went to see them. There were our old residences, and the Park and the Lake and the bookstore. I took a last look at them all, but I was not at all sorry about the bookstore for it was connected in my mind and memory with an enormous amount of overwork. I said goodbye to many people, and almost every man or woman among them appeared to know why I was going west and to be ready to send me off loaded with good wishes. As for my father, he gave no hearty consent, although he did not positively forbid. He told me, however, that if I did go, I must "go upon my own responsibility." I had a dim idea that he expected that shortly I would be writing to him for help. He did not know that I would have digged cellars first. One of my old bookstore acquaintances was not only a schoolteacher but an arithmetical crank and he had invented and printed a considerable volume of "countinghouse tables." The thing was too big and clumsy and was not selling well and he proposed that I should make an effort to introduce it in the West. I knew too much about bookselling to see a gold mine in it but believed I might work off a few and I took a dozen or so on commission. My brother Henry, still a clerk in the bank, lent me twelve dollars and off I went, stopping at Rochester to pick up Hop Strong, who was going at the same time. He had long since left the University, as uncongential, and had entered upon a commercial career as travelling salesman for his father, who was a manufacturer of and dealer in all sorts of trunks, whips, canes and the like, and whose trade in the west needed stimulation for the times were cloudy.



They were so, but few men seemed to be properly aware of it. The whole country, if not the rest of the world also, had gone mad upon speculation. The West, in particular, was crazy with wild expansion, beyond all immediate possibility of realization. A hundred times as much real estate, mostly unimproved, was for sale, as there was any demand for. Cities and towns were everywhere springing up, - on paper. Railways without traffic were going out in all directions and trying to market their bonded indebtedness upon a clogged market. There were twice too many banks, such as they were, on a balloon basis, and twice too much currency, such as it was, with the notes of different states selling across the state borders at two and three per cent discount and endless counterfeits of a high grade of execution. It was what some people called "flush times," and the end was not far away.

Hop and I went on to Buffalo, to take a Lake steamer for Detroit. I may have sold some books in Buffalo, but do not remember. The great thing was to be actually on that steamboat, a fine one, and on my way west. I seemed to myself to be already another man and my depressions all fled from me. I went into the spirit of the hour with tremendous zest and had no doubt whatever of my entire success. Why should I have had, with such an overflowing sense of suppressed but ready energy? Some books may have been sold on the boat and others at Detroit, for here I parted company with Hop. My next stop was at Kalamazoo, that I might see the housecovered land which my father had once sold for almost nothing. I saw it and took courage, determining to also buy much western land and to keep it until it should be built upon. From Detroit I went to Chicago and to a hotel kept



by oldtime Rochester acquaintances named Blossom, who had once been proprietors there of the Eagle Hotel. I made my footing good at once, for I took Mrs. Blossom and her daughter Nellie to the theatre, the first night. The next morning, without telling them what I was up to, I went out with my books, but a day's hard work dissuaded me from sending back for any more. Then I fell in with a queer genius who had invented a complicated mathematical instrument for measuring lumber and I walked many a mile through the great lumber district before I would be fully instructed that the Chicago dealers were able to do without it and were not just then selling as much lumber as would make them ready to buy extravagances.

The city itself was in a peculiar condition. It had been started and built up at the level of the lake, large areas having been actually swampy. It had been determined to "raise the grade" to a height which would admit of cellars and sewers and the work was going on. Whole brick or framed blocks were being hoisted in a marvellous way and it was in contracts for this engineering that Pullman of The Palace Car marvel made the beginning of his colossal successes. Each of the business streets, however, was a mountain country, one house on the old grade and the next on the new. A day's walk was a day's fatiguing if not perilous climb. All the city was drinking hard, speculating madly, and tumbling up and down stairs. It was just at the end of my lumber measurers that I again fell in with Hop Strong and he was in difficulties as to his business. For some firm or family reason, he had been unexpectedly ordered home. He had closed out all the goods sent on with him except a lot of cheap sword





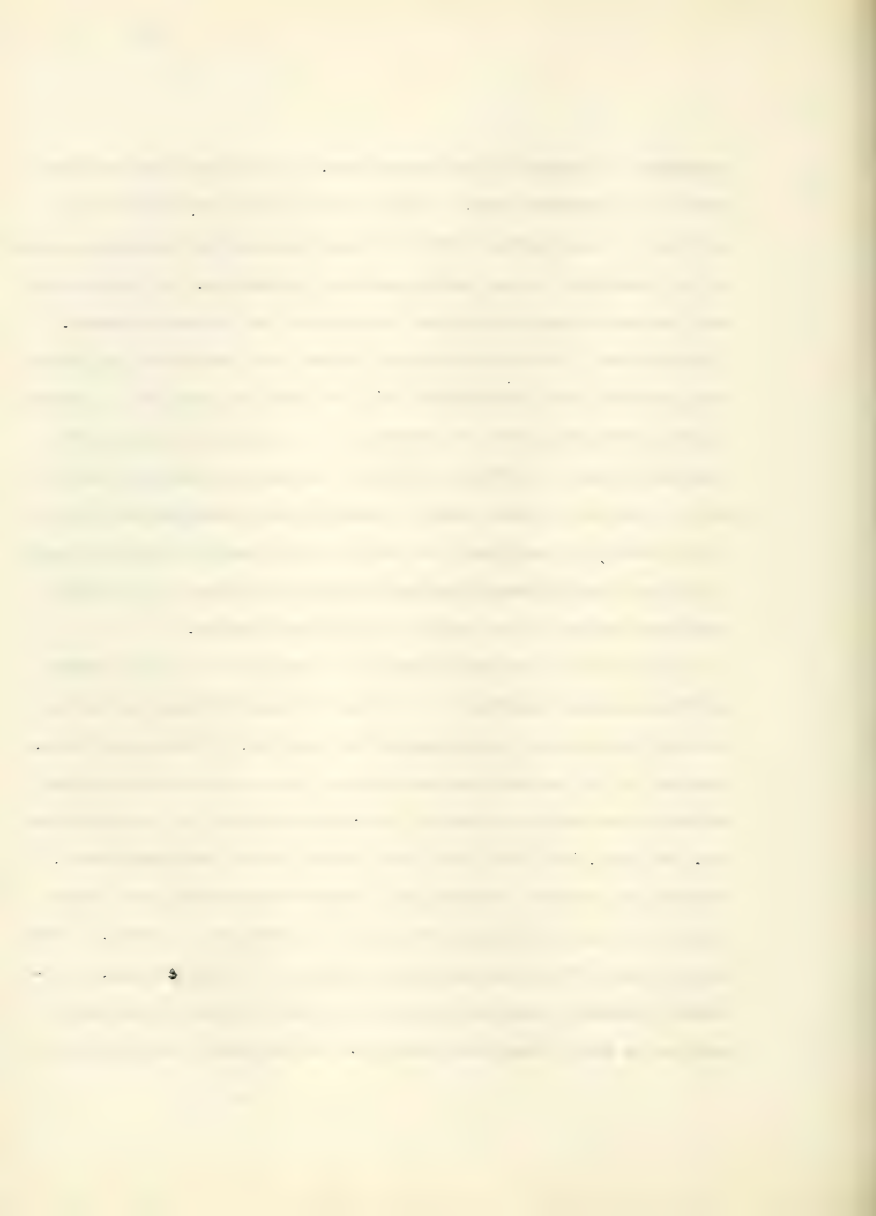
canes and loaded headed "plug-ugly" canes, which he did not care to carry back with him. Liberal terms were offered me if I would sell them and I took up the offer. He went home and I went out into the streets of Chicago as a peddler. I did pretty well, too, in my new vocation, but left the hotel for a cheaper boardinghouse, away down on the "west side", not at first knowing that it was to be my side of the young city. My stock in trade had been small, however, and it was needful for me to seek some other means for making a fortune. Now it had happened that, at the request of some Rochester friend or other, I had contributed reviews, letters, &c., to a recently started afternoon journal called "The Chicago Daily Ledger" and my work had met with approval. So my mind went from peddling all the way back to literature and I determined to call at the Ledger office. The editor and proprietor was one of the most curious of unusual characters and believed himself to be a great man. So he was. He was the leading "Spiritualist" of the Northwest and had even carried on a bank under spiritual direction until the ghosts ran it under water. He had lectured all over the country and was prone to anything but steady hard work.

One of my good points was that I had proposed to be jauntily well dressed and my long collegiate hair was not closely cropped. So it was in fine uniform that I entered the editorial sanctum of the Hon. Seth Paine and dignifiedly introduced myself as his well beloved eastern correspondent. He was glad to see me and I informed him that I had already been several days in the city, looking around. My conclusion was, I told him, that any man of sense would be likely to look around a good while before making a



settlement in business at the present time. I was in no hurry and might prefer to go somewhere else. He fully agreed with me and added that a position on the editorial staff of a rising journal, like the Ledger, would be the right place for any man in search of information. All the channels would be open before his eyes and he might wait for favorable chances. I replied that I saw it as he did but doubted if he could offer me sufficient wages to cover my expenses. O! As to that, he could give me twenty dollars a week and I could be economical. So I yielded and found, off hand, that I was to be "Literary Editor," because my predecessor had gone off on a strike. Somewhat later, I learned that my excellent and spiritually minded chief had gone to the hotel and had received glowing accounts of me from my old Rochester sporting friend, Bill Blossom. That fellow could have written a short novel, with one hand, any day.

We had first rate accommodations in the upper story of a large brick building, occupied otherwise as a foundry and scale factory, and our job printing office was as good as any in the city, with a fine run of trade. That part of the business was presided over by a fat genius who informed me that a mere editor was nothing in comparison with a full fledged printer. He added, with just pride, that in the City of Washington itself, printers were admitted into the best society because of the well established fact that one Benjamin Franklin had himself been a printer. I was glad to know it and determined that I also would be like Benjamin. I obtained a printer's guide and learned how to correct proof and as much more as the small volume could teach me. On the whole, I was quite con-



tented and did rapidly acquire a great deal of general information concerning Chicago and the great West. It was not until afterwards, down on the prairie, that I learned from Old Man Howe that the original name of the locality had been shortened a little. All that the term we now have means, in the tongue of the Miami Indians, "The place of-" but the word for Skunk in the same tongue is "Nugh." the whole name was Chi-ga-go-nugh," the place of Skunks. There were enough of them there, on two feet each, in the summer of 1857. My boardinghouse was pleasant, if it had not been for the enormous activity of innumerable mosquitoes, the sole produce of the lakeshore marshes. Among the boarders, however, was an English lady and her daughter, who pronounced it Chicaygo and pretended to teach music. The idea of learning something of music and of helping them took possession of me and I went to the piano with the old lady. I made a good beginning but had to give it up, for no sooner would the good woman get me to the keyboard than she would invariably go to sleep and I suspected that it was not altogether on account of fatigue. The days were getting wonderfully full, moreover, for the news editor also struck and I had to take up his dropped burden. He had quarrelled with Seth on money account. It was a tough problem to solve as to local items, but I solved it. Ours being an afternoon journal, all the newsboys came for us as soon as they had closed out the morning prints. I went for them and promised them a tip for each really good item they might find and bring me. Sometimes a dead horse or a knockdown had to be divided among several reporters, but there could not anything occur in Chicago without my getting hold of it in first rate



order and full life size. So much for that and I made short work of my reviews. It has been a lesson to me, ever since, for I know very well how the review business is worked by tired editors. So far, so good, but Seth had been seized by a sharp attack of politics, lecturing and spirits of all sizes and I found myself Leading Editor also, to an uncomfortable extent. I knew whom to abuse, including Long John Wentworth, then Mayor, and it was safe to talk any kind of radicalism, so that I did fairly well, only that I had to write like lightning and care nothing for small slips of the pen. When I found time for sleep I do not know, for it was needful to keep up with the theatres and give reports of performances. That I did, going from one to another, every night, and getting the run of theatrical business in a way that led me to try my hand as a playwright. In the course of the Summer, I had written a local comedy which was duly accepted at Ford's Theatre. It was all ready for presentation, in the autumn, when that theatre burned down, my comedy perishing with the flies and footlights.

As to spiritism, I must not forget to say that I tried to make a study of it. I talked with our printers who were in it and gathered an idea that the best "mediums" among them were using too much of either opium or whiskey, or were nervously out of order in some way. They were not healthy or sound minded men in my opinion. One night, there was to be a grand exhibition, by several noted spiritists from the East, in the largest hall in Chicago and I went to see. A committee of well known citizens was called for, to act as judges, and they were ceremoniously





elected. One of the newsboys shouted for me, however, and in an instant all the peanut eaters in the crowded hall were yelling "Stoddard!" The general public followed their lead and I was sent to the stand as "one of the best known and most trusted of our fellow citizens." Such is an election by a unanimous vote of a free and enlightened people. The performance was really of intense interest and my own experiments brought me some things which I could not then understand but think I can now. There were no ghosts present but there was a high order of animal magnetic telegraphy. Not one name or fact or thought came back to me in any manner which I could not readily find in my own mind or memory. To these facts or names something or other might readily be hitched on by the operator. Not to elaborate that business, I saw that its best hold, just then, was to make great men like Seth Paine and wrecks like some in my office.

The Ledger might have done well in the hands of competent business men, but its finances were in Seth's hands and my salary began to run behind. So I put in as much time as I had left in getting cash down advertisements and waited for the next thing in my queer enterprise. It was of course that I should inquire into the real estate business, for we were advertising lots of it, and that the fever of real estate speculation should begin to burn in me. I had even begun to make my selections. Perhaps it was with a view to examining the rural districts that I also availed myself of my editorial privilege of obtaining railway passes of any kind that I could get. They were issued freely in those days, for competent railway managers were glad to have somebody upon some of their trains.



It was a hot and feverish time and there appeared to me to be a sort of desperate struggle for existence, all around me. The air seemed dusty and it was not difficult to detect a growing feeling of uneasiness. Into this state of things there suddenly came sweeping a kind of financial cyclone. Its course began in Europe but it crossed the Atlantic with a rush and a whirl and struck the eastern states. It did not pause there for a day but came furiously westward. It struck Chicago and in one day every bank and banking house and almost every commercial or manufacturing concern had closed its doors. The Ledger had to shut up shop, for the bank in which Seth Paine had trusted was one of the first to close. I was no longer a leading citizen or a prominent editor, I was an adventurer out of employment and so were thousands of others. The streets were swarming with young men of all sorts who had nothing on earth to do. A great palsy had fallen upon all manner of ambitions and enterprises and the entire United States appeared to be standing still.

A day or so only was needed to convince me that I must get out of Chicago, if I really expected to get anything to eat that Fall and Winter. It may seem too much to say, but I was hardly dispirited. I did not lose heart for a moment, but promptly decided to push right out into the country and try my hand at agriculture, at least until the storm should blow over. I had a little money and a pretty good outfit of clothing, and besides that I had my railway passes and could get more of the same sort.



## Chapter Twentieth.

## Grand Prairie.

Beginning, at the east, somewhere in Indiana; at the north on the shore of Lake Erie and Lake Michigan; at the south in the woods of southern Illinois; at the Wabash and the Ohio; bordered at the west by the Mississippi river, there is an immense, irregular, undulating plain of alluvial country to which the early French explorers gave the name of "Grand Prairie," and they were entirely justified in so doing. For further geographical particulars, please consult the maps. These will give all outlines and some of the watercourses, but will not give any idea whatever of what so large a prairie really is. In the first place, it is a deceptive humbug, giving to the eye of the innocent observer the impression of a vast level, when the fact is that the waves of land which became solid to make the prairie are some of them very high and that no such thing as might truthfully be called a "table land" actually exists.

Anyhow, it was down into the heart of this plain that I was going, at the end of my remarkable residence in Chicago. I was not to go alone, for I had picked out as my companion and partner a stalwart young fellow named Ezra Kendall. He was from Chautauqua county, New York, and had been raised on a farm. He had been a drygoods clerk in Chicago and his concern had gone up very high. Just at this time, all real estate was a drug on the market and sales thereof, except by the sheriffs, had almost ceased. Perhaps it was the more easy for me to obtain a partly cultivated patch of prairie, of about four hundred acres, with a provisional contract for



another section. A section is a square mile and would contain six hundred and forty acres if the surveys were accurate and if the earth were not so round. The curve continually lets in more land and I knew one section which stretched itself out over 700 acres and more.

The Chicago Branch of the Illinois Central railroad runs nearly due south and if your eye will follow it on the map about 170 miles you will see a point where it is crossed by the Toledo, Wabash and Western road, on its way to the Mississippi river. That road takes you to the capital, where Lincoln lived and the day came when I had passes on it and used them.

At this railway junction there was a hotel, a stationhouse, a cornerrib, a real estate office, two dwellings and a barn, the whole constituting the town of Tolono. Ten miles north was the old town of Urbana and at its right elbow was the new, railway station town of West Urbana, now the thriving city of Champaign, standing in the middle of the large prairie county of that name. It was to the southern edge of this county, on the border of what was then Coles county, that my land title was to take me, with the help of the road. Ten miles due east from Tolono is the village of Homer and a plumb line dropped from it to the county line would hit my farm but I did not get to it by that way. Ezra Kendall and I left Chicago in the night and I had to buy a ticket for him as my pass would not carry double. We left the cars at what we had been told was the town of Pesotum, ten miles south of Tolono, and we did so in the dark which comes before the dawn. It was a lovely morning in early October, and there we sat on our trunks, on the station platform, waiting for the sun to rise. When at





at last it rose, we saw the town. It was about a hundred yards from the station and appeared to be full of corn in the ear. That was the south half of Pesotum. The north half was further off and resembled a farmhouse but not in any direction did we see any fences. Far away southward, on a roll of prairie high enough to be called a hill, was a bit of forest and we were informed that it was "Lost Grove," but could not learn where it had wandered from. There was no hotel in Pesotum, but we learned of a good hearted young farmer at three miles or so southerly and we left our baggage in the lookup and went for him. I will call him Kirby until I can be sure whether or not that is his name. He was from Kentucky and had put a whole section under wheat the previous year. It had yielded him thirty bushels per acre, at a dollar a bushel, and had paid for his land and house. With the money that was left, he was not putting in that section again and another with it and felt rich. I regret to say that the next crop was a complete failure. That morning, he gave Ezra and me a tiptop breakfast and was almost offended when I offered to pay for it, asserting with much dignity that he "did not keep a hotel" and that his neighbors were always welcome, and strangers too. I afterwards found that this was only customary prairie hospitality and that any lonely dweller would be ready to overfeed a fellow who would bring him any news from the world.

From Kirby's we footed it on till we could feel sure that we were looking at our own palace. It was a small, one story frame concern and almost new. It was also much occupied. Our tenant was a curious Yankee who had received permission from the previous owner to live there long enough to



raise a crop of corn. The corn was raised, twenty acres of it, and "old man Southwick" refused to budge until Spring. His wife, a fair pattern of a cross between an Italian and a Maumee Indian, came to the fore with a liberal offer to let us have one of the two bedrooms and to board us at \$3.00 per week. Her spouse also agreed to bring our trunks from the station to his hotel. There was still enough of daylight for us to take a look at our domain and we did so, aided by Southwick. I do not now remember how many children he had, but my first hard look was at him. Positively, as a student of great men, I decided that he was the ugliest looking man I had seen yet. Short, broad, long armed, heavy jawed, large headed, pugnosed, red-mud haired and stubby bearded, his eyes were his strong point, for each of them seemed larger than the other and to be set in a blotch of red paint, a little below his shaggy eyebrows. His forehead was an oblong square and he conveyed an impression that he was aware of the scarcity of water on that prairie in the Fall of the year. His apparel looked as if he had found every piece of it while wandering around a poor country upon the peddling expeditions which he soon began to tell about. For some good reason he was not now in that business but it could hardly have been the fault of the panic which had "shut up" so many other concerns. Perhaps the banks had distrusted his securities.

The approach to the house was through a long, narrow lane, between the bare prairie and a fenced-in field of corn, northerly. At the end of this ten acre corn patch was a small, frame house which we were told was occupied by a family named Shoemaker, of whom our handsome tenant appeared



to have a poor opinion. He described them as being not only "ornary" but also as "torn down poor." There certainly were no visible signs of prosperity about the Shoemaker ranche, but Southwick gave us the impression that he was disposed to be critical. Half a mile southward was another fence, a lane and a small house beyond it and we soon learned that it was the place where all the preachers put up when they came to ministrare in the schoolhouse meetinghouse which was hidden from view by the hazel bushes at this side of the line of timber along the Little Upper East Fork of the West Ambraw Slough. Not far from the schoolhouse and the hazel bushes was the double establishment of Old Man Jim Williams. It consisted of the log house which he had built when he first settled, buying 200 acres of land at \$1.25 per acre, and the frame structure of about the same size which now witnessed to his increased prosperity. He and his blooming wife "Liz-Bet" were each over thirty but I soon learned that as soon as a prairie boy and girl were married they became "old folks." Nearer, but across the slough, on a rising ground, was the pleasant home of Old Man Lemon. To the north, a half mile or so, was a considerable neck of woods upon another branch of the many branched Ambraw. It obtained its name, the entire river did, from the manner in which the French explorers had been embarrassed by that tangle of water courses. So they called it the "Embarrass," and the new settlers who could not spell the word managed their own pronunciation of it and got their teams stuck in the sloughs for all the world like so many wandering Frenchmen.

The next morning Ezra and I continued our explorations, but the first



weight upon our minds was the condition of our cash resources. We went out for work and discovered that there was little or no money on that prairie, owing to the frost bitten failure of the corn crop and a partial failure of the wheat crop. There were, however, large standing crops of frost bitten corn and there was really a great scarcity of labor, so that many farmers were at their wits' ends as to what they were to do. Ezra and I obtained temporary employment at 50 cents a day, but saw that something better must be done. We therefore took the ungathered fields on contract. We intended to husk, or as the neighbors called it "shuck," as much as we could and cut and stack the rest, for sale to the cattle men. We made tip-top bargains and were getting at once into a paying business, wondering why so many fellows preferred to let us make the money while they went visiting or put in their valuable time "in town," at Urbana, Homer or Upper Embarrass. In due time, we learned that this tendency was only too general and accounted for some of the lost crops. And now followed a season in which there were few interesting incidents because of the early and late style in which we were pitching into our profitable contracts. We were also trading for hogs and had secured the use of a fine team of horses and three yoke of oxen "for their keep," as their several owners were temporarily non residents and had no other means of caring for their quadrupeds. The horses were a large bay team, well matched and in fine condition. The wheel yoke of oxen were large, long horned and powerful. The next yoke were lighter and handsomer, a tawny brindle pair, with sharp tapering horns and bad tempers. The fore yoke were short, active reds.





I must say that I found a strange, wonderful fascination in my entirely new manner of life. It was a page from a frontier romance and I began to understand the born borderers who are unable to live in anything but a new country but must pull up their stakes and move westward as soon as the clearings of other men come too near and crowd them. I found Ezra an energetic, hardworking fellow, but the business part of our enterprise had to be left altogether in my own hands. As he does not come out personally in anything worth telling here, I may as well say that before cold weather came I lost him. His father, the owner of a large farm in Cattaraugus, not Chautauqua, died suddenly and Ezra went home as one of the heirs of about five hundred acres of New York land, cleared up, paid for and under cultivation. That is the last I ever heard of him but hope that he did well.

Husking corn, cutting corn, was hard work, but the autumnal weather was magnificent. So were occasional glimpses of deer, the scurry away of rabbits, the whirl of many flocks of prairie hens, the gangs of cranes, the honk of wild geese overhead and the flight of ducks, when they began to go southward. My letters were to reach me by way of our nearest post office, Upper Embarrass, seven miles southward, in Coles county. I soon began to receive many and they were a variety. Those of my sister and brothers and the college boys were full of admiration and encouragement but my father appeared to be all taken aback by the idea of my becoming a prairie farmer. He even asked how much it would take to get me out of my scrape for "all his friends disapproved of it." It was then and is now my belief that



he was altogether too ready to be advised and that the opinions of his "friends" had been the ruin of him. I did not want any advice, just then, and I knew that the Syracuse coterie did not really intend to put in any money. As for him, poor man, it was drawing down upon him and his wife in a very unpleasant manner. It was an idea of hers that was shortly to get me into a curious predicament.

We were still boarding at Southwick's when an enterprising stranger who purchased a neighboring section of land began to build upon it the finest mansion ever yet seen on that prairie. It was asserted that before it was done it would cost him two thousand dollars, exclusive of his exceedingly extravagant barn. Workmen came and had to be boarded around in any shape while that vast structure was going up and among them were odd characters that I was to meet again. I will call one of them Hiram, having forgotten the right handle, and he had with him a wife who always spoke of her baby as "it." Poor thing! she was not fit for baby handling and he was a loose fish. There was a strong vein of humor in him, nevertheless. As I have said, down at the county line was the house of pious hospitality and Hiram was not pious. One morning he came to his work laughing spasmodically, at frequent intervals. When inquired of as to the cause he had a story of his own which I cannot tell worth a cent.

"Wal, boys, you see as how it was this way. Old woman Jones used to have loads o' hens and chickens, and she's out an' out good an' whenever one o' them thar parsons kem along she was bound to kill a chicken. Nothin' else was good enough, ye know. So they kep a comin' an' the chickens



kep goin' till thar wasn't ary one left 'cept that thar old Shanghai rooster. He's as tall as a barr'l and when he crows the folks in Injianny kin hear him. Now I was a comin' along to work an' I looked back along the timber an' I seed another o' the preachers a ridin' on toward Old Man Jones's house and I knowed that the Shanghai rooster's time had come. But I was in the lane an' I heerd a yell behind me an' thar was old woman Jones a leggin' her level best this way. She was runnin' well, but away ahead of her, comin' along ten feet at a jump, was the old Shanghai an' it was his yell I heerd for he was a screechin' Good God!-Good God!-Good God! at every jump, and he got away into the corn, somewhere. He knew what was the matter with him, as soon as he saw the preacher comin'.

Hiram had another adventure, a few days later, for he was not on good terms with the sheriff of Champaign county and was all the more willing to find employment so near the county line, beyond which no constable or deputy sheriff was likely to pursue him. The men found it out and they put up a job on Hiram. It was at about the close of a day when by looking north he and they might see a pair of men coming briskly along on horseback. In an instant these wayfarers were recognized by Hiram's friends and fellow workmen as the sheriff and a deputy and beyond a doubt they had a warrant and were armed.

"It's only a half mile to the line, Hi! you can beat 'em if you run well. Cut It!"

Hiram was a long legged fellow and away he went while the entirely innocent horsemen plodded down the lane, somewhat in the same direction. Over



the county line fence he went with the spring of a somewhat clumsy and out o' breath deer, but the instant he was in a foreign land he turned courageously and leaned against that very fence to hurl at the authorities of Champaign county a series of bitterly sarcastic remarks of many varieties. He had escaped, indeed, but the boys had their fun with him the next day.

Right here, while the gang was at the new house, with noonday additions from the neighboring cornfields, one of which was keeping me there, occurred as funny a thing as was ever too much for a painter. It contained a pair of entirely unique characters. It was said of Old Man Southwick that he had never been known to buy a horse but that he always owned four, getting successors as fast as any of them frequently died. At this date he was in full supply and his team was well known in those parts. One of his critters had been named by the neighbors the Elephant; another was the Setter, from an asserted habit of his to sit down if he felt a load behind him; another was Jim, but the cream of them all was a dark mud colored beauty who took on the title of "Old Lije." He was a large hide, drawn loosely over a huge skeleton, and his head was one that you might put into a barrel. As to his tail, it was no longer encumbered with useless hair and stuck out behind him as if it might have been a kind of equine rudder. Now, on the farm of Old Man Lemon there was employed a youthful cousin of his by the name of Romeo Smith. He was full grown but he wore an exceedingly youngish face and an expression of contentment with himself. He was fond of spending his evenings in the society of the prairie girls, far and near, and he was believed to have many ideas. Perhaps some of them were ambitions also, but





at all events it now occurred to him that he would rest from cutting corn and become a mighty hunter. He would not stoop to grouse and rabbits but would go after deer and he would go on horseback. He could not persuade Lemon in that way but Old Man Southwick cheerfully let him have Old Lije on consideration of a division of the game. Somebody lent Romeo a rifle, although the deer gun for horseback hunting is a double-barrel and buck-shot. Early one beautiful hunting morning, Romeo set out, mounted and equipped, and Lije carried him well. Just how far he wandered or how many deer he did not see, does not appear from any known record, but at last he drew near unto a gang of sandhill cranes and he determined to consider them even as deer. He took aim, blazed away, and all but one of the cranes took wing. That one did not do so because Romeo had taken him on one of his wings. The gallant bird was only wounded, however, and stood upright upon his pins. At once an entirely new idea entered the busy brain of Romeo Smith. Young cranes were said to be good eating, as good as turkeys, but no one had ever had sufficient enterprise to coop and raise them for market or for the table. He would do that very thing and here was to be a beginning of his long legged flock, if he could capture that first crane. He therefore did not shoot him but followed upon Lije while the bird walked rapidly away from him, and it was not difficult to drive him in the right direction. That is, he did so for some distance and then the bird rebelled, refusing to be driven any further. He walked out in to the middle of a wide, shallow pond, such as the rains leave in prairie hollows, and there he stood defiantly at bay. Now was Romeo's chance! He would fol-



low in and capture his game. Old Lije had no objection to wetting his feet and allowed himself to be driven in until near enough to put out his great head for a smell of the winged brute whose own head and neck were poised and ready, in the attitude of a crane taking aim at a horse. The long, sharp bill flashed forward and the point of it struck Lije upon his nose. It was unexpected, it was severe and Lije backed out of that pond. No amount of beating or coaxing could make him go in again. The captivity idea had to be sadly given up. Romeo re-loaded his rifle, took a careful sight across the saddle and dropped the crane where he stood. So far, all was reasonably triumphant, but Lije was still obdurate and Romeo had to wade in himself to complete his triumph. He did get the crane and he waded ashore but now there came to pass a new difficulty. Not on any account would Lije allow his borrower to come near him with that peaked nose bird and it seemed as if it were a question between horse and game as to which of them must be given up. Genius has its resources, however, and Romeo's trowser pockets were perennially bunched with string. From one of them he now extricated a long, strong piece of twine. One end of this hawser he tied behind the head of the crane and the other to the hairless tail of Old Lije. That done, the willing steed was mounted and the invention appeared to be a success. Perhaps it was, but pretty soon Lije was aware of some obstruction upon his rudder. He halted, turned his barrelhead and lo, there was that awful thing pursuing him. It may have been many a day since he had raced after deer at any faster gait than a good walk, but he began to run, now. In vain did he do so, if escape was in his mind, for the air



got in under the wings of the crane and made a kite of him. Up he arose at the end of the twine and the next glance of Old Lije showed him his enemy as if coming to pounce upon him. Romeo could hold on and that was all, while his affrighted beast plunged wildly across prairie toward the kindly shelter of his home. It was not so far to go but that his doubtful wind held out and we were at noonday luncheon in the lane when he came powdering along into it with that wide winged wonder soaring behind him and Romeo shouting to us to stop him. We had no such thing to do, for Lije halted of his own accord among a gang of settlers some of whom were rolling over and over upon the grass and others were standing up to hold their sides and laugh. We never knew whether or not Romeo and Southwick divided the game.

It was while we were living in our own shanty which was Southwick's house, or rather it seems to have been just after Ezra's departure, that a queer incident occurred in connection with our neighbors the Shoemakers. There were three of the men, father and two sons, long, lank, ugly looking fellows, of the "poor white" class of southerners. We had heard that they were soon to migrate, and it was a saying that some kinds of settlers did not remain in any locality longer than to run in debt, raise some corn and sell it, and then "light out between two days." That was just what the Shoemakers did, a week or so later, but before going they were inclined to settle their old feud with Old Man Southwick. If there was any mean thing which one foul tongued man could say of another and which the parties to that internecine war had omitted, the dictionaries are "enfants perdu." I knew what was going on, but did not yet understand the pernicious process



by which brutes of that sort work themselves up to the homicide point. It was a lesson which I needed to learn. I was, as ever, the most peaceable of human beings and it was only with reference to grouse, deer &c., that I had provided myself with a double barrelled shotgun, large bore, a hair trigger rifle, small bore but good range, and a pair of widemouthed, short barrelled derringer pistols. The latter carried ounce balls and were ugly looking customers in the hands of a fellow who had been weaned on derringers and could hit a card with one at ten paces. Fellows appeared to like to have an admiring look at those toys and to see a spot hit with one.

Well! I was coming home, at the close of a Saturday, and had reached the head of the lane by Shoemaker's, when I was halted by a scene in a western theatre. There stood Southwick, in front of the Shoemaker shebang, and in front of him stood the three "poor whites" and they had their shotguns but were not quite ready to use them. Southwick was unarmed but the stubborn old brute was not flinching one hair. As soon as I came up he told me that they had threatened to kill him. I laughed at him and at them and told him to go home. That was what they did not intend him to do, but I handed him the long, cutlasslike cornknife in my hand and told him to take care of himself. He at once begged for one of my derringers but I refused, telling him that he would not know what to do with it. Part of what I meant was that he was crazy enough to shoot instantly and was pretty sure to miss and be replied to with buckshot from those guns. That, at such short range, would very likely have been bad for him. "Go home!" I told him, and he slowly backed off, down the lane, while I stood guard and





scolded the Shoemakers. It was the old man who made the replies to me and all that he said was bitter with his bad opinion of Old Man Southwick. At the same time he was even kindly in his references to myself, for he could see that a broadmouthed bit of iron lay in the palm of my hand, ready for prompt elevation. Several times did he assure me, "I wish you how well you may do, but I'm gwine to get even with Southwick, the-----!"

There I laughed at him and left him and went on homeward with an eye over one shoulder, and scolded Southwick for his folly in coming down that lane or having any words with such a lot of men. He was as surly and ugly and boastful as might be and blamed me severely for not allowing him to cut up the Shoemakers. My own idea was that no cutting would have been done and I told him so. The whole affair appeared to me exceedingly ridiculous and I supposed that there would be the end of it, but I was still ignorant of the depths of that kind of stupid iniquity and had something to learn as to the ways of the border and the border men.

Sunday morning came and as usual I was up and out at daylight but that was a feat never performed by Old Man Southwick. Well for him that he did not attempt it that morning. I left the house by the front door, taking with me a gun for incidental chickens. I did not mean to be wicked and go hunting, but the Southwick dinners would bear any amount of improvement. On I went, along the edge of my own cornfield, until I saw something more interesting than any chicken. There sat Old Man Shoemaker, crouched down under the corn, with his rifle ready to fire and his dull eyes glaring at the back door of my house. He was waiting for Southwick to make his appearance.



in that doorway and to make a pot-shot at him at about twenty paces. He arose to his feet on seeing me and said something about chickens but my blood was up, at so meanly murderous an undertaking, and I told him plainly what I thought of it. He replied with much energy and again warmly declared that he and his sons "Wished me how well you may do," but it was of no use. I ordered him home under penalty of all the buckshot I had not put into both barrels of my gun, for they were loaded with double Bs, for prairie hens, but the consequences would have been about the same for him at short range and he gave it up and went home, swearing vengeance upon Southwick. I afterwards imbibed an idea that that morning's adventure had something to do with the fact that we never saw any more of the Shoemakers and that within twenty four hours the Sheriff was down on that prairie making miscellaneous and utterly vain inquiries as to their whereabouts.

As to the rest of my reminiscences of that first residence on the prairie, I only remember an occasion when I went down to a slough to pull out Southwick and his four horse team and told him I would hitch on behind the wagon and he and his four in hand might do their best the other way. I pulled them all out in no time and he told me it was something the matter with his gearing. So it was, if half dead horses are to be described in that heartless manner of speech.



## Chapter Twenty-first.

## The Log Cabin Home.

From the corner of the cornfield on the four hundred acre patch, a man might have walked away, northwest by north, sixteen miles, without being unpleasantly interrupted by a fence until he arrived in the outskirts of Urbana, the countyseat of Champaign County. There he would find a considerable village, at the upper end of an old farming settlement that extended for some distance down an upper east fork of the Sangamon river. It was a queer notion of the earlier settlers, who were mostly from forest states, to avoid the fertile prairie as if prejudiced against it and to actually make laborious and timber wasting farms in the riverside woods. Not until a later day were men enterprising enough to go out into the already cleared-beforehand prairie. The first settlers in this neck of woods were from Ohio and they had brought with them the name of their nearest town in that state. They were an industrious, intelligent class of people, but along with them or closely following them were immigrants who were occasionally industrious, intelligent only in a few specialties of their own and almost entirely illiterate. As for that, it was the same down on the Embarrass timber, for very few of my own neighbors could do more with a pen than to write their names or more with a printed page than to light a pipe with it.

In spite of seeming discouragement, there were two weekly journals printed at Urbana, one Whig, one Democratic, and the place carried an air of business prosperity. My visits to it were not many, during that fall or winter, and they all carried me straight through to West Urbana, wheth-



er I were riding, driving or walking. The reason was this. Both places contained Baptists but the greater part of them were in the new town although the old possessed a small semblance of a meetinghouse while the other had none. It had a good hall, however, and it had organized churches energetically. Meetinghouses had been provided for the Old School Presbyterians, for The Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians acting together; for the Methodists and for the Episcopalians. The small population was therefore somewhat cut up, theologically and threatened to become yet more so. The double-towned Baptist churches, moreover, had succeeded in obtaining the services of an old and warm college friend of mine. Bright and genial indeed and ever to be remembered well by me was Rev. Archibald LaMont Farr and he had married Jenny Strong, the sister of my old chum Hop, so that I seemed to myself to have had kindred sent to me in my Illinois loneliness. It was to their house, therefore, that my town visits were made and I soon began to have a pretty clear idea of what might be done with a municipality which was only two years old from the bare prairie and the arrival of the railway hotel in the middle of it. It may give an idea of my physical condition in those days to say that if a saddle horse was not handy, I rather enjoyed a morning walk to the county seat and through it to Farr's, and then a bit of a stroll homeward in the evening. It did not appear to fatigue me unpleasantly. The fact was that the work of each day began before daylight with the cattle and horses. At sunrise we were in the field and cutting or shucking did not cease until it was too dark to work. Even after Ezra left me, I remember cutting corn in the open field until the snow was a foot deep. That came in January,





for the season, after the corn destroying September frosts, had been unusually warm and I had found new bluegrass growing in the sloughs as late as the twelfth of that month. It was in these long walks across prairie as well as in my hunting excursions, that I began to learn something of the nature of the prairie. I learned its natural grasses, once the abundant food of the bison whose deeply worn trails were still there, as hard beaten as hickory wood and sticking together in big, adobe chunks when broken by the plow. There were the rosin weeds, with beads of resinous gum as large, sometimes, as buckshot, exuding from their stems and leaves. There were the rolling weeds, growing in balls of stiff twigs nearly four feet high to rot off at the ground and be carried across prairie by the winds until landed against some fence or in the deer sheltering depths of some ravine. There were the redroot weeds, the enemies of the plowman and there, most interesting to me, were the snakeroot flowers, something like the "everlastings" that I had been familiar with in the east. The root was said to be a sure antidote for any kind of snakebite, especially that of the rattlesnake. Of this reptile, we had two varieties. The "timber rattlesnake," never found except in the woods, is the same as his kind anywhere and he was scarce on account of the searches made for him, as a dainty, by our not at all dainty hogs. The other kind was the massauga or "prairie rattlesnake," as deadly as his woodland cousin but shorter. He also seems to me, in memory, to have been thicker than other snakes of his length. My first sight of one was a startler. Ezra and I were walking along a buffalo path, one day, shortly after our arrival. He had on low shoes while I was provided with boots. He was ahead when



my ears caught a loud whirring sound and I sprang forward to catch Ezra by the collar and hurl him back into the grass, just in time to keep him from kicking a large and angry massauga that had been coiled for a spring in the middle of the path. The spring was made but it missed and the snake hurried away through the grass while I explained to Ezra that a rattlesnake was considered unsafe kicking. He turned pale enough and both of us made calculations as to the armoring qualities of the cowhide boots which appeared to be the prevailing fashion. The fact was that all the soft leather, calfskin affairs which we brought with us were soon used up by the cutting edges of the prairie grasses. Neither were low shoes the right thing for dewy weeds, mud, slough wading, or kicking oxen. I heard something, then, of a fellow, down the timber, who would let himself be bitten at any time by a rattlesnake, for five dollars. He would chew and swallow some snakeroot, let the reptile bite, use plenty more of the root and come off apparently unharmed. In the next Spring, however, he forgot the time o' year. All venomous creatures are at their worst in the Spring. I was told that some were then deadly which were not so at any other time. At all events, the truster in snakeroot allowed him self to be bitten in April, at Urbana. And all the root he could chew and all the whiskey he could drink could not save him. He died in less than two days.

Ezra was gone and Old Man Southwick and I did not get on well together. This may have been, in part, on account of a peculiarity of mine which was discovered at an early day by the keenly observant eyes, as black and glittering as those of an Indian, of Old Woman Southwick.



We were all at the dinner table and the company included two or three workmen, day-boarders. I had an idea that I was watched but did not know what for until Mrs. Southwick loudly exclaimed:

"Pop! I know! Mr. Stoddard's a gentleman! He eats with his fork!"

It was a rare phenomenon in that settlement, truly, and I was the only feeder at that table who was not employing his broad bladed iron knife as a food shovel.

There were other points of difference and I decided to move. Somewhat less than a mile westerly there was a large and quite comfortable log house, at the unfenced roadside, with twenty acres of corn and half as many more of "sod-corn," or corn planted on the backs of first turnings, just behind it. The occupant was a character known far and wide throughout that region as Old Man Howe. Of him and his there will be more to say and just here it is enough that I secured winter quarters with him and his interesting family. Never did a wiser thing in all my life and would not miss the memory of him for anything. The last of my doings at the Southwick farm, which was mine altogether, now Ezra was gone, was of particularly vivid interest to me. The grass was now dry and the year had been a good one for tall weeds of every name and nature. Perhaps it was in consequence of this that the prairie fires were beginning with more than usual enterprise. We could see the sky at night, in the west, reddening with the light of the coming danger. In other directions, that neighborhood was protected by wet sloughs, watercourses and wide reaches of plowed land upon which there was as yet no stubble to carry fire. It was a matter of



accustomed prudence to begin measures of protection and all other work was suspended for that purpose. The received method was simple but was generally effective. A breaking team and wide nosed plow were sent out thirty feet or so from the edge of the land to be guarded. Twelve feet wide of sod were then turned over, and the back of a sod is incombustible. That was not all and the next process was laborious. All the strip of dry grass inside of the newly plowed barrier had to be carefully burned over. It was then to be supposed that no ordinary fire would jump so far and it was safer in our case because the cattle had shortened the grass for some distance outside of our lines. At this distance I cannot well remember what it was that then carried my impertinent curiosity a long reach beyond and into the region at which the sweeping volume of the advancing fire was coming. It might have been all well, but for a sudden tornado of wind that blew straight at me, instead of nearly the other way, as it had been doing. Behind me was a dry slough in which the bluegrass and rosin weeds were terribly high and luxuriant. A fire among them would be a furnace in which a man would wither like a moth. In front was fairly level ground and beyond was a high roll on which the grass would surely be shorter. On those rolls the washed off black soil is often hardly a foot deep while it may be four or five times as much in the adjacent hollows. Higher, higher, higher, sprang the tall columns of smoke and flame and I saw but one hope for escape from cremation. I pulled my hat over my eyes, tucked my trousers well down into my boots, pulled up my coatcollar, stuck my hands into my pockets, drew a long breath and charged that fire, the middle of it, at





the best pace I could make. It was a dark, choking, doubtful, hot, but exceedingly interesting race for life. Probably it was not so long as it seemed before I was out on the high ground. It had been burned over and had now no fire on it but behind me was a great, angry roar and a wall of awful flame. My hat was ruined. My hair was singed badly. So were my eyebrows and coat tails, but there was no real harm done, as soon as I could once more learn how to breathe. Then I went around home, much wiser on the prairie fire question and well pleased to find that our barrier had worked well and that the corn was safe. One of our neighbors, hardly two miles away, had not been so fortunate. He had neglected back firing and that day he and his whole family had gone to Urbana, leaving their house untenanted. It was well that they did so, perhaps. It was a new, neat frame dwelling, and around it were 160 acres of land in full cultivation. He had gathered a good wheat crop and it was in stacks near the house. His corn was mostly in the cribs, his hogs were there or in the timber and his cattle were free to run away and take care of themselves, except a few in a fenced lot which escaped the fire. It came across the stubble field and in a few minutes all the rest of his farm was bare ground. Not a trace was left of the house and its surroundings except such embers as the fire did not stay to clean up. He had to begin all his establishment over again and so, I was told, did others at greater distances. As for myself, not many days after the fire, I was on my way to Old Man Howe's and I did not even reach the log house without one more reminder of the eccentricities and sad uncertainties of human life on the western frontier.



As nearly as I can remember, it was early in November, a cloudlessly sunny day, when I made ready to convey the last of my effects to Old Man Howe's. My hogs were already there, my clothing and many other matters, but a quantity of farm tools and other light things, like plows and crow-bars, were yet to go. I had a light wagon for the purpose and in front of this I had hitched, or yoked, my brindled span of handsome and dubious tempered oxen. All went as merry as a marriage bell until perhaps half the distance had been conquered. My clothing was of the lightest and the oxen were stark naked. The sky had been rapidly darkening, however, and now, down out of the clouded heavens, with a rush and a roar and a knife in both its hands, came one of those phenomenal gusts of Polar air known to the dwellers of the Southwest as a "Norther!" They are the meanest wind that blows. Others may travel as swiftly or may even be as cold, but the distinguishing characteristic of the Norther is its extreme dryness. It is a desiccating blast of the most perfect kind and men and animals go down helplessly before it. Large numbers of cattle have been known to perish with strange rapidity without one of them being frozen solid. All hoofed creatures appear to know, by instinct or otherwise, that at the coming of this destroyer their best hold is a shelter in the nearest timber. It would have been wiser for my oxen if they had taken my advice and streaked it for Howe's, but they disregarded my entreaties and turned tail to the blast for only a moment before they began to race that wagonload of tools toward a line of timber to the westward. Not wishing to see the wrecks of my wagon and the whole collection scattered over the prairie on the way, I



fought them desperately and they in turn fought with me. The wind was not now as cold as at first, I felt sure of that, and there was no longer any good cause for them to run away. It was getting milder and I could feel a soft kind of languor stealing over me. Then I felt sleepy and then I do not know what came next but was afterwards credibly informed. A team of our neighbor Jim Williams, with him and another Williams in the wagon, had raced it to the shelter of the log house. They and Howe and the women folk came to the door to see me contend with my cattle. They saw me lie down and concluded that the critters had "horned" me. They sprang into the wagon and whipped their horses to where I lay. They picked me up but were unable to find a scratch. Nothing was the matter with me except that I had been frozen to death. They carried me to the house, stripped and rubbed me and Old Mrs. Howe made for me the hottest bowl of red pepper tea you ever heard of. In half an hour or so of vigorous treatment I was made to open my eyes. Then I knew where I was and inquired for my team but nobody could more than guess that it must be in the timber. I was in bed and was beginning to swallow pepper tea and to know how a fellow feels when he is coming back to this present world after being frozen to death. If you have ever had a bad case of a limb "going to sleep" and can recall the prickly sensation of its recovery, you may multiply that prickling by a hundred and spread it all over you and you will get the idea. It is a strange kind of unendurable agony which you will not wish to have repeated. At first I could not appreciate the pepper tea but that inability soon passed away and I could hear good Mrs. Howe say that she thanked God for putting it into her mind to raise those peppers. Good woman. Methodist!



The best way to get at the measurement of that loghouse may be to consider with a measuring eye the things which it was called upon to contain and was entirely capable of doing so. In the first place, it had no front yard but in place thereof all the area beyond the wagon track at the doorstep was thickly strewn with chips from the many firewood logs which had there been hacked in pieces. A person contemplating those fragments might be reminded of the romantic tradition concerning colonial New England courtships, that some time had always to elapse before the attentions might go further, on the way home from meeting, than "the chips." The roof had a steep slope and was made of large hand-split shingles. On the ridge of it, pretty regularly, unless he was elsewhere stealing something, was Old Man Howe's pet crow, cursing whoever came in. His prevailing complexion was a shiny black and his prevailing tendency was dishonesty. He was somewhat lame of one leg but he could fly well. He loved to go in and hop around the floor until he could sieze an unguarded article not too heavy for him, notably balls of yarn, scissors, thimbles, pieces of paper, and carry them up to a coop he had made on the houseridge. Then he would berate in the fiercest manner anybody coming to rob him of his booty.

The front doorway was not exactly in the middle of the house, and, on entering it, one might see that there was a similar door on the opposite side. Those doors were closed only at night or in bad weather and there was a window at the right of each of them, so that light was let in abundantly. Window sash was hard to get when that house was built and more windows would have called for more severing of the heavy, old-growth logs of





which the walls were constructed. The interstices between the logs were well "chinked" with tempered clay which did not often fall out but would do so occasionally. The floor was of heavy planks which had been put down green and had left cracks in seasoning. Speaking of logs, I never saw any very huge trees on Grand Prairie. The surface formation of that region is not of great antiquity and it may be that the largest of its trunks are those of the "redwood" trees which stop the tools of the borers of artesian wells at the depth of one or more hundreds of feet below the grass. At the right of the door was one large bed, in the corner, and this belonged to Becky Howe and one of her two sisters. Rebecca had been married once, but her husband had long since disappeared and she had resumed her maiden name. The girls were fourteen and sixteen and there was a grown up brother Timothy between them and Becky, as well as a small boy brother Sam, or some other name, and all were children of Mrs. Howe the first, for the present head of the house had been a middle aged widow, of strong and quiet characteristics, when Old Man Howe married her, over on the Brushy Fork of the Wabash river, in Indiana. She sat in a chair on the further side of the room, eight feet out from the wall, toward the fireplace. Between that corner bedstead and the very large, wide, high one in the middle, there was a space of three or four feet, and there was a similar alley way between the side of that bed and the double bed in the further corner. The middle bed belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Howe, the trundle-bed under it was for one of the girls and the small boy, while the bed in the corner was mine, and Tim, when at home, semi-occasionally, might bunk on



the floor like any other transient guest. I never saw more than sixteen persons of all sorts asleep in that hospitable mansion at once,- but I did see precisely that **number**. In the middle, at the left, was the positively tremendous chimney, made of tempered clay and sticks, most of it outside of the wall. The fireplace may have been five feet wide, three and a half deep and four feet high. The andirons were curiosities for a collector and the **cooking** machinery was likewise. All the bread was baked in a big skillet, a foot wide and three inches deep and there was no crane to hang a pot on, but there were big and little pots and skillets. As for bread, I heard Old Man Howe declare that he "didn't see how anybody could eat wheat bread, so long as there was corn to be had." I nearly agreed with him, at least as to the product of his own cooks and their skillet, especially when the result took the form of cannon ball biscuit. In the course of time, it was manifested to me that the only good cook in that neighborhood was Mrs. Lis-Bet Williams, and she was deservedly proud of her unusual accomplishments. Carpet there was none but there were tables and chairs and the one book in the house was a big Bible which I never saw opened but once. In fact, as to religion, all the theology on that prairie was in scattered chunks. Old Man Lemon was a Universalist, I was a Baptist, the Williamses were Methodists, there was a Presbyterian over on the west prairie, Old Man Southwick was an Infidel and proud of the title, the McCarthys were Roman Catholics and Old Man Howe said that for his part he was an Auctioneer. He really was one and now and then made fair fees at sheriff's sales, constable's sales, breaking up sales, and the like, for he had fun in him and could talk off the goods.



## Chapter Twenty-second.

## Prairie Life.

Mrs. Howe was elderly and fat and dark and rarely said anything. Miss or Mrs. Becky Howe was plump and dark and could talk, while her younger sisters were lighter or fairer. So was Tim, a broad shouldered fellow who had a nose like his father's but of a smaller and thinner pattern. As for the old man himself, he was a figure never to be forgotten. About six feet high if he would stand up straight, which he rarely did, thin, muscular, with a limp on the foot which had been Club-crippled by rheumatism. His face was long and the tangled, pointed goatee beard at the end of it, without any side whiskers to speak of, made it seem longer. His moustaches were long, luxuriant, and added much expression to the hawk beak above them. His small, gray eyes were set to twinkle away back under his bushy eyebrows and his deeply wrinkled forehead was covered by a curiously movable hide. All of his face that might be seen was sunburnt to a muddiness and he was said to have combed his hair, once, when he was living over on the Wabash. He had been a flatboatman on that stream and the Mississippi in his earlier days and he was crammed full of yarns concerning New Orleans, Helena, Natchez under the Hill and other charming places, as they were seen in those times by the river men. As to other occupations, he had experimented with many and had bursted up at all of them. At the present time, he was occupying this farm for its absent owner, without any rent to pay and with a strong hope that his generous landlord might not soon return. He had a few hogs and a not very exorbitant horse, but no



cattle and how he made a living was a question. No doubt a boarder who paid cash was an acquisition.

I had a large field of corn to cut for Jim Williams and it was while on that job that I formed a strong friendship for him and Lis-Bet. They were genuinely friendly, honest people and the whole timber was full of their kindred. It was on that field that I began to make a reputation, for I was able to measure its irregular form and give them its precise contents. Next came my miraculous ability to give the exact contents, in bushels, of a large and many sided rail cornpen. I had brought with me, from Rochester and from Chicago, quite a large shelf full of books, more than all that prairie contained, and it was at once entitled Stoddard's Library. People came out of their way to stop at Howe's and get a look at those books. I myself was making many acquaintances. I had been down the timber several times to Upper Embarrass and was fond of picking up new specimens of frontier humanity. I was also fond of hunting and our trips to our own wood lot, westward a mile or so, were always accompanied with weapons for the slaughter of game; also by Howe's two halfbred pointer dogs, two of the most remarkable of canine characters. Bob was all activity and his wife Delilah, or Lile, was more than his equal in intelligence. It was worth something to see that pair manoeuvre a rabbit out of a shock of corn, one tearing in to drive while the other waited outside to catch the escaping jumper. It was better fun after snow came and rabbits might be tracked and one winter morning three guns of us brought home forty-four at noon. Deer were not so plentiful but grouse or "prairie chickens," were to





be had at almost any time. They were a capital variation in the accustomed pork bill of fare. So were rabbits until I got so tired of them that I could hardly eat them. The house of Old Man Lemon was only half a mile away southerly, across the slough and on a rising ground. Lemon had one of the few natural springs in that region, but water was easily to be had by digging. None of the wells were deep, but I saw one that was abandoned suddenly. A ten feet square hole had been dug and side timbered to a depth of not more than twelve feet when the workmen got out of that place with yells of fear and astonishment. Their escape from an awful death had been narrow indeed. When I went to look at the phenomenon, I saw what appeared to be a swiftly running stream of glistening gray sand. It was sand and water, of course, a "quicksand," and anything dropped into it, as a stick or a stone, disappeared instantly. So would a human being have done and the hole was carefully sealed up with timbers and earth. It was a thing to shudder at, that slimy mystery of the underworld. Where did that river come from and where did it go to? I don't know.

One of the first conclusions to be reached on an inspection of my neighbors and their ways, was that all the poverty to be found was the net result of ignorance, bad management and waste. No potatoes were raised, the few to be had coming in wagons from Indiana at a dollar a bushel. No other vegetables, not so much as one garden, did I see that autumn. There were no fruit trees nor vines planting, no chickens to be had nor eggs, and even in such a cattle country, there were few milch cows and hardly any farmer thought of making butter. It was scarce and dear.



My first visit at the Lemon place brought me a brace of interesting acquaintances. There was a wide, uphill lot between the road gate and the house. I went in, one day, and was going leisurely up the slope when down to meet me came a pair of the finest looking dogs I had ever seen. They were of a breed I was not familiar with, too. I think I was told that they were thoroughbred Livonian wolfhounds, as large as an English mastiff but not so heavy and with close, grisly hair and wicked looking heads, fine, sharp, wolfish faces and teeth, and tremendous strength and activity. I did not at first notice that Old Man Lemon, his wife, girls and boy and Romeo Smith were out at the door, coming in a hurry, terribly frightened about something. One of the huge creatures sprang up and put his paws on my shoulders and his mate uttered a wolfish howl while I patted number one in undisguised admiration. Then I rubbed the other's ears and talked at them and in a moment they were jumping all around me, as if they had known me from puppyhood,- their puppyhood. The Lemon family could hardly express their astonishment and gratification, for the hounds were considered exceedingly dangerous as watchdogs, to all strangers but not to known neighbors, and were usually chained up in the day time, unless one of the family could be with them. They took to me remarkably and would shortly follow me anywhere as if I were a kind of outside owner. I afterwards had a couple of curious adventures with those dogs. The first adventure was along of a prairie wolf or "coyote," that had been howling o' nights in that neighborhood. Somehow or other, I got out after him, accompanied by the two wolfhounds, and I followed him well although I was on foot. I ran him to earth, or the dogs did,



and then I went after a spade to dig him out. The den was in the side of a hollow, where the soft, black earth was several feet deep, and the digging was easy. Down I went, deeper and deeper, until the dogs got an idea of what I was going for and dashed in to paw at my side. In a moment more they had obtained a smell of their prey and then my hunt was up. They became crazy with excitement and altogether uncontrollable. They turned upon me in the most savage manner and drove me out of the hole. I had a gun with me and was glad of it, and was also glad that they returned to their digging. There was nothing more for me to do. I had to keep at a distance, unless I was ready to shoot the dogs. I went home, for there was no possibility of their digging out that wolf. The other adventure came at hog weighing time, in November of that year.

The independent swine of the Embarrass timber, and possibly of all Illinois, were supposed to require little food or care in the earlier stages of their existence. Once born and branded, they might be permitted to roam at their will among the woods and slough, rooting here and wallowing there, until the days of their development for pork. Then, indeed, a hog became an object of human care and the forests were cleared of him. Gathered into hog lots, separated according to brand, much corn was fed to them in exceedingly wasteful ways, not needing description, the object being to bring up each individual porker to the contract weight. During each season, the Chicago buyers were accustomed to make tours in the country, bargaining for all the hogs at a fixed rate and weight. At a time agreed upon, in each Fall and Spring, they would come again, pre-



pared to weigh and pay and drive their purchases to the nearest railway station. One feature of the timber pork culture was that if any individual pig managed to escape an annual drive and maintain his or her freedom through another year, the wild spirit of the woods would surely grow in him,- or her,- and with it cunning of the woods, and a second escape was likely. After a time, such an absentee from the mollifying processes of the hogpen and the porkmakers would return to the wild state, more or less completely, and become a fighting and freedom loving hog. The breed raised in our timber still retained some of the ancient length of leg, in most cases, although steadily improving. The contract weight fixed for that year was a minimum of two hundred and fifty pounds and it was understood that it would be rigidly adhered to, as the price in Chicago was so low as to threaten the buyers with loss. The weighing scales were permanently at the Bill Williams farm and the number gathered from our timber was not far from four hundred. They were in good apparent condition, some of them a trifle light of weight and likely to be left over until the Spring. Among the crowd swept in, however, was one high backed, long legged, long headed old lady who had been out in the wildwood for more than three years and was wildly wrathful at now being out of the wilderness. She was as lean as a shark but she was large enough to turn the scale at over three hundred pounds. The buyers did not want her but she was within the contract limit and all the settlement uproariously declared that she must be taken. The next thing was - to take her, for she had decided not to be weighed. The scales were at one side of a small pen in the middle of a five acre lot.





All the gathered swine were in that big lot and small squads of them were driven into the pen, seriatim, to be engineered one by one upon the scales. The process was easy enough with all orderly and mild minded critters but the wild sow rebelled furiously. Whenever the drivers came too near, she charged them fiercely and her clashing tusks were an unpleasant warning to any man whose legs were not iron clad. Dogs were sent at her and she used up several of them in short order. One clip was enough to send away any dog howling. She was standing at bay when it occurred to me that I would like to try an experiment. I told them to go on with the weighing while I went for Lemon's hounds. I obtained them and also procured a white oak stake, five feet long and as large as my wrist. I sharpened it at one end. By this time, the wild sow was alone, all the others having been weighed, and she was holding her own finely. I went for her with my hounds and it was worth while to see their intelligence. They did not attack her in front as the unlucky curs had done who had felt her tusks. They started her from her "bay" and followed one on each side of her, so close that they touched her and she could not strike them. I was wise enough to imitate their wisdom and keep a little behind her. In an instant more, the hounds had her by the thick of her ears and they actually threw her flat, after a brief wrestle. I sprang for her head and forced the stake between her jaws, driving it down into the earth. Close behind me was Bill Williams, ready to carry out his part of the game, but while he was sewing up the eyes of that sow, she had twice cut the stake in two with her strong, sharp teeth. The sewing caused no pain, for the needle passed through nothing but the



thick cartilage of her eyelids. As soon as this was done, she was subdued and submitted to be weighed. Next day, she traveled all the way to Pesotum with the drove, without any resistance whatever.

There was just one little streak of politics among the occurrences of that November. In state and national affairs, it was an "off year," although much political feeling was brewing, but it was a great year in the history of Coles county, just south of my farm. It was too large a county and an act of the State Legislature had cut it in two, the lower half retaining the old name and the northern half becoming "Douglas County," in honor of Steven A. Douglas, the great leader of the Democratic Party in Illinois, if not in the whole country. His acknowledged opponent in our state was the leader of the Whig Party, a man by the name of Lincoln who had once been in Congress but who had failed of a re-election. Men said that he had ability but then he was by no means the equal of Douglas and there were several other men in the state who could make as good a stump speech as he could. However that might be, there was one question met to be settled. The new concern would need a county seat and there were only two candidates for the honor. Several hamlets fended it off on the ground that it might increase their local taxes. One of the candidates was a very young railway station village, called Arcola, a little south of the middle of Douglas county. The other was a similar infant, named Tuscola, a little north of the middle. If it was to become a town, it would be advantageous to all the settlers on the southern line of Champaign County and they began to take a deep interest in that election. It was pretty well understood that



the Arcola men were patriotic and would come out strongly, and that they would have the aid of several settlements in the southern part of the county. The entire legal vote was understood to be somewhat over seventeen hundred, loosely calculated, and wise, practical politicians might know exactly what was best for them to do. All the upper Embarrass river timber country was for Tuscola to such a degree that mere county lines were lost sight of. Especially was this the case with the workmen on the big McCarthy and Sullivant farms. Mac had in about 2000 acres of wheat, that year, besides corn, and Old Man Sullivant was struggling to get under plow a patch that he had there of over 30,000 acres. He had as much more up in Ford county and more in Ohio and was calling himself "land poor." Just so he was, for it broke him up to handle it.

On election morning the polls were opened early at all the voting places in Douglas county and the entire population that could get away from home swarmed out to fight. Before noon, one of the southern tier villages, as large as your hat, had polled 780 votes and quit to go and see what other places were doing. All may have been doing well, but the palm appeared to belong to Arcola precinct itself. How many legal voters were in it, nobody seemed to know, but it had cast somewhat more than the entire vote of the county and felt that it ought to consider itself safe. Alas! for Arcola. It did not know what may be found in Champaign. Not long after sunrise, there were processions of wagons filled with American citizens plodding across the pleasant prairie from the Sullivant and McCarthy patches and there were noblehearted freemen, on foot or on horse-



back, traveling southward from the upper timber. All were bound for Tuscola, to show their interest in the election and to encourage the new county seat. Perhaps a half mile east of the voting place was a large barn. The teams arrived at the polls, the men got out, they were provided with tickets, they were recorded, they cast their ballots, they again got into the wagons, after a brief pause at the counter of a grocery store that was that day doing a lively saloon business. Then the wagons drove away and that lot of Tuscola precinct men had done its duty,- once. Then, however, as if something had been forgotten and left behind, each wagon was driven around that barn and came again to repeat the first operation,- both at the polls and at the bar. It could hardly have been said that any man voted twice, for a fellow at the polling table had a copy of the Chicago city directory and the names recorded were selected from that overflowing source. It was said that among the Tuscola voters appeared to be The Hon. Steven A. Douglas himself, with other prominent citizens of the village at the shore of lake Michigan. All sorts of fun was going, and before long even the formality of going around the barn was omitted. Malicious people said that it was because the voters could no longer climb into the wagons and had to be held up to vote. At all events, Arcola was defeated, for not to speak of the work done elsewhere, Tuscola alone sent to the State capital a pollbook which contained nearly 4700 names, or more than three times the adult male population of the new county. Oddly enough, there was no contest made and the result was formally accepted by the state authorities. Douglas County owes much to Champaign.





## Chapter Twenty-third.

## The Winter Prairie.

The snow did not come until January and after that it was what might be called a mild winter. Still, there were storms and I had more than one ride to or from the county seat over a spotless carpet of glittering white. By night it might have been easy to lose my way, but for the stars. As to the ease of wandering from right paths, I had one queer experience, just before the snow came. Old Man Howe and his wife went off on a visit. It may have been to "Brushy," of which she was fond of talking. At all events, they were to be absent for days and Becky and her sisters determined to make the best of it. They arranged for a kind of girl party, without any men, and the girls came. There were not so very many of them, a dozen or so, but to my dismay I discovered that most of them intended to spend the night in that commodious log house. It would be occupied altogether too much to suit my notions and I decided to even go over as far as Southwick's farm, and mine, to obtain a night's lodging. I ate my supper and escaped from the house and set out along the well known prairie road. It had no fence but I never dreamed of missing it, by day or night. When I left the house the hour may have been six, and a fine, light rain, of no consequence whatever, was beginning to fall. The next minute, a fine, light wind began to blow and it brought with it a dense mist that was a damp darkness which might be felt. I plodded on, but was soon aware that my feet were on grass instead of on a beaten road. A turn was made to recover the lost track and I pushed rapidly onward. It was not long after this turn that



I found myself wading in pretty deep water. "All right," I thought. "I know where I am, now. It's that pond back of Southwick's. I'll take a southerly shoot." So I did, and the pond was waded through but the time was passing and the fog was denser than ever. It is hardly worth while to try and remember all the wet places my wanderings led me into, but I crossed both branches of the Upper Embarrass, upper little left forks, east and west, or something of that kind. Late in the evening, or a little after ten, I came whack up against a rail fence and saw a light ahead of me. Over the fence I dragged my wetness and found myself in a cornfield. Near me were tall shocks and out of one of these projected the handle of a corn knife. An idea struck me and I pulled it out to look at it. -It was my own knife and I had stuck it there that afternoon after finishing a job of cutting for Old Man Lemon. That is, I was to come and finish it in the morning and so had left my knife. This was Lemon's place, therefore, and I wondered why any of his family should be up and wasting candles at that hour. It was explained when I knocked my way in, for the whole Lemon family was off on a visit and Romeo Smith had but just returned from an unlucky jaunt across the south prairie. All the girls he had gone to see were not at home, because they were even now having a good time at Becky Howe's. He could give me a bed, however, and in the morning I was so much nearer my work, but I had traveled, that night, during over four hours of vigorous walking, as nearly as might be in a complete circle. There is a reason for it, and the difference in the pressure of a man on one foot more than another is well understood. It does not lose him when he can see.



A thaw and much rain came toward the middle of January. All the rivers and sloughs were full and all the roads were rivers of mud. Our patch of prairie became a kind of island, with no possibility of getting to town or even to the stores at Upper Embarrass. We were entirely out of candles, for one of our many privations, and I would have been deprived of my "library" or its uses if it had not been for the good which there is in dry hickory bark. I could lie down in front of the fireplace, all of a long winter evening and read away, lighting one slip of bark after another and obtaining pretty good results from them. The special favorite at that time was a couple of second hand volumes, big ones, of "The Old English Dramatists" and I managed to get fairly well acquainted with a number of old worthies whom I had never known before. Newspapers and letters had to be dispensed with during several weeks. At the end of them, I managed to get my mail again and did make one horseback visit to Urbana, but I was conscious that I was getting out of order. If I had known anything about Hygiene, I might easily have escaped any unpleasant results, but I did not. There came a morning when I did not feel like going out. I even went and lay down but was aroused by one of the girls coming to tell me that there was a gang of deer, a buck and three does, out in front of the house, within rifle range. I arose and took down my rifle and went to the doorway. My legs felt unsteady and I sat down on the doorstep to draw a bead on that buck, for he was a fine one. The sights of the rifle appeared to be cutting queer diagrams around his head for a moment, and then I fell back on the floor. I had been seized by what people called the "winter fever," and it



is a bilious thing to have. I think a modern doctor would have had me up in a few days, but the scientist who came all the way from Upper Embarrass at five dollars a visit, to pour poison into me, was of the old kind, "brass mounted." His stock of curealls consisted mainly of mercury, iron, quinine and opium. I was dosed with loads of mercury and quinine and it was a wonder that I overcame them but I did, and the fever also went away, leaving me a thoroughly doctored out man. The Howes took as good care of me as they could, but pig pork and corn donicks are not a temptation to a convalescent. It was therefore genuine Christian kindness on the part of my friends Jim and Lisbet Williams to insist upon my coming to their place as soon as I could be moved. O! how I did appreciate the good cookery of that good woman. I was rallying fast when early plowing began and Jim told me that the ducks and geese were coming. Somehow, I had won a marvelous reputation as a rifle shot among my neighbors and he proposed that I should make a trial for some of those birds. He carried me out in his wagon, one morning, to a "shock-house" which he had made, and into it I went, to lie down upon some corn fodder and wait for game. It was not so very long before a gang of wild geese alighted within long rifle range and I took up my shooting iron. It was not easy to handle it but I let drive and lay down. In a minute more, Jim came galloping his team to the shock to see if I had hurt myself and was astonished to find that instead of that I had brought down a fine, fat wild goose, hitting him right through the gizzard. Lis-bet cooked him tiptop and we all enjoyed him, but Jim would not let me go out again. The weather might give me a setback.





I was doing well but was still quite weak when an astonishing piece of news was brought me by a neighbor who had been to Homer, on the Toledo, Wabash and Western R. R. and at about the same time came explanatory letters from home. Much furniture which had belonged to Mrs. Stoddard when she was Mrs. Bolles having from time to time been substituted for such as she found in our West Genesee street house when she got there, the older materials had been "stored" and were even in the way. They were of the most miscellaneous description, and the bright idea came to her that they must be exactly the thing for a young man to make a start with on the prairie. Therefore, without warning or consultation, the whole lot, a carload, had been consigned to me across country. It had reached Homer while I was sick, the railway officials had been unable to find me and now they sent me word that my goods had been there the prescribed month, unclaimed, and that if I did not at once come and attend to them, the consignment would be sent to Springfield and sold to cover charges. These were pretty heavy and would make a serious inroad upon my already depleted resources. There was no help for that, however, and the next question was, how on earth could I get to Homer and care for those unexpected treasures? I determined to make the effort. One of our neighbors was a man who always kept more horses than he could use. Among them was a thoroughbred named "Turk," a splendid saddle horse who had never been in harness and who had strong prejudices of his own as to who should be permitted to mount him. His owner was one of his favorites and I was another, but it was said that he would promptly "shed" almost any other man. Be that as it may, Turk was sent for and he



came in a state of mind which indicated that he had not had an outing for a long time and expected me to take him out hunting, of which he was especially fond. If there was anything in the wide world suiting his mind better than another, it was a race across prairie after deer. He greeted me kindly when I came out of the house and unhitched him at the fence and he permitted me to get into the saddle. Then off he went, at the long, easy, elastic stride which I delighted in, and it was really far safer for me, just then, than the motion of a rougher horse would have been, even if he were slower. He had hardly gone a mile over the open before a gang of cranes arose from a pond near by and Turk made a playful rush after them and I was powerless to restrain him. The next thing was a marvel! That horse had discovered that I was sick! He came back into the road of his own accord. Twice, after that, he started off at the appearance of game and each time he returned as meek as a lamb. Homer was reached, my goods were cared for and I was conscious that my strength was nearly gone. Out I came to mount Turk, hoping that he would behave himself and he did. He sidled up to a pile of lumber, so that I could get into the saddle easily and then he took the road for home as if he were now in charge of that expedition. The rest of it was told me by Jim and Lisbet. Late in the day, they saw a horse coming slowly, carefully down the lane toward the house, with apparently something on his back, and they went to inquire as to what it might be. The horse stood still when they came and it was Turk and he had brought me home! I lay with my arms around his neck, insensible, and was lifted off and carried in. The story went the rounds and Turk's owner said that he would not take a farm for him.



I was up again in a day or two, but it was only to discover that all my plans in life had been changed for me. First of all, there seemed no probability that I would be physically capable of hard field labor that season and the management of my farm was out of the question. So was the meeting of my interest and other payments on my land and the procuring of stock, seed and workmen. The winter's expenses had about used me up. Ezra had gone, my strength had gone, most of my money had gone and it was needful that I should look about me for a new opening. My mind went back to literature and journalism as my probable resource and the nearest printing offices were in the Urbanas, east and west. There, too, was the hospitable home of Arch. and Jennie Farr and I decided to go and take council with them. My store bills and doctor and board bills were all paid and a wagon going to town took me as far as Urbana, late one afternoon.

I said goodbye to that neck of woods with the most sincere regret, for I had learned to love the prairie and its ways in life. Somewhere inside of me must have been preserved some of the wild blood which had led my ancestors across the sea and had made frontiersmen of them. Perhaps, too, I was a little of an Indian. Of one thing I was then and afterwards made very sure of: I had so conducted myself as to win a number of rough but honest hearted friends and I kept them. To this day, my heart warms toward their memories, although I lived among them only for a few months. On the whole, I may say that I had been in a most useful school and had learned many things which I could not have found out anywhere else. They have been a help to me from that day to this.



## Chapter Twenty-fourth.

## Frontier Journalism.

The broad area of Champaign county was said to contain at that time, the Spring of the year 1858, not many more than two thousand inhabitants, mostly gathered in small villages and altogether dependent upon the as yet hardly initiated agriculture. The specialty of this was cattle, first, wheat, corn, hay and hardly anything else. The cattle interest was indeed large and the one bank, at West Urbana, was named the Cattle Bank. Such a county had to limit its expenses. It might have a sheriff, with other means of support; a county clerk always on hand and a justice of the peace in each hamlet, not dependent upon his judicial income; but it did not need and did not have a permanently sitting county judge of its own. It was one of the counties of the Eighth Judicial Circuit and the lawyers of other counties followed the court in its travels from place to place. The circuit Judge at that time was Hon. David Davis, afterwards United States Senator and Justice of the Supreme Court. It was said that the bar of that circuit, which included Springfield, the state capital, contained a phenominally large number of capable men, of whom several were of national reputation and left deep marks upon the history of their country. I was soon to come in contact with them, one after another, but I was a fine figure to be introduced to great men, that chilly evening in April. Little had been done for my wardrobe since leaving Chicago and that little had been adapted to prairie uses. My hair, always disposed to luxuriant growth, had last been cut on the shore of lake Michigan, except a slash





from a prairie fire. I was afterwards informed by a fellow citizen that his first admiration of me had been attracted by the remarkable character of my cowhide topboots, into which a pair of coarse trowsers were tucked. My shirt was a blue checked hickory, and under its ample collar was a flowing black silk neck scarf, a remnant of Rochester days. On my head was a broadbrimmed slouch felt hat, black, and my complexion was of the combined tint effects of sun and wind and winter fever. On the whole, there was no other man in Urbana just like me when I got out of the wagon and walked around to shift for myself and to strike for a new field of action. Near the middle of the town, on a corner, was the one drug store and it was large, though somewhat dingy and badly lighted! It had been, year after year, the favorite gathering place of the town worthies and especially of the members of the bar whenever the court was in session. Here they would come to discuss politics, literature, the news of the day, and to tell stories, crack jokes and be the admiration of as many of the village loungers as might choose to come in. It was even said by the malicious that any eminent jurist who might happen to feel the need of special medication could have his accustomed prescription filled for him in a small back room. Illnesses were said to be frequent and that now and then a man would come out of that room with a rye face. Be that as it may, the court was in session and when I entered the drugstore there was a full gathering of illustrious persons around the big egg stove and over them fell a gloomy kind of Rembrandt light, while around them floated clouds of tobacco smoke. The subject up appeared to be the English literature of the



Elizabethan age. I did not know a soul of them but I listened with more than a little surprise and interest. There is no certainty in my mind as to the personality of a very tall man in a stovepipe hat who sat somewhat behind the rest, but "Old Abe" Lincoln was in town and this was his favorite haunt after court hours, unless detained in his hotel room by work. The leader of the Champaign county bar was a middle aged gentleman who was generally spoken of as "Old Bill Somers." The Somers family was numerous all up and down that timber. One of them was always county clerk and a township had been named after them. Old Bill was a genius in his way and had a library which was said to contain four thousand volumes, of all sorts including lawbooks. He was by no means a dude in his apparel but he was a gentleman of much more than ordinary intelligence. He was surprised but not bewildered, that evening. He had but just finished an apt and poetical quotation from "Old Ben Jonson," when a queer looking crackling near him broke in with, "You are wrong there, Judge. That isn't from Jonson, it's from Sir John Suckling."

Old Bill never so much as turned his head as he responded: "Perfectly correct, my friend. I meant Suckling." I sent another quotation at him however, and roundly disputed his conclusions, while all the other persons present did turn their heads and chuckle. They appeared to enjoy hugely the idea of the learned scholar being taken up on his own ground by a raw rough from the prairie. Not one disrespectful word was spoken to me, nevertheless, and that was the beginning of a long friendship between me and the eccentric lawyer, whom I learned to esteem highly. I left the



drugstore soon, and walked wearily on over to West Urbana, to get a night's lodging at Farr's and to make up my mind as to the morrow.

The next morning I was ready for my first attack upon local journalism although the outlook was anything but golden. I had already been aware that a too sanguine literary adventurer had attempted to set up an "Agricultural" weekly journal in West Urbana. His undertaking had failed and his entire outfit had been bought in for eight hundred dollars, at a sheriff's sale, by a local medical celebrity named Dr. Walker Scroggs. He was a man of a million. Of medium height and thin, he was by no means ill looking, and he dressed well, for in Summer or Winter he always had on a black frock suit and a brilliant velvet vest of many colors. He also wore a stovepipe hat and had a pair of sharp, twinkling grey eyes. He was a man of ability, for without any other education he had obtained a good deal of professional skill, medical, surgical, homeopathic, eclectic and universal. He knew nothing of grammar and nearly nothing of spelling, but he could write, after a fashion. He was courageous, pugnacious, hated all allopathic physicians, was a fanatical temperance man and anti-slavery man and had accumulated a considerable property, part of which was an entire section of land which he was not as yet cultivating. He owned a good house and a remarkably intelligent old mare that could outwalk anything. His wife was a bright and pleasant woman whose maiden name had been Roach. On the ruins of the lost newspaper enterprise, Dr. Scroggs had determined to establish a journal of his own planning, devoted to his 'isms and to a miscellaneous abuse of the many men whom he did not like. He was one of



the best and readiest of haters and had a full vocabulary of free speech, not much of which indicated piety. In fact, he had strong prejudices against

the members of the gospel ministry in both of those towns and elsewhere and his feelings were pretty generally reciprocated. That is, it must be said that the doctor was far from being a beloved citizen. The printing office was in the second story of a balloon frame building on a corner, with a drygoods concern below. The entrance was by a flight of stairs on the outside of the building, in the rear. It let one into the press and composing room, the editorial sanctum being in an ample "cut off" at the front. That building was a tough one, for it could shake and sway in a gale of wind without tumbling down. The press could quiver it and a fever and ague patient might make himself felt.

To this institution, therefore, I made my way, that hopeful morning, and I climbed the stairs, but I had no letters of introduction, for my friends were not acquainted with the doctor and Arch. Farr had laughed his best when I told him I was going to make a raid upon the "Central Illinois Gazette." It was already three weeks old and its editor had won a sudden distinction which threatened him with libel suits and personal encounters with angry men. He had written his talk right out, in his wrath, and some of the words that he put in were of the kind mildly described as "Archaic." It was, therefore, a dark morning for the Gazette and its remarkable conductor and I had climbed into the gloom.

No change had been made in my wardrobe and yet I felt perfectly at home as I entered that printing room. Had I not worked with Seth Paine?





I had never seen the doctor, but there was no mistaking his personality as he sat there, on the other side of the egg stove, hugging his left knee over his right and wearing so sourly discontented a countenance. The printers were at their cases, picking type industriously, and there were no other visitors. I did not give him any card or name, by way of introducing myself, but calmly sat down in another fifty cent chair and warmed myself by the stove.

"Doctor," I remarked, as if we were old acquaintances, "you are trying to run a newspaper here?"

Only a nod and something between a growl and a grunt was his response and after a moment of contemplation of the stove I added, kindly:

"You don't know how!" and that brought down his leg as he responded:

"The hell you say! I know that better than you do!" and I continued:

"You can't run a newspaper, but I can!"

His hands went behind his head half contemptuously as he replied:

"The hell you can! What will you take to try it on?"

"No pay at all, just now," I told him, and he again made a careless allusion to a country where the weather might be warmer than in Urbana.

I went on to make a business proposition, however, for I was well aware that he was losing money fast and needlessly. I told him that I would get out one edition of the paper, to show him what I could do. If all was then satisfactory, I would take no wages. I would agree that I would run my own risk of making the paper pay its own way. As soon as I should do that, I was to have a full third partnership and control. In



the mean time, at the end of the week, he was to buy me a good suit of clothes and some other things and pay my board in a good boardinghouse.

"Done!" he exclaimed. "Take right hold. Take the whole dam thing and run it! I'm going out to see a patient."

As nearly as I can remember, he turned back for a moment to inquire my name and if I knew anybody in the village and then he disappeared and I did not see him again until later in the day. The printers all growled audibly when they saw me making my inspection, for they had been fairly fleecing the doctor. They had each week been setting up the entire areas of all the four pages of the paper and charging him for it at the Chicago "Printer's union" rates, which were not allowable on a country sheet. Even the fine type market reports of New York and Chicago were all re-set or charged for, each week, instead of merely being corrected. The big blazing head lines for many "departments" were all paid for over and over. I at once hunted around the office for some old electrotype advertisement plates which had been in the dead journal, found them and made up a full page with railway, patent medicine and other dead matter. Then I ordered out all the head lines and had as much permanent "standing matter" set up as I could ornament pages with and not seem to crowd the news. Fully a page and a half being saved in this way, the genuine advertisements filled another half page and the weekly bills for type setting were reduced more than one half after I had cut down the printers to weekly wages at the ruling country rates to which they were entitled. They swore some and not so many of them were needed. Then I went into the sanctum and rearranged it.



There was room for improvement everywhere and when the doctor came in I told him what I had done. His first objection was that none of those old ads were paying anything but he wilted when I showed him that they were to save him a dollar and a half per column per week in typesetting. He demurred to some other things, for it was his nature to oppose, but he ended by telling me to "go my own gait, this week, if the whole concern went to"- Chicago. That evening I was at work late in my new office and when I went home and told Arch. and Jennie what I had done, and how, it seemed as if they would never stop laughing.

Three days later I sent out the fourth number of the Gazette in fine style, looking like entirely an other affair. The contents, too, were of such a character that the doctor was astonished when he read his paper. I had omitted some things that he had written for it and bluntly refused to put in any more personalities. He surrendered only after all the men and women he met had congratulated him upon the improved appearance of the Gazette. As yet, hardly anybody knew how it had happened but folks were curious and it was time for me to put on my new uniform. That was what the doctor had agreed to and he seemed even in a hurry to keep his word, making energetic remarks about having such a looking customer the editor of the greatest paper in central Illinois. I think it was the cash account that affected him most, and he still kept his own name at the head as editor while he ceased to take any care of the literary business except as a kind of skipping critic, after each consecutive issue came out.

So I had made my re-entry into journalism and really felt at home. My



ambition was rising fast and I was rapidly recovering my physical strength - after my hair was cut, like Samson of old. Was that the way with him? A good boarding place was provided me and I began a systematic examination of my surroundings. It was well not to seem to seek prominence, but an unexpected notoriety was close at hand. Up to that date, the politics of the village had been in the hands of what Dr. Scroggs eloquently described as the "rummies" and they held power by means of imported voters, for the village people were largely against them. The Spring election was at hand and the substantial men of West Urbana held a kind of despairing caucus in the Gazette office, one evening, for the purpose, as it appeared to me, of sadly assuring one another that there was no use in trying to do anything. The imported voters were generally rough and dangerous men, railway workmen, drinkers, &c., whom no man was ready to face at the polls as a challenger. I heard them all through without saying a word but my temper was rising and at last I said to them:

"Gentlemen, there will be a challenger at the polls on election day and every foreign interloper will be compelled to swear in his ballot."

The answer came from three or four at once:

"Who on earth will dare to do the challenging?"

"I will!" I said. "I shall be at the polls all day."

Some doubts were even then expressed but the caucus broke up and more than one of its members promised me assistance. Among them were the two members of a firm of railway contractors who were ready to put in a quite efficient stroke of work but not to openly make themselves unpopular.





They were wise and able men and they knew just what to do and they did encourage me although they were not to be at the polls. The next morning the funniest kind of rumor went around the village. It was to the effect that the new editor of the Gazette, the dangerous desperado who had come from nobody knew where, was to challenge at the polls and he would be prepared to fight his bloody way through if he had to kill all the bad men. As for myself, my real idea was that the only difficulty in the way of the respectabilities had been mere pusillanimity and I had small fear of any gory consequences. Nevertheless, at sunrise next morning, there I was at my chosen post and the first men who came had to "swear in." Great was the current wrath but I was obstinate and I may have looked so. At all events, respectability took courage and before long there was quite a gathering of good men around the polls. It was perhaps as well that "Satan came also." A leader of the opposition, for politics sake, was a handsome, tall and well educated young fellow named Daniel Bradley, with whom I was to have a better acquaintance thereafter. He was beginning to cause me some annoyance of a verbal kind when he suddenly found himself face to face with an exceedingly unpleasant character. This was a carpenter whose esteem I had won when he was at work upon the pine palace and took his meals at Old Man Southwick's house, and mine, down on the south prairie. He was a lean and hungry looking man and I had noted him then as having an exceedingly black vocabulary. I had done him injustice, however, for I had formed no adequate idea of the foul and abusive things which he could say or how long he could pour them out. Poor Dan was befouled,



abused, objurgated and cursed in the most prolific manner and anything like a personal encounter was out of the question for he was distinctively "A gentleman" and an affray with Chadden would have implied loss of caste. He was utterly beaten and had to give it up. This affair also increased the courage of my supporters, more of whom were now coming in from the prairie. In fact, I had the obvious majority with me all day, but my enemies were like Wellington when he exclaimed "O! that Blucher or night would come," for late in the day they were sure of heavy reinforcements. A construction train, loaded with voters from up the line, was to arrive and settle this matter and they felt sure that the impudent challenger would be swept away. So he might have been, but for Clark & Porterfield and the switch at Rantoul, the next station north on the Ill. C. R. R. The train ran off gently into that switch and before it could be on the track again the hour was late. The Blucher party did not make another Waterloo, for sunset came before they did and the polls were closed promptly. Then in came the belated train and an enormous quantity of bad language. In justice to Chadden, I must record that before the end of the next year he joined the Methodist church and began to make a better use of his free flow of language. He was a born orator. Small as had been my actual personal risk, that day's work set me up and I became one of the acknowledged first citizens of West Urbana, although some who had been there almost two years still spoke of me as a new comer. They were almost silenced when it became known that I was a prairie farmer, with a large tract of land in the south part of the county.



## Chapter Twenty-fifth.

## Forward.

One of my first duties, after obtaining my regular editorial passes from the railroad company, was to go to Chicago and deed back my now useless farm land. The seller was a just man and dealt well with me in the settlement and he had his reward, for the price of prairie land of that quality was rising. It was already much better than it had been just after the Panic of 1857. I hope he sold it the next time for twice as much.

My newspaper enterprise prospered amazingly and before long I was the editor of two instead of one. That is, our Ford County subscribers were ambitious to have a local journal of their own and were not numerous enough to sustain one. It was better for them that we should make up, each week, a page of Ford County advertisements and local news and then let all the rest of the Gazette go in as "The Ford County Journal." By this means they had a big newspaper to send out in proof of the prosperity of their young and growing concern and we secured all the Ford County business at a comparatively trifling cost. The Gazette was much better looking than either of its local rivals and our subscription list grew rapidly in all directions. Advertising also came in to an unexpected extent and some of the "dummies" could shortly be dispensed with. The Job office was a fairly good one and that part of our business I encouraged in every way that I could think of. In short, it was but a little while before I was able to demand of the doctor the fulfillment of his contract and became a partner in the concern with absolute power of management, to his great relief and disgust.



West Urbana was growing fast and it had many advantages over its older neighbor. The two towns touched at the edges, however, and there was more than a little jealousy between them. Nevertheless, the Urbana merchants found it for their advantage to advertise in the Gazette and our newspaper brethren turned upon poor Dr. Scroggs the full abuse power of their political and personal wrath. It was easy writing to abuse him and to talk in varied type about "Scroggins" and his pills and his plasters and his eccentricities of all sorts. The fact is that mere blackguardism is the least brain tiring of any penmanship that a man may turn his hand to. The nominally Whig and soon to be the nominally Republican organ was edited by an experienced quill driver named Crandall and his son. They were experts at blackguardism and each week brought out some new evidence of their ability as well as of their animosity to the doctor. So very rough did this thing become that I began to fear results and deemed it needful to "speak to young Crandall." His father being out of the question, I gently informed him that if he should print about me as he did about the doctor he might expect me to come and see him. In fact, I said that one of us two "would get a pretty severe thrashing." He replied that it would probably be me, but both of us had doubts on that head and he never mentioned me afterwards. It was best to treat me with silent scorn. For my own part, from the first, I disgusted the doctor by insisting that the Gazette was too dignified a journal to condescend to that sort of thing and that his only proper course was to consider all blackguardism beneath him.





It was a matter of course that the Gazette should go at once into politics, which were then in an exceedingly tangled condition, all over the country. The aspect of national affairs was cloudy to the last degree, and perhaps the largest party then in existence was composed of both Whigs and Democrats who were scared so badly that their creed was mainly composed of denunciations of all men who had positive opinions and dared to speak them out aloud. I was one of the positive fellows, although I was by no means such an unthinking, uncharitable, venomous Abolitionist as was my partner. He considered me almost lukewarm because I could not see my way to indiscriminate cursing of all slaveholders and all pro-slavery men. I could see that there were fairly two sides to the great question and that the right way for dealing with it had not yet been discovered. I went in, however, and soon found that I was going to have enough to do for in that county we were short of stump speakers and party managers. As time went on, I became more and more familiar with the names and some of the supposed characteristics of the leading men of the state but was impressed with an idea that those of them whom I had seen were by no means of gigantic intellectual stature.

Parallel with the slowly formative processes of party politics was the growth of our local churches, especially the Baptist church, which was taking good shape under the wise management of my friend Farr. It was financially the strongest body, if it were yet a body, in West Urbana. One of its members was a bright sort of man named John White, our most successful speculator, who sometimes boasted that he owned "the biggest



house, the best overcoat and the handsomest wife" in the village. He also had by all odds the most imperative and largest mother-in-law and she not only ruled her own household, John included, but the church also and she persisted in singing in the choir as in her earlier days. Another leading member was a well to do lawyer named Harmon and he and his wife were all the more especial friends of mine because they both were from Monroe County, New York, and had known about me before they came. He had studied law in Rochester and knew many of my old friends. He had a pleasant house, too, but it was a frame concern, not brick, like the lordlier mansion of John White. The regular services of the church were held in what was called the town hall, although it was private property, and it was really a good auditorium, for so small a place. The congregations were quite respectable in numbers and it was obviously the correct thing to have a Sunday School. Somewhat to my surprise, I was unanimously elected Superintendent and I took hold of my work with all the energy in me. It was a complete success and before long we had by all odds the largest and best school in Champaign county, greatly to the jealousy of many citizens, both outside of our church and in. As if I had not enough on my hands, as the autumn drew near and a need for right methods of spending some of the social evenings, my evil genius suggested the formation of a Young Men's Literary Association, to hold meetings in the hall and to have all sorts of literary and social and musical entertainments. There was much vocal and instrumental ability lying around loose and it was easy to make up a first rate Glee Club. All the fellows were ready to distinguish themselves as orators and essayists



and our successes were phenomenally brilliant. Alas! for me. I was unanimously chosen President and for a time it was all glory and congratulation but every fellow who imagined that it was his next turn to speak or sing or read aloud and was crowded out by somebody else visited his wrath and disappointment upon my unlucky head. What between the Sunday School and the Association, I was ignorantly making enemies rapidly. In fact, anybody could see that I was getting ahead too fast and evil minded men and women roundly accused me of the dreadful sin of ambition. Dr. Scroggs himself had a bigger stone than that to throw at me.

"Stoddard," he openly declared to me, when his steam was up, "the difficulty with you is that you are an aristocrat!"

I humbly pleaded not guilty of so heinous a crime as that, but he said:

"It wont do, Stoddard. It's in you, as big as a horse. Why, any man can see it in you,---across the street!"

It must have been bad, to have been visible at a distance, and I could not imagine how he could have formed so insane a notion. At all events, it had not yet appeared to hinder my popularity. Another cause of jealousy was close at hand, however, and it came in the strange shape of friendly finance. The cashier and manager of The Cattle Bank was a handsome, merry faced fellow named Chalmers M. Sherfy and of course he was a man of much importance. The large room in the rear of the banking office was his sleeping room as well as the Directors' room and it was fitted up in style. Among its other beauties was a good piano with an Eolian attachment. It was not a great while before Sherfy and I became close friends and I was



invited to become his chum in the bank bedroom. We got on together capitally well but there were those who did not like it and many remarks were made that were indicative of a disturbed state of mind. Among other points, a result was that Chal and I became in a manner society leaders and no public opinion of any entirely new town will stand that sort of aristocracy. It was not long, too, before my unlucky reputation as a possible blood tub and desperado received another unexpected lift. There came to the village, from Chicago, a pretty and stylish young widow who had business interests thereabouts and her guardian put her under the protection of his friend the bank cashier. That meant me, for poor Chal was a cripple in one leg and was no sort of fighting man. At about the same time there arrived from the east a young doctor who was drawn there by his brother, the keeper of the one doubtful sporting concern in West Urbana. The doctor was good enough but he had not only that misfortune but also the erroneous idea that the code of honor was still in some kind of dead alive existence. That is, that a man must be ready to fight. He of course went to his brother's place and had a room over the wicked billiard saloon. Now, it happened that an older physician had two daughters and their mother was a great friend of mine as well as a strict Methodist, down on gambling and liquor. There was nothing wonderful in the fact that young Dr. Isom began to pay attention to the pretty widow. There was an imprudence, nevertheless, in the act of Chal when he wrote about it to her Chicago guardian and mentioned me as one of the responsible references. He did so because it had happened that good Mrs. Dr. Bearse, at the close of an





evening entertainment, had bidden her daughters not to let Dr. Isom see them home and had requested me to do so instead. I had done so, in utter innocence and knew nothing about the warning letter. The Chicago guardian was another remarkable, for he wrote to his pretty ward, quoting only too liberally and loosely from Chal in advising her that she must discourage her supposed suitor. She was an obedient ward, for she at once told the doctor to stay away and showed him her guardian's letter in justification so that Chal and I were put in the position of declaring him improper company. He was furious and so were his sporting friends, but these told him that it would not do for him to call a known cripple to bodily account. The whole matter came down upon my innocent head and the whole village knew that there was to be what was called "serious trouble" between the injured lover and the editor of the Gazette. I heard of it and paid it no manner of attention although even Dr. Scroggs believed that there was a "difficulty" on hand. Only a day or two passed and at a little after noon I was sitting in my inner office, at my table at one end of it, when in strode the angry doctor, all screwed up to the fighting point. He glared at me ferociously and I do not remember what were his salutations but I at once arose and went to the door, shut and locked it and went back and sat down. I did so with no other idea in my mind than that if he meant a fight I did not intend to be helped or interfered with by the printers in the outer office. We would fight it out without witnesses. The effect upon him, however, was peculiar for he at once took the chair to which I invited him and began a fierce statement of his grievances.



I of course disclaimed the letter and he sternly demanded:

"But do you mean to say that I am not fit company for any young lady in this village? Do you dare to impugn my character?"

"Well, ye-es, I do!" I calmly responded. "Your associations are bad. We don't know anything about you, but some things wont do-"

His rejoinder was the reverse of polite or good tempered. In fact, it was what might be called chivalric and threatening but he kept his eye on me in an interesting manner. It happened that my table drawer was open and that my right arm and hand rested in it. The reason was that he was the larger man and was supposed to be armed while I was not. Just beyond my hand, however, there lay upon the table what the printers call a "Shooting Stick." It was a bar of steel about ten inches long and having a heavy knob of steel for a head. A terribly effective short club was that same shooting stick and it was my calculation that if he should draw a pistol or a knife I could crush his skull like a glass bottle before he could do any mischief with either. He now seemed to be growing strangely cooler and even asked me about the Mrs. Bearse business. "Did she do so? I don't believe that she ever did. Do you dare to tell me that what I have heard is true?"

It was true, I told him, and I had seen the girls home to prevent his doing so and should do it again if necessary. His whole manner was changing but mine was not for I felt as cool as ice. At last he begged me to go with him to the Bearse place and let him give an explanation. I was willing, the door was unlocked and then a swarm of curious villagers saw



the two "dedlie duilysts" walking up street, side by side. We found Mrs. Bearse at home and in reply to his excited questioning she replied:

"I did that very thing, Dr. Isom, and I think you are not fit company for my daughters. I did speak to Mr. Stoddard."

The doctor burst into tears, exclaiming:

"My God! Has it come to this?"

Then he went on to tell of a respectable eastern home, good bringing up, good intentions, and a strongly formed intention to be more careful of his conduct thenceforth. He went his way and I went mine and before night I had the fun of hearing his explanation of the reason why he did not rush in on me and mash me in some terrible way or other.

"It was just this way," he told his friends. "The little Devil got up and locked the door on us, for a close fight. Then he sat down with his hand in the drawer where he keeps his revolver and kept his eye on me, and you know he's a dead shot. If I'd ha' stirred a peg at that distance I was a dead man and I knew it. I had no chance whatever."

He was more than half right but the shooting stick I meant to draw was not the Colt he was thinking of. He would have dropped just the same.

In justice to him I must record that the to-be-expected consequences followed. He reformed entirely and won a success. The pretty widow hated me like p'isen and in due time she married him and they were happy. On the whole, however, the effect upon my unpleasant pugilistic reputation was all that I did not ask for and was not just the thing for a successful Sunday School Superintendent.



Daughter Emily- 1811.

Supper at the Bank.

I will finish up the story of the bank bedroom that it may not be entirely forgotten hereafter. It was large and high and when it was thrown in with the bank office in front the two together made plenty of area for reception purposes. Therefore, we utilized it to an extent that it was not originally intended for. The black cook of the Doane House was a fat and dignified party who was exceedingly proud of his ability to do up game and delicacies. Every now and then the village would be honored by the presence of some distinguished visitor or visitors, especially railway officials and their friends, for whom there were but scanty means for social enjoyment in the community. They always put up at the Doane House and were sure to be willing to meet cashiers and editors and the leading local business men. The correct thing, therefore, was to give such a person, if he were at all agreeable, a supper at the Bank. Especially when game was in season, we were able to give him a good one, venison, grouse, quails, and the cook's charm was in quails. When game was out there were chickens which had never known a hungry hour on that prairie and which could be had for a dollar and a half a dozen, the regular price of all feathered game, but I have known a side of fat deer-meat to fetch as much as three and a half. To the feeding we could add the glee club and our leading clothes merchant was a bright young Jew named Eppstein who was a musical enthusiast and really an expert on the piano or the "cythera," to which latter instrument we generally preferred the piano. I remember one occasion when he was almost disappointed. He had never been allowed to pay any part of the frequent expenses, his music and his pleasant company being all we wanted, and he felt in honor bound to put in a food contri-





bution and he did so. One evening he was all smiles of confident expectation for he had brought in a rare and attractive delicacy which he exhibited with pride. It was in little tinfoil rolls and there was much of it. We did our best and each of us tried a bite of the Delicacy but we were a gang of uneducated, untrained savages and every man was trying hard to relish and smile gratefully over his first mouthful of "genuine, imported Sweitzer kase," as nearly rotten as any such wonderful cheese ever succeeded in getting. It was the tinfoil that had held the stuff together and I had a strong suspicion that I was struggling with a concoction of fat worms and soft soap. We did our best in the way of praise but poor Eppstein saw that we were unable to appreciate his contribution. As to those gatherings, they brought me a number of pleasant acquaintances, but they also gave our enemies a handle for stinging remarks about the orgies of Stoddard and his temperance men in the bank parlor. I got it in various directions and one of my asserted speeches at a supper party was curiously quoted from in Crandall's Journal.

The summer passed away and a new element was added to my perplexities. My dear sister Kate had found it exceedingly difficult to get on with her stepmother and her father was turned against her to such an extent that she also determined to come west. I had no word in the matter and was altogether at sea as to what to do with her when she appeared in what was soon to be known as the young city of Champaign. I had absolutely no means for supporting her and was at my wit's end. I could have done nothing if the Gazette had not now become really prosperous under my management. We had become such a power, politically and in circulation, that we actually



obtained the official county printing and advertising, to the boisterous disgust and indignation of our newspaper rivals.

I obtained temporary board for Kate and she went in with an old lady who was trying to keep a select "primary school." I believe Kate's earnings as a teacher during the following year were forty dollars and it was well for her that she brought a good wardrobe with her. She also brought curious social notions which did not diminish the jealousy of some of my plebeian neighbors. On the whole, I was up to my eyes in difficulties of many kinds. One of my adventures that autumn was an attendance at the State Fair, agricultural and so forth, away up in the northwest corner of the state. Abundance of railway passes cut down the expense and the trip had to be a brief one for Dr. Scroggs insisted upon going with me. All would have gone well if I had not been seized with cholera on the cars of the Central railroad, forty miles out from Freeport. The doctor did his best but I suffered horribly and came near dying. When we reached Freeport, however, and I was carried to the nearest hotel, all of its inmates swarmed out of it, remonstrating vigorously against having a deadly plague brought in among them. The proprietor to whom they protested was a sincere Christian, nevertheless, for he told them all to go to h-eaven and said that he would be forever blessed before he would turn a sick man out of his hotel to please such an inhuman, happy! happy! set of blessed cowards. He reaped his reward and I was all right in a few hours, for the men and women who ran away had secured their rooms in advance at low rates and the town was swarming with visitors who were unable to obtain



quarters and were ready to pay anything. Every room in his house was instantly reoccupied at several times as much per diem cash as he had been receiving before. It was beautiful poetical justice and I shall always remember him with pleasure as a true-hearted man and a good manager of the plague stricken hotel business.

The year 1858 drew to a close in a mixed kind of success, on the whole much greater than I had any good right to expect. In politics, I could say that I had attended one state convention of the People's Party, now beginning to call itself Republican, and that I had there managed to be so effectively busy as to acquire the lifelong friendship of Hon. Leonard Swett, Lincoln's friend, and other well known men, as well as to gain the reprobation of another lot, quite as influential, against whom I had figured in the convention. I had also delivered a number of stump speeches, all over my own county, and was acquiring some facility upon the platform. I was well aware, however, that my oratorical powers were small and that they were in need of much practice before they would amount to anything. One feature of the year, for me, had been that the University of Rochester had given me my degree of Bachelor of Arts, in course, with my class, although I had not taken my Senior year of residence. It was kindly declared to be "on account of standing and scholarship." I had kept up my correspondence fairly well with many of my eastern friends, and believe that some of them had exaggerated ideas of what I had accomplished. I will leave this chapter, now, and put some of the adventures of that year and the next into another parcel.



## Chapter Twenty-seventh.

## Characters and Incidents.

Dr. Soroggs was a pretty good financier, and as soon as the Gazette was fairly on its feet he decided to dispense with rent paying. With a view to that accomplishment he purchased a gore of land on the corner adjoining the balloon in which we were and proceeded to build upon it. So far as I remember, he put in the first stone foundation ever seen in that village, bringing the stone from a considerable distance. The new building was to be about sixty feet deep, twenty-five on the street and perhaps fifteen in the rear. He bought the odd lot for almost nothing and he traded for the stone. The foundation laying called in the services of the only stone mason to be had and this was his first job. He was a man of middle height and disproportionately broadshouldered, with a large head, long curling gray hair in superabundance down over his back, a tangled gray beard to his waist, moustaches to match, eyebrows like awnings, and a wardrobe that looked as if he slept in a lime kiln. His boots were of a fine lime red and his hands were as hard as horn. He had two remarkable voices and he knew how to use them in the most effective way. One was in his throat and was somewhat like the voices of other men. The other was away down in his stomach and was as the growl of a hoarse bear, declaring its agreement with whatever, from time to time, might be uttered by voice number one. He was a vast adjunct to our somewhat heated local political discussions and he was always allowed the floor for he was a perfect master of vituperative abuse. I can almost quote:

Mr. Speaker! I am a man of common sense (voice number one) I am!  
 (voice number two) I have listened to the lies uttered by the last speaker  
 (voice number one) I have (voice number two)





He is a complete numbskull,- he is! And I believe he is a villain,- I do! He does not know enough to go in when it rains,- he doesn't. I think all such fellows as he is ought to be in Hell,- I do! The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that most of the people of this unlucky village are dam fools,- they are. As for that other man over yonder, he ought to be taken out and hung,- he ought! And a rope is too good for him,- it is!"

The sudden drops from his throat to his stomach were worthy of the most accomplished orator,- or ventriloquist,- and the multitude was always glad to hear him while it was of no use for one of his victims to lose temper. He could outscold any man and as for hitting him, he was as if he had been made of stone or an old oak stump.

The new building was of pretty solid frame above the foundation. The cellar and the front part of the lower story were rented to a druggist for much more than ten per cent interest on the entire cost, leaving the doctor free. Twelve feet of the narrow rear was cut off for a doctor's office, he had never had one before, and for an editorial sanctum. The entire upper floor was printing office and as soon as we were in it we had the best outfit in those parts. I was rapidly acquiring a good knowledge of job work and could pick type rapidly, which was often a good thing, owing to the exceedingly uncertain character of the tramping jous whom we were compelled to employ. I had a row with a gang of them once in the old building, when they came in late from a spree they had been on, the night before. I cleaned them out but I carried for many a day the black scar on my left temple where one of them split me with the coal shovel. It bled well and Dr. Scroggs said that it had missed the temporal artery



and fatality by only a sixteenth of an inch. I had no more trouble of that kind. Our run of business was good but I had a queer incident in one of the warm days of that autumn. It was as warm as summer.

I was up stairs, at a piece of job work which a devil had carelessly pied, and it was on a composing stone near the head of the stairs. I was in a state of mind, my sleeves, shirt sleeves, were rolled up to my shoulders, and my hands were black with ink. There may have been streaks of darkness on my face. The doctor was below, rolling out some pills and must have been standing with his back to the open street door when a loud voice in the doorway hailed him as "Doc." and inquired into the condition of his health. I did not entirely catch the doctor's responses, but in a moment more he was up at the head of the stairs and at my elbow informing me, in a suppressed tone which might have been heard all over the office:

"Stoddard! Old Abe is here and he wants to see you!"

My reply was in accordance with my state of mind and with the pied type.

"Come right down!" he said. "But do fix up a little. Why, Stoddard, you are looking like the devil."

I could believe that I was not exactly in presentation uniform but I replied that all I would do just then was a kind of compromise. If Mr. Lincoln wished to see me, I would go down and I would wash my hands but I would not roll down my sleeves. The doctor was not at all satisfied but I was aware of an audible chuckle in the room below. Up to that hour I had not met Mr. Lincoln but had heard a great deal of him and did not believe he would care much for a little ink and light clothing. The Doctor, on the other hand, considered this visit of so prominent a politician a great



affair and he was a little afraid of big men. I was not and I could also perceive that he was unable to comprehend why the visit was not to him but to a mere junior like myself. He may have been under the delusion that the general public did not know who was the editor of the Gazette. Mr. Lincoln greeted me cordially and plunged at once into the causes of his coming. In a minute he had me not only deeply interested but somewhat astonished. I had supposed that I knew the people and politics of that county and he had been told that I did, but so did he. He could ask about the different precincts and their leading men almost as if he had lived among them and I was glad enough to be able to set him right as to the drift of the voters. They all were drifting, more or less, and out of all that driftwood he was proposing to organize a new political power. Of course, I could not give him a thorough personal reading at that time but he impressed me strongly and in after years I was the better able to understand his intimate knowledge of the people he was to govern and upon whom he was to rely. As he was then studying Champaign county, so he was investigating the state of Illinois and other states and was getting into close relations with the current of thought and feeling, north and south. The conversation was a long one and Dr. Scroggs soon got weary of it, for he had no part in it, and he went off "to see a patient." Lincoln went out and I went back to my pied job and did not at all suppose that so unimportant an interview was to have any permanent effect upon my life or his. The fact was, however, that I had begun to take a deep interest in the great Whig leader and I soon knew more about him.



Among other things, I had heard marvelous stories of his power over a jury, especially in doubtful criminal cases, and must say that I did not half believe them. I cannot as I write recall the name of the county town next west of the Centralia crossing of the Ill. C. R. R. on the St. Louis road, but I believe it was at that place that a man was to be tried for murder. Some things grow singularly dim, at times, after a lapse of nearly half a century. All I can distinctly recall are the things which at that day impressed me and the railway crossing was not one of them. The murder had been committed in a small country store and the victim had been killed with a spade in the hands, it was charged, of a somewhat loose character living in the neighborhood. The murdered man, a non resident, perhaps a cattle buyer, was supposed to have money with him and there were three men in the store who saw the deed done and were prepared to testify. In my opinion, it was this precise presentation of the case which drew the attention of Lincoln and convinced him that there was too much evidence and too little motive, as well as too much unreason. At all events, he had volunteered to defend that seemingly hopeless convict and I availed myself of my abundant passes on those roads to run down and hear him before what was pretty sure to be a prejudiced jury with their minds made up beforehand. The court room was jammed full of eager spectators and it was easy to see that the drift of public opinion was mingled with a strong curiosity as to what on earth Lincoln could do in so entirely clear a case. I almost wondered, myself, when I listened to the straightforward and unanimous testimony of the three men who had actually witnessed the murder.





The character of the murderer was badly smashed for him but the truth was that he was nothing worse than an ordinary ne'er do weel, of the customary southern Illinois stamp, with no bloodthirsty element in him.

The next singular feature of that case was that Lincoln appeared to be against his own client and doing his best to convict him. O! how he did make them reiterate and nail down their evidence, forcing all their several statements to an exact agreement as to all the minute particulars. He had visited the scene of the murder and he now took out a tape line and made measurements to illustrate to the jury the exact facts of the occurrence. At precisely such a spot the victim had been standing and at exactly such a spot by the upright wooden pillar by which he had picked up the sharp edged spade from a lot of new ones that stood there, the murderer had been standing when he struck the blow. The measurements between the two spots were carefully made with the tape line and were as carefully verified by the witnesses. That poor convict was doomed! It was wonderfully vivid. Every soul in that courtroom had been transported to the country store and we were standing there, behind the counters or in the back part of the store, looking on with horror as the awful deed was done before our faces. Lincoln now had the spade in his hand and he held it up. He was at that moment, to our eyes, particularly to the eyes of the jury, on the very square foot of flooring occupied by the now trembling convict, his despairing and deserted client, shivering in the prisoner's dock and waiting for a verdict of guilty. At the same time, as Lincoln lifted the spade,



we could distinctly see the innocent victim standing on the other spot so accurately proved for him as his place of death. It was awful! Up, up, went the spade at the end of Lincoln's long arm, and down came the fatal blow but the end of that deadly weapon struck the floor a number of feet short of the pillar. As I remember it, Lincoln had managed to now have his client, a short man, standing so near him that with one step they were side by side and the six feet four of the lawyer's height was in strong contrast with the five feet eight of his client.

"Gentlemen of the jury!" shouted Lincoln. "I am a taller man than he is! I could not have done it! He could not have done it! Gentlemen of the jury, he did not do it! Somebody else did it!"

The absolute demonstration of his declaration was apparent to all who heard and saw and the accused man was acquitted. I do not now remember what became of the witnesses but it was pretty plain that they had convicted themselves of that murder and I went home well satisfied with my first look at a trial for murder.

The winter of 1858-9 passed busily away and The Spring came again in a wet and chilly way. My own affairs were undergoing a few changes. For instance, The Literary Association was played out. My term of office ended and another fellow was elected and he didn't know how and the whole concern lay down and died. As to the Sunday School, there were not only factions and jealousies but also ambitions in that infant Baptist Church. One of these was in the teeming brain of my good friend John White's large and sharp tongued mother in law. She clearly understood that the



richest man in the church must be the best and should be its ruler,- under her supervision. It was therefore his place to be Superintendent of so very large and fine a Sunday School, instead of a young man who really had no money to speak of. Therefore, when a day of election came, somewhere after the Holidays, I was dropped and the school I had so zealously built up was put into John White's hands. He had not been brought up in anything of the kind and his education for it was of the most original. What was his other education may be seen through the pinhole of his free employment of the term "sect" when what he meant was "sex". To cut that matter short, the scholars did not take to him and began to go off to other schools and before long he came before the church, like the really frank and honest man that he was, and told them he had discovered that he did not know how. It was not at all the easy job he had imagined and he offered his resignation. The question was asked of him "What is to be done," and he promptly responded, in a business like manner, "Put in again the man who built up the school. Mr. Stoddard is our only man for it. I am sorry I ever undertook it."

Mr. Stoddard was at once unanimously elected, Madame being angrily silent, but he positively refused to attempt a restoration of the wreck for there was more stormy weather ahead and he did not care to push himself in among a lot of jarring factions and was well aware that he was not at all liked by the mother in law. He was not under her thumb in any manner and she could not brook rebellion.

Here may be the place to put in the rest of the church fight, without



reference to chronology. The split in the church took form in two religious armies, "The John White party" and "The Harmon party" and the numbers on either side were about equal. My sister and I kept out of the mess as well as we could and my poor friend Farr and his wife did all in their power to reconcile the really ridiculous differences. All was of no avail and the war grew more and more bitter until a day came when the John White party had a "church meeting" almost to themselves. They proceeded formally to "exclude" every member of the Harmon party, including blindly my sister and myself. In the course of a few days, another "church meeting" was held which was attended only by the Harmonites. It was entirely regular and constitutional and it proceeded to formally "exclude" every member of the John White party. So that entire church had excluded itself and from all its enterprising membership the "right hand of fellowship had been withdrawn." Some of the too severe executioners were somewhat taken aback when I informed them that Kate and I were still members of the Syracuse church and not within their reach at all, not having jined.

My father's elder sister, Harriet, had married a prosperous New London county farmer named Morgan. I think it was in the year 1859 that he and his family, including two nearly grown up sons, came to our next north county of Ford to settle upon a section of prairie land which he had purchased of the railroad company. It took him only a year or so to discover that his proper home was in Connecticut. I think he then turned his prairie property over to one of his sons and went back, homesick and repentant. It was not long after his arrival, however, that I managed to





squeeze out time enough from my somewhat pressing duties to go up and visit them. Of course I had a good time, but my most vivid remembrance of it is that Uncle Morgan had a good double gun. It was just too early to kill grouse, but the state game law was an old one and did not include any but the older counties. Now Ford County bordered upon Vermillion. Ford was within the law while Vermillion was not and the birds were flying well. Uncle Morgan's farm was on the county line and all I had to do was to walk along the line and shoot at eastward flying chickens. I killed that day more birds than I could well carry home. Every one of them was hit inside of the law and fell outside of it. The legal question involved has often puzzled me.

It was during this year that my old friend Hop Strong came to Champaign to see Arch Farr and his wife and me. He urged me to give up so small and unhopeful a place and come and try my luck in St. Louis, where he and his cousin Henry Strong had opened a fine shoestore. I consented to come over and see them and their village. Having passes, the trip did not cost me anything, but the train I was on came to grief half way. The engineer was killed and some others were hurt and I learned what remarkable figures human beings might cut in pitching out of the upper berths of one of those old style sleeping cars. I was in a lower berth and did not pitch. My stay in St. Louis was a short one and I decided that it did not need me just then. Within a year, Hop and his cousin had also decided that theirs was one shoestore more than the place had any need of.

There are hosts of queer occurrences of those days which I must omit,



because they do not appear to have any direct bearing upon my own course in life. I remember taking a run down to Cairo, to see the Ohio and Mississippi rivers get together. I do not know what it is now, but all there was of it then was a kind of muddy cellar between two high levees, with here and there a storehouse for grain and a hotel or two, with a few residences especially designed for the kinds of people who could consent to live in such a place as that was. On the whole, I believed that Campaign was about the settlement for me and I had no idea of leaving it. My purpose was to grow up with it and if I had done so my western success was really cut out for me. It was not to be so, however, and there was no prophet to tell me how my plans were to be broken up.



## Chapter Twenty-eighth.

## A New Beginning.

Somewhere along in the winter, I found means to secure a small cottage near the middle of the village and in this Kate and I began small house-keeping. The house contained only two rooms besides the kitchen but it would do. I still retained some remnants of my remarkable shipment of old family household goods from the east and was able to obtain whatever else was needed. At a later day, our old piano had also been sent on, because it was really Kate's property and because the Syracuse family needed something finer. I had with the house a coop of a barn and was provided with stable room for a stout pony which I had accumulated. On the whole, we were pretty well off, for one of our oldest and most faithful family servants, devoted to my mother's memory, had migrated to Champaign and was living near us to take care of rough jobs and washings. Her name had been Helen Linahen and I do not remember her married name but she was a kind of jewel.

One more burden had been added by Kate's determination to get as much of the family as she might away from Mrs. Stoddard's influence. This had led her to bring on my younger brother, John, and with some difficulty I obtained a place for him in a store kept by a friend of mine, where he obtained board money for his services. I was loaded up to my eyes in the Spring of 1859 and was even feeling somewhat tired of doing so very much.

The new political campaign was opening early and the whole country was getting on fire with excitement. The Gazette was also beginning to regard



itself as an important journal for we had a circulation of over two thousand, scattered over several counties, and that was phenomenal. The doctor watched the cash account closely, as well he might, and believed that in some inscrutable way he was still the editor of the Gazette. Nobody else believed with him and it was not necessary for me to dispute the point. He was, of course, disposed to launch out into national politics, but with only a dim idea of what these were to be. Other papers, here and there, were taking time by the forelock and were announcing their preferences as to the leadership of the new party which was in process of formation. For an understanding of those processes, a reference is respectfully suggested to the Life of Lincoln, for the story of them is too long to be inserted here. He had already taken a position which nobody as yet understood. I am quite positive that he himself did not quite estimate the forces which he was rallying or to what an extent they were gathering in around his own name and character. His nearest friends were as blind as so many bats. Among all the long list of possible presidential candidates, the name of Lincoln had not been spoken of in any newspaper publication that I knew anything about. Long afterwards, a lot of Chicago editors and other politicians asserted that they had held a hole and corner caucus upon the subject and had ventured to speak of him as a possibility in case Mr. Seward should be shoved aside. Upon this subject Dr. Scroggs had been much exercised and he and I had had several talks which had but resulted in disagreements. As a New Yorker, a born and bred follower of William H. Seward, I had been disposed to advocate him, but had





at the same time a doubt of his ability to secure the western vote. It was my opinion that the situation called for a western man and I was not at all satisfied with any of the doctor's suggested candidates.

There had been changes at the bank, just before I set up housekeeping, and I was temporarily boarding at the Doane House, the square hotel at the railway station. It was a temperance house and had no bar but its office was a large room that had been intended for hospitality. In the middle of this office was an enormous egg stove and near this, in the corner, was the office counter. Just beyond was the door from the dining room.

One chilly morning in March, I came to my breakfast as early as usual and after eating it passed out through that door into the office. Just as I did so, the street door opened and Abraham Lincoln came in. He had been to the post office without any overcoat and he may well have been chilly. At all events he walked toward the stove, drew up one of the much whittled arm chairs which ornamented the office, sat down in it, cocked his feet upon the stove hearth, took off his hat and settled it between his knees. I think he always wore a very tall hat and one that was respectable for age. This hat, now between his knees, was so full of letters that it might have been wondered how he managed to put it on. That was no wonder, for his law business was large and he was here in attendance upon the court which was in session at Urbana. I had never before known him to put up at the Doane House. On seeing him come in, I had paused at the counter and there I continued to stand, for there was something in this man's face and manner that attracted me unusually. My old fad for studying remarkable men came



back upon me with power and I put away my first impulse to go forward and speak to him. It was much better to watch him and he appeared to be unaware of any other presence in the room. He and I were alone and he was much more alone than I was.

I stood at the office counter, watching him. His face was not handsome, to be sure, but at any time there was a great deal of expression in it. There are many faces of which so much cannot be said. This morning was evidently a thoughtful one and his expression varied from minute to minute, all the while being cloudy. He read or looked at letter after letter, as he opened them and for some he did not appear to care much. At last, however, he came to an epistle which I have wished I knew something about. It was written upon a square letter sheet, in a crabbed but regular and very black hand writing, page after page. It seemed to interest him at once and he read on slowly, stopping at intervals as if to ponder ideas which were presented. His face at first grew darker and the deep wrinkles in his forehead grew deeper. I was also getting more and more deeply interested. Then, if you can imagine how a dark lighthouse looks when its calcium light is suddenly kindled you may get an idea of the change which came into the face of Abraham Lincoln. All the great soul within him had been kindled to red heat, if not to white, and his eyes shone until he shut them. Before he did that, they seemed to be looking at something or other that was far away and the shutting may have been to more completely keep out of sight all but that far off object. I had seen enough and I said to myself, emphatically: "My boy, that is the greatest man you have



ever seen!"

What else may have been my suppressed mutterings I cannot now recall but I did not disturb Mr. Lincoln or try to speak to him. I turned and made my way out of the hotel through the diningroom and I did not pause until I had reached the Gazette office. I opened the door and walked in and there at the table sat Dr. Scroggs, diligently at work upon his accustomed pills. His back was toward me and he did not turn when I came in.

"Doctor," I shouted, "I've made up my mind whom we are going for for President!"

"The Hell you say!" was his mild and appreciative response. "Who is it?"

"Abraham Lincoln of Illinois!" I shouted back.

"O Hell!" he rejoindered. "He'd never do for president. He might do for a nominee for vice president, perhaps, with Seward or some such man—"

I was obstinate and at the end of a sharp controversy he yielded, for I told him that as soon as I could run off the current editions of the Gazette and Ford County Journal I was going straight to Springfield and to Bloomington, to see William H. Herndon and Leonard Swett and procure materials for a campaign life editorial. That is precisely what I proceeded to do, without telling too many men what were my purposes. On my return, the editorial was written, perhaps two full columns of it, and it was printed but I did not stop there. I sent a letter embodying some of it to "The Century," a New York weekly journal then recently set up by Horace Greeley's old partner McElrath, and it was printed with approval. Meantime I had done something else. Our regular exchange list was large but for



that week I added to it not less than two hundred journals, all over the country, particularly the west. Then I waited to see the result of my experiment and it altogether surprised me. I had marked my editorial in the copies sent out and when the exchange papers came in it appeared to me that hardly one of them had failed to notice it, making extracts, and to give more or less favorable comments. Many of them reprinted it in full, or nearly so, and swung out the name of Lincoln at their column heads.

Note by W. O. Stoddard, Jr.

The story here told of the writing of the first editorial nominating Lincoln for the presidency had long been a legend in our family. It had in a way taken on an atmosphere of romance as a good story will when there is lack of confirming evidence. At the time of the writing of these memoirs, we had nothing more than father's word for their correctness but we were accustomed to accept him at one hundred percent and did so in this case.

However it was a great satisfaction to us when documentary evidence was at length forthcoming. In 1908, "Lincoln the Citizen" by Henry C. Whitney was published, in the first volume of which appeared full confirmation of father's story and to our great satisfaction extracts from the Central Illinois Gazette including the editorial itself and also the personal note.

I quote from Mr. Whitney's Lincoln, Vol. I - Page 262:

"The first newspaper that mentioned him as a Presidential possibility was the Central Illinois Gazette, published in Champaign, Ill., by J. W. Scroggs. On May 4, 1859, it printed the following articles, the first in the local column, the second in the editorial. Will O. Stoddard, Esq., afterward Lincoln's secretary to sign land patents, and later his biographer, wrote both articles, he being editor of the paper at the time.





## PERSONAL.

Our Next President.---We had the pleasure of introducing to the hospitalities of our Sanctum, a few days ago, the Hon. Abraham Lincoln. Few men can make an hour pass away more agreeably. We do not pretend to know whether Mr. Lincoln will ever condescend to occupy the White House or not, but if he should, it is a comfort to know that he has established for himself a character and reputation of sufficient strength and purity to withstand the disreputable and corrupting influences of even that locality. No man in the West at the present time occupies a more enviable position before the people or stands a better chance for obtaining a high position among those to whose guidance our ship of state is to be entrusted.

## WHO SHALL BE PRESIDENT?

We have no sympathy with those politicians of any party who are giving themselves up to a corrupt and selfish race for the presidential chair, and are rather inclined to believe that the result will be a disappointment to the whole race of demagogues. The vastness of the interests depending on the political campaign now commencing, gives even a more than usual degree of interest to the question: "Who shall be the candidate?" Believing that a proper discussion of this question through the columns of the local papers is the true way to arrive at a wise conclusion, we propose to give our views, so far as formed, and we may add that we are well assured that the same views are entertained by the mass of the Republican party of Central Illinois.

In the first place, we do not consider it possible for the office of



President of the United States to become the personal property of any particular politician, how great a man soever he may be esteemed by himself and his partisans. We, therefore, shall discuss the "candidate question" unbiassed by personal prejudices or an undue appreciation of the claims of any political leader. We may add, with honest pride, an expression of our faith in the leading statesmen of our party, that neither Chase nor Seward nor Banks nor any other whose name has been brought prominently before the people, will press individual aspirations at the expense of the great principles whose vindication is inseparably linked with our success. While no circumstances should be allowed to compel even a partial abandonment of principle, and defeat in the cause of right is infinitely better than a corrupt compromise with wrong, nevertheless, the truest wisdom for the Republican party in this campaign will be found in such a conservative and moderate course as shall secure the respect and consideration even of our enemies, and shall not forget National compacts within which we are acting and by which we are bound: and the proper recognition of this feature of the contest should be allowed its due influence in the selection of our standard bearer.

Although local prejudices ought always to be held subordinate to the issues of the contest, it will not be wise to overlook their importance in counting the probabilities of what will surely be a doubtful and bitterly contested battlefield. It is this consideration which has brought into so great prominence the leading Republican statesmen of



Pennsylvania and Illinois. If these two states can be added to the number of those in which the party seems to possess an unassailable superiority, the day is ours. The same reasons to a less extent, in exact proportion to its force in the electoral college, affect New Jersey.

From Pennsylvania and Illinois, therefore, the candidates for President and Vice President might, with great propriety, be chosen. It is true that our present Chief Magistrate is from Pennsylvania, and other States justly might urge that a proper apportionment of the National honors would not give her the presidency twice in succession; but, while there are several good precedents for such a course of action, there is one point which outweighs in importance all others: to wit, We must carry Pennsylvania in 1860, and if we can best do it with one of our own citizens as standard-bearer, that fact cannot be disregarded with impunity. The delegation from the Keystone State will doubtless present this idea with great urgency in the National convention.

Aside from this, there are other points in favor of the two States mentioned, which cannot fail to carry great weight in the minds of all candid and reasonable men. They have both been distinguished for moderation and patriotism in the character of their statesmen, with as few exceptions as any other States. They are among that great central belt of States which constitute the stronghold of conservatism and Nationality. They are not looked upon as "sectional" in their character, even by the South. They, moreover, are, to a high degree, represent-



ative States. Where will our manufacturing, mining, and trading interests find a better representative than Pennsylvania? Or what State is more identified in all its fortunes with the great agricultural interests than is Illinois?

The States themselves, then, being open to no valid objection, we come to the question of individual candidates. Pennsylvania has not yet determined her choice from among her own great men, but as for Illinois it is the firm and fixed belief of our citizens that for one or the other of the offices in question, no man will be so sure to consolidate the party vote of this State, or will carry the great Mississippi Valley with a more irresistible rush of popular enthusiasm, than our distinguished fellow citizen,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

We, in Illinois, know him well, in the best sense of the word, a true democrat, a man of the people, whose strongest friends and supporters are the hard-handed and strong-limbed laboring men, who hail him as a brother and who look upon him as one of their real representative men. A true friend of freedom, having already done important service for the cause, and proved his abundant ability for still greater service; yet a staunch conservative, whose enlarged and liberal mind descends to no narrow view, but sees both sides of every great question, and of whom we need not fear that fanaticism on the one side, or servility on the other, will lead him to the betrayal of any trust. We appeal to our brethren of the Republican press for the correctness of our assertions."





It is sixty-four years since that editorial was written. Father was then twenty-four years of age. He is now (1923) eighty-eight. Young as he was he saw and knew his man. He sensed greatness. That was like father.

--- W. O. Stoddard, Jr.

After that I attended the "railsplitter" convention at Springfield and I went into the political canvas head over heels, heels over head, with all the more enthusiasm because I had nearly all the stumping of Champaign county on my own hands.

It may seem odd, but I had not any idea whatever of obtaining any other advantage from my political labors, whether for the party or for any individual, than such as might appertain to my success as an editor. I was proud of the position of the Gazette and of the recognition I continually received on that account and that was all. As for financial advancement, I saw small chance of that. One incident may be mentioned. During the previous year and that, Dr. Scroggs and I had often discussed the idea of setting up an Agricultural College as an ornament and advantage to our city of Champaign. Precisely what such an affair might be, neither he nor I had any clear perception, but to him it meant a college in which the undergraduates might not be compelled to worry themselves with too much trashy science, philology and other timewasters. The notion at last took form and it bought up a tract of land between the two Urbanas on credit, easy terms. The land was at once cut up into town lots and I obtained several of them but afterwards gave them up when I went into distant enterprises. I am



told, however, that there is now a flourishing educational institution on that spot and if there is, it owes its origin to a sharp talk between Dr. Scroggs and myself in the Gazette printing office, long ago. He and I were only at odds upon the "agricultural" idea and the college is now agricultural, so that my side of the debate won, after all.

Not to dwell upon the minor incidents of the political campaign, it was over at last and Lincoln was duly elected, to my great delight. At an early date after the election, he held a sort of congratulation levee at the State House in Springfield. Hearing that he was to do so, I took a day off and went over to shake hands with him, for I believed that I had a vested right to tell him how I felt about it. I went to the State House and took my place in a long line of people who were there to get a look at the coming president. Some of them, indeed, were from far away and had come to tell him how much they had done to secure his election and how ready they would be to serve him further in one or another of the fat offices at Washington. One of these disinterested patriots was next in line ahead of me and his account of himself may have added point to Mr. Lincoln's question, when he heartily shook hands with me and looked down two feet or more into my face.

"Well, young man," he said, "now! -What can I do for you?"

"Nothing at all, Mr. Lincoln," I responded, "but I'm mighty glad you are elected."

"How would you like to come to Washington?" he asked. "Would n't you



like to take a clerkship, or something?"

I was just telling him that I was pretty well fixed now and had never thought of going to Washington when a red hot thought came flashing into my mind and I added:

"Mr. Lincoln, the only thing that would tempt me to go to Washington is a place on your personal staff!"

"Stoddard," said he, "do you go right back to Champaign and write me a letter to that effect. Then wait till you hear from me."

That was just what I did, but I did not say a word about it to any living soul, unless it may have been Kate. That was early in November and before the end of the month I had about considered myself forgotten. I did not yet know Lincoln. About the first of December, I received a letter of some length from him, ordering me to close up my affairs, go on to Washington and wait there until his arrival. It is not now needful to quote from the letter or to try to tell just how I felt about it. It was a hard blow to Scrogges and he got his back up to such an extent that he made pecuniary trouble for me. I made out to sell my effects, however, and had money enough to go east with and to send Kate to some friends. John remained for a while in Champaign and then returned to Syracuse, obtaining a clerkship in the Bank of Syracuse, with our old friends the Whites. I had all the passes needed to lessen my expenses and selected those which took me by the way of Philadelphia, so that I was not on the Northern Indiana R. R. at the time of an awful accident which murdered scores



of people. A telegram of mine, however, had made our Syracuse family believe that I must have been on that very train and when I reached our house I found all in great excitement. We were gathered in the front parlor, all but Harry, and there were friends with us and I was sitting on a sofa, giving an account of myself. In came Harry and our old dog Dash. They were just from the telegraph office, with a despatch stating that my corpse had not yet been reached but that as soon as it could be found---- Harry stood in front of father, talking rapidly and showing the telegram, but Dash came and sat down in front of me and raised his shaggy head and sent out the longest, most doleful howl you ever heard. That was because he knew I had been killed, you know, but then he jumped all over me, barking, before he sprang off after a stick and brought it for a friendly game of fetch and carry.

I had a good but short visit in Syracuse and went to New York. There I saw the Brights and my old Rochester chum, Tite Eldredge, now a somewhat prosperous New York lawyer, but my errand was to the capital and to any orders I might there receive from Mr. Lincoln.

What I really did was to take a ticket for Secessionville by a very miserable route. Instead of going straight through, as the trains do now, there were tedious changes at Philadelphia and Baltimore. On reaching the capital, I put up at a hotel, the United States, and went for a look at the public buildings, one after another. These were all I had expected, but the city itself was little more than a great, straggling village, with





only a moderate allowance of good looking residences. As might be imagined, it did not at that hour contain many fellows who knew less about some things than I did. It was in the first week of February, and the last days of the Buchanan administration were going out in a tremendous excitement for the whole country. This fever had its hottest corner in Washington and no words can paint the exact state of affairs. The Southerners appeared to be having things almost to suit themselves and there was actual personal danger in being as outspoken a Unionist as I was. I changed from the hotel to a quiet boarding house but I had work before me. I deemed it my duty to attend all the important debates of the dying Congress, in Senate and House, and some of the hotter sessions lasted all night. I sat them through and had an opportunity for hearing many of the foremost men of the day on both sides. I will tell of only one. It was an afternoon session and the galleries were so crowded that my best hold was in or under an empty statue niche of the Senate Gallery. Vice President Breckinridge was in the chair. There were speeches from Stephen A. Douglas, Mason of Virginia, and others, and then Senator Joe Lane of Oregon, the defeated candidate for The Vice Presidency, made a singularly weak-backed pro slavery, secessionist tirade. Not far from him sat Andrew Johnson of Tennessee and he had utterly lost his not very good temper. At the close of Lane's "effort", Andy was on his feet, with something like a warwhoop.

It was time for somebody to make a break and he made it, for of all the torrents of vituperation, denunciation and genuine redhot eloquence that I had heard, up to that date, his speech took the prize. He paid his res-



pects to some of the other orators of the day but the worst of his lashes fell upon Joe Lane until that gentleman could bear no more and retreated into one of the cloak rooms. It was just as Andy wound up and before he could sit down that a kind of yell sprang out of the niche in which I was craning forward to hear:

"Three cheers for Andy Johnson!"

The startled audience had begun to give them and Breckenridge was on his feet, hammering with his gavel, while senator Mason was demanding that the Galleries should be cleared. I think Breckenridge had so ordered or was threatening to do so, when a portly, elegantly dressed woman, in the lower tier of gallery seats at his left, leaned away out, waving a white handkerchief and shouting, in a wonderfully clear and powerful voice:

"Three cheers for the Union!"

It was thunder and lightning together and the dense throng in the galleries rose to its feet with a swelling roar. It was a moment of intense excitement. The cheers were given, three times three, and the Vice President was shouting to the sergeant at arms to make arrests. The Senate clock was at the gallery rail, opposite the "Chair" and up at the side of it arose a tall, lantern jawed fellow with a voice like a trombone to respond, tumultuously, to the order: "Arrest Hell!" It was a wicked thing for him to say and it was not by any means the only angrily patriotic remark that was hurled back into that Senate chamber as the audience poured out. No arrests were made for no sergeant at arms could have arrested quite so many half on fire men and women. It might have been bad for him.



There was one beautiful thing, to my mind, about those night sessions. Whenever either house was in session, a large American flag was hoisted over that wing of the Capitol. In the daytime it was a good thing to see but at night a strong glare of light was thrown across the flag, to make it visible, and the effect was all that could be asked for at a time when so much treason was being plotted in that very building. Not all of the Congressional debates were of an interesting character and I had time for other affairs. Evenings could be spent with profit among the excited crowds in the hotel corridors. Here, indeed, the current of talk was not all one way, for people from the north were coming in increasing numbers and by no means all of them were made of putty. It came to pass that any secessionist who repeated the trite saying that "The d--d Abolitionist has been elected but he never will be President!" was apt to be asked "Why?---- What makes you think so? You-----!"

Another of my enterprises was an effort to get well acquainted with the other side of the Potomac. I made frequent invasions of Virginia, sometimes going down to Alexandria by boat but more frequently going across the Long Bridge and making my tours on foot. I had one family of friends, the Godwins, living at a little distance out of Alexandria. They were secessionists but I liked them none the less. On the whole, I was beginning to obtain a clearer idea of the entire South and its people and the near future and was continually surprised to find how few on either side of the controversy agreed with me. At this date it is not easy to



believe how many patriotic Americans, including even such men as Horace Greeley, were ready to say of the seceding states, "Let 'em go!" Another group of prophets, headed by William H. Seward, steadily asserted that "If a war should come, it wont last thirty days."

My own mind was made up to a long and hard pull of it and I waited for Lincoln's coming with increasing anxiety. So, I suppose, did the entire list of Democratic officeholders and the swelling mob of Republican office seekers. As to these, they were a wonderfully select lot of men, and they had selected quite as many offices as the United States could give them.

Mr. Lincoln arrived but he was not yet President and even then there were doubts in the minds of the timid. For my own part, I was well aware that there was danger, all around, but I seemed to have no fear of the result. Great preparations were made for the Inauguration. The Address was to be delivered and the oath taken on a temporary platform at the East front of the Capitol and I went and surveyed the scene beforehand. I remember how I had managed to hear Daniel Webster and I tried those tactics again. It was at a pretty early hour of the fourth of March that I gave up the procession, the music, the military and the dense pack of people upon Pennsylvania Avenue. I went and wormed in through the as yet not very suspicious crowd before the East Front until I secured standing room just beyond the line at which the soldiers of the honorary guard were to stand at rest. There I waited and I was well paid for it, for I could look right into Lincoln's face while he was speaking and could hear every word he said. I can recall a mild feeling of pity





for the many great men of all sorts, diplomatic, military, political, whose luckless dignities had wedged them in among the pillars and so forth in the rear of all the show. Among them were Nicolay and Hay, neither of whom I had yet seen. I did not even try to see the President for several days, but I did go to admire the dense pack of office seekers which had taken possession of the White House. The city fairly swarmed with them and it was a hot time for any Senator or Congressman who was supposed to have influence with the new president. It was pretty well understood that nearly all the old officials were to go. All, in fact, whose services could be dispensed with. Not at all to my astonishment, among the rest came my old friend Dr. Scroggs, expecting to get something handsome for having printed the first editorial nominating Lincoln. I did not at all discourage him, but was not a little amused to hear him weighing the respective desirability of a Treasury Comptrollership, Auditorship, and the post of Examiner in the Patent Office. He did not care to take a consul's place for that would compel him to go abroad. I was not quite sure that he had an idea that he could hold office in Washington, or at least draw a salary, without entirely giving up his Champaign County practice and his fever and ague patients.

It was two or three days later that I worked my way into the White House and struggled as far as the bottom of the main stairway. The stairs were a sweltering jam but an usher, at the top was managing to receive cards in some inscrutable manner. He obtained mine and it went in and in a few



minutes Nicolay came to the banisters to shout my name while three or four eager patriots tugged at his coat tails. I "hollered back."

"Do you wish to see the President?" he asked.

"No! I don't!" I shouted. "Tell him I'm here, 'cording to orders. That's all. He'll know what to do. I wont bother him."

I did not understand what a score of fellows found to laugh at in my reply to the great Mr. Nicolay and it even seemed to please him. I hope it pleased Mr. Lincoln and it was only a few days before I received notice of my coming appointment as Secretary to sign Land Patents. After that and even before actually receiving my commission, I was a marked man and worthy of much respect. I came and went from the White House, but the stairway was still corked. I did get up, once or twice and got acquainted with Nicolay and Hay but did not try to speak with the President. I went to the Interior Department building for a look at my office and found it a pleasant one. At the same time I was aware that about four hundred of the old Secession clerks who were so soon to leave were armed and organized for some possible pernicious undertaking in the near future. There were other treasonable organizations in the city and moreover on the other side of the river in Virginia, besides such as were known to exist in Baltimore. Washington itself was practically without a garrison. One battery of light artillery was posted near the Interior Department, one company of cavalry was camped near the Navy Yard and at the Yard were also a number of marines. There would have really been no army so to



speak, if it had not been for five hundred office seekers who obtained muskets and cartridges from the War Department and camped in the East Room and corridors of the White House, to protect the government all night and to be ready to press their claims in the morning. The worst of that corps was, however, that whether a man was appointed or disappointed he became sick of war and ran away.

Hotter and hotter grew the excitement as the days went by, but for all the current events, the Peace Congress, the setting up of the Montgomery Rebel Government, the attitudes of foreign powers and a host of other matters, reference must be had to the several, I think there are several, historical accounts which have been printed. Nothing in any of those volumes, however, can include the black clouds overhead, the close, stifling atmosphere, the constant listening for thunder and the suspicious feeling concerning all men, as to what they might do next, which made life in Washington what it was in the days when the Civil War was crawling on.



## Chapter Twenty-ninth.

## War.

If there was one thing more than another concerning which the people of the United States knew nothing of any consequence in the year 1861, it was war. They had read about it and that was all, except for a few regular army men and a few more who could boast of having served in the war with Mexico. In the city of Washington, as in other cities, there were militia organizations, but none of these were worth much to the country just then. The "crack" corps was a company of select and eminent young gentlemen who regarded themselves as the pink of chivalry. Almost all of them were either from slaveholding states or were natives of the District of Columbia. As the prospect of hostilities grew darker, the secessionist captain of the Rifles resigned and went to offer his services to the Sunny South and more than half of his comrades in the militia business followed his example. This had a remarkable consequence for me. Hardly was it known that I was appointed Secretary, before a fine young fellow came and told me that he was trying to get recruits for his company, but that all the men he had tried were averse to taking commissions as private soldiers. The current notion appeared to be that what the country needed was an army of finely uniformed and highly paid officers. If, he told me, the president's secretary would set a patriotic example, he felt sure that the high pride of certain heroes would yield and they would enlist in the Rifles. Of course I accepted the proposition and





went in, but I did so with only a dim idea of the toughness of the job I had undertaken. The Rifles had been organized as an artillery company, as the red trimmings of its uniform witnessed and the fact that it owned a French bugler instead of a drum to wake it up in the morning. Its new commander was also an artilleryman, Captain John R. Smead, formerly of West Point, and with the fulness of regular army drill for recruits in his soldierly mind. A soldier he was, every inch of him, and he had a crack company under him, now that its gaps were filled up. Nominally of the District, the Rifles now contained picked men from Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, New York, Connecticut, Ohio, Maryland and elsewhere. The armory was about two squares west of the general Post Office and the weapons were what was called the Harper's Ferry pattern of rifle, the heaviest I ever saw and weighted also with a sabre bayonet of which it was proudly asserted that it was of the exact pattern and size of the old Roman Gladius with which so many men were killed. It was a good thing to split wood with or to break hard tack but it was not very murderous for any but the short ranges to which the said Romans were accustomed. The common sense of later military genius lightens the load of a soldier's iron and saves him needless fatigue.

Other companies of District militia were forming. Three of them were grouped as the Third Battalion, D. C. Rifles, and our commander, while retaining his position with us, became Major of the battalion of which ours was Company A. Captain Smead did not have much confidence in his other companies and the work fell mainly upon us. One of them was a company of all



sorts and the other was entirely German "Columbians." We were put upon duty at once but I was allowed to go the Land Office and sign some thousands of delayed land patents. Piles of them were military warrants issued to soldiers of the War of 1812, and for the first time I became aware that the American armies in that skirmish with Great Britian must have numbered over a hundred and fifty thousand men. The historians are all at sea on that point and it is no wonder that poor England was compelled to take a return ticket and get out of the United States. It is barely possible that some of that land went to the Home Guard. Things were getting thicker and the day came when we were informed that we were to be sworn into the service of the United States although no call for troops had yet been sent out by the general government. It put into my head a very natural question of personal duty and I decided that I must see Mr. Lincoln about it and that was by no means an easy thing to do, in those crowded days. I thought I could do it, for one of my official privileges as private secretary had come to me. The post of Patent Secretary had not before that time been held to include the higher rank but my case was somehow understood to be an exception. Some days previously, on a visit to the White House, I had met out in front of it old Edward Moran the antediluvian doorkeeper, and he halted me with:

"Mr. Secretary! I've something for ye." He was holding out something for me to take and he added: "I've been getting some new latchkeys for the young gentlemen. I don't know what's become of the keys we had. May be they've gone south and mean to come back, some day, and open the



door."

Two of the keys were bright and new, but one was old and tarnished.

"There's one for Mr. Nicolay and one for Mr. Hay and one for yourself. That's the owdone, that belonged to the lock when it was put on."

"That's the key I want, Edward," I said. "Give Nicolay and Hay the new ones." - and I had the traditional antique in my hands.

"It's like meself," said old Edward. "It can open the door as well as ever it could."

When, long afterwards, I left my private secretary duties behind me, I kept that key and whenever I visited Washington I enjoyed the joke, if it was one, of visiting the White House and astonishing the doorkeepers by walking right in without any help from them. The lock remained until some time in the second term of President Grant. I still have the key which has opened the White House door for so many presidents and their officers.

Armed with my bit of brass and almost wishing I had more in my face, I went upon my important errand, early in the morning of the 12th. of April. I went up stairs and looked into the official rooms but they were as empty as I had expected to find them. A bit of topography will help just here. Along the full length of the second story of the house, runs a broad hall, with rooms of various sizes and uses on either side of it. Beginning at the eastern end, on the right is a somewhat narrow room which was soon to become my own. On the left is the Private Secretary's room, or there was, of the same size. Next to that was a large room, "The President's Room" from the building of the house until a later day than mine. Opposite



to that is a large chamber, then used by Nicolay and Hay as a sleeping room. Then comes the grand stairway and beyond are other rooms. Just beyond the stairway, the hall is cut off by folding doors and another pair like them cuts off the part of the hall which is over the western wing of the house. On the left, northerly, is the library, and I had ventured in that far when the further folding doors slowly opened. It had been a sunny morning, outside, if it were not that every soul in the land was waiting for news from the rebel siege of fort Sumter. Not a shot had yet been fired, except at the steamer Star of The West, but a sort of pall hung over Washington and it seemed to me as if there was the gloomiest kind of shadow in the White House.

Slowly opened the doors and very slowly came forward Mr. Lincoln, leaving them open behind him. All beyond was the "family" part of the house. He was bent until he almost appeared to stoop and he was looking straight before him, as if gazing at something in the distance or like a man who is listening intently. Just in front of the library door, I stepped before him and dared to say:

"Good Morning, Mr. Lincoln!"

He stood stock still, for a moment, looking down into my face, but the expression of his own did not change. He may have been listening for the sound of guns in Charleston harbor. I was astonished, almost alarmed, for there were deep, dark circles under his eyes and they were vacant.

"Why, Mr. Lincoln!" I exclaimed. "You don't seem to know me!"

"O, yes, I do," he wearily responded. "You are Stoddard. What is it?"





"I wish to ask a favor," I said.

His lips contracted, for that was about what everybody he met was saying to him, just then, and he asked, in an almost petulant manner:

"Well! What is it?"

"It's just this, Mr. Lincoln," I said. "I believe there is going to be fighting, pretty soon, right here, and I don't feel like sitting at a desk in the Patent Office, or here either, while any fight is going on. I've been serving with a company, already, and if it's ordered on duty I want to go with it."

"WELL, well!" he interrupted, with a very different expression of face "Why don't you go?"

"Why, Mr. Lincoln," I said, "only a few days ago, I took a pretty big oath to obey your orders, and now I'm likely to be asked to take another to obey somebody else. I don't see how I can manage them both without your permission. I may be ordered to service outside of the District of Columbia."

He half smiled as he cut me short, right there.

"Go ahead!" he exclaimed. "Swear in! Go wherever you are ordered to go."

"That's all I want, Mr. Lincoln," I said and I was turning away when he called me back to add with some emphasis:

"Young man, go just where you're ordered! Do your duty." -something else that I have forgotten ended with: "You won't lose anything by this!"

Off I went and he went on into his office, having granted really the first favor I ever asked of him.



As nearly as I can count it, that was just four hours after the firing of the first "Sumter gun," and he may have heard the report of it as he was coming out to meet me, but it was many hours before any regular news of it reached Washington. Then came Sunday but the President's Proclamation which went out to the country that night was dated as on Monday the fifteenth. While the people of the North were reading it in the morning papers, the National Rifles, with myself among them, were being sworn in, in front of the War Office, the first company of volunteers sworn in at the beginning of the Civil War. None of the other boys had to go and ask the permission of the president.

It was almost unlucky for us that we were so trusted a company, for it brought upon us an extra allowance of hard duty, over and above the severe drill called for by the martinet notions of our West Point captain. I was particularly overburdened, for I had patents of importance to sign both at my own office and at the White House. Here I was all the while getting better acquainted with Nicolay and Hay and liked them both. As to the nature of our duties, they were largely as guards at important points for there were continual rumors of secessionist conspiracies to seize the city. How true all of them were, I do not know, but remember one evening when we were drilling on Ninth street and at the same hour an unarmed battalion of secessionists was drilling upon Seventh street and no orders were given to hinder them. They were three times our number. One of the points to be guarded was the Long Bridge over the Potomac. In the middle of the channel was a draw, wide enough for the passage of



large vessels. This draw was left closed all day, for the passage of teams and men, but was regularly opened at sunset and a guard of ours, or some other company, was set at the edge of it. At the same hour, shortly, a similar guard of the Virginia Militia was set at the southern side of the draw and I obtained a clearer idea of how near the war might be when I stood guard on the Union side, rifle on shoulder, with a Secessionist rifleman standing in like manner within short range across that narrow barrier of water. In the daytime, the Virginians would fall back to the mudhole village known then as Jackson City, in the swamp on the southern shore. There was a tavern there and one fine day a large squad of our boys disobeyed the orders which commanded them not to cross the bridge in uniform or with arms. They went over pell mell, captured the Virginians on duty and compelled them all to march to the tavern and swallow unlimited mint juleps. Next day, the Alexandria papers were boiling over at this invasion and violation of the sacred soil of the old Dominion, but their wrath broke down when their own militia responded by defying the Rifles to come and try it on again, - daily. Major Smead's angry reprimands prevented that and the Virginia boys did not get any more julep. The Major also sat down on me severely when I acted as the spokesman of a chosen squad who had agreed to go with me and take down the secession flag which was then waving over Arlington House. He explained that the State of Virginia might declare it an act of war and that it would be a fool's errand, useless, in any event. He was entirely correct, but what did I and the other volunteers know about war?



The hardest guard duty I ever had on the bridge was one night when a bitterly cold rainstorm came blowing fiercely up the Potomac, for we had no shelter. Sleep was impossible and in the intervals of guard duty I tried to console myself with fishing. I caught some bullheads, a garpike and a very miserably long, thin eel that tangled up my line.

Another uncomfortable night was when I could not leave my post at the Treasury building front and had to do my sleeping upon one of those magnificently wide stone slabs in front of the portico. It was a hard bed. Perhaps as hard was the bed I had one night in the middle of the main street of Georgetown. The pavement was of cobblestones of about a peck measure each and it was impossible to lie down with those for bedfellows for any length of time, tired as I was. Another bad feature of the case for me was a strong idea in my mind that the President's secretary must set a good example. Therefore, whenever Major Smead or General Stone came into the armory and called for volunteers from among our overworn fellows for any special duty, it was my place to be on my feet and call out "Here!" before any other fellow. It speedily obtained for me a laughing soubriquet, for the sergeant on deck would immediately respond, "Stoddard! Number one!" Well, it was no disgrace to be known as Stoddard Number One. Speaking of General Stone, he ought never to be forgotten, for the inestimable services he rendered in saving the national capital in that hour of doubt and danger. Not long after the war began in earnest, he was put under a cloud, severely, unjustly criticized for the errors he did not make at the defeat of Ball's Bluff, and his military career was





ruined by jealousies and some politicians. That was after I had returned to the White House and one day, in the middle of his troubles, I met him on Fifteenth street, by the Treasury. He was looking downcast and his head was bent. I stepped in front of him and saluted and said:

"General Stone, I want to say something to you. You don't remember me- "

"O, yes, I do," he interrupted me, heavily, "I remember you very well. You are Stoddard Number One. What is it?"

"Well, General," I responded, "our boys of your old command are white mad about this matter and I want to say, for myself and them, that you have our utmost and undiminished confidence and esteem- "

"Thank you, my dear fellow! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!" - was all he could say but his lip was trembling and he turned away with his hat lifted and walking as straight as an arrow. I'm glad I did it. General Stone afterwards attained the rank of Pasha for services to the Khedive of Egypt, but New Yorkers will remember him better as the engineer who set up the Bartholdi statue of Liberty.

Dangers were thickening around the city of Washington. The northern States were preparing to send on their seventy five thousand militiamen but none of them had as yet arrived and the Montgomery Rebel Government was as busy as a bee in a sugar barrel. We Rifles were all but worn out with extra duty and there came a night when two thirds of us were lying on the floor in the armory, about used up. I was not yet asleep and lifted my head at the sound of conversation in the doorway. There stood General Stone and Major Smead, talking hurriedly with one of our



lieutenants. In a moment more the voice of the latter rang out:

"Twenty picked men wanted, for special and dangerous duty!"

I was on my feet like a flash and the next I heard was:

"Stoddard Number One! Taken!"

The rest followed rapidly, although I believe that some were rejected as being manifestly unfit to go. We were ordered to take forty rounds of cartridges each and not a word was said of our destination but we all knew that something extraordinary was to the fore.

In those days, what was known as "the Island," between the city and the Potomac, was cut off by a narrow canal. It contained the Smithsonian Institute and a deal of fever and ague. In the middle, opposite the Institute was a draw footbridge, for communication of science and the city. Our squad went at a quick pace down across Pennsylvania Avenue and met with no warlike opposition except from a snoop who demanded of Lieutenant Webb where in Heaven we were going at that time of night. Then he lay down and swore gently to himself, for Webb was a good hitter. In a few minutes more we were filing across the footbridge, as if we were to storm the Institute. On we hurried through the grounds and their scientific shrubbery and we were soon within a hundred yards of the river bank, where was a low bluff, beyond which was known to be the ferryboat pier and wharf.

"Halt! - Load! - Silence! - Fix bayonets! - Forward, double quick! - Charge!" Over the bluff we went, at a run, and there, just reaching the pier end, was the well known passenger steamer St. Nicholas, from Alexandria.

"Forward! Board her! Silence!"



Hardly was a hawser around a snubbing post before we were over the rail and pouring into the saloon of the steamer. On either side of it were long ranges of staterooms and not a door of them was open.

"Men! Ready there! If any man puts his head out of a stateroom, put a bullet through it!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed an agitated voice near me.

It was the captain of the boat, explaining to Major Smead, or somebody, that the staterooms were full of armed secessionists and he had feared that if they captured his boat it would be condemned as contraband of war. Not a head made its appearance and when, an hour or so later, all the passengers were permitted to land, not any offence could be charged against one of them and no arrests were made. Virginia had not yet seceded and no acknowledged state of war existed in that vicinity. Nevertheless, we were a proud lot of pirates, for we had captured the first steamer ever captured in any of the waters of the United States. It was the first naval victory ever won at sea by riflemen and it was the first also of the War.

Next day, after a long sleep, I wrote a graphic account of the affair to my brother Henry, and, much to my surprise, the whole column long letter was printed in the Syracuse daily papers and copied elsewhere. It was a new kind of fame for me and it sounded loudly until some other affairs sounded a thousand times more loudly. Then it was forgotten, but if the Washington part of that conspiracy had not been in this manner disconcerted there is no telling what the results might have been.



The skies were growing darker. State after state was "going out" and the Montgomery government was raising an army. Sumter had fallen. The whole North appeared to be in a comatose condition so far as real war was concerned, although some of the states, New York, the New England states and some others were gathering their quotas. Maryland seemed to be in the hands of the rebellion and Baltimore was as secessionist as Richmond. The first reinforcements to arrive were the Pennsylvania Fifth, Volunteers, a disorganized mob without discipline or arms and not fit to stand guard. News came that the New York Seventh was on its way and there were serious doubts of its ability to cut its way through the barrier of foes which now isolated Washington. It was not to pass through Baltimore but around by way of Annapolis and the Junction, nine miles from the capital, as I remember. There it would be in danger of attack and there was a rebel plan to seize the railroad and the Junction and stop the Seventh. Our battalion was ordered to go out and hold the post until its arrival. Five hundred secessionists were said to be marching out of Baltimore at the hour when we started and I do not know whether they did so or not. The second or "Dutch," company, was sent along the railway as scouts and we soon went past them for they were in no hurry. Our third company was not fit for this duty just then. We carried a carload of rations for the coming New Yorkers and Washington people said goodbye to us as if we were a forlorn hope, going to destruction. The train did not run a race but it landed us at the Junction and we garrisoned the station house. It was a poor fort but it might do and we were about seventy strong. We





were waiting anxiously for events when suddenly a long line of gray uniforms made its appearance to the eastward and some of the boys shouted:

"There come the rebs! Now for it! There are the Baltimore men!"

"Nonsense!" roared Major Smead. "Don't you see the flag?"

My impression is that we all admired the elegant silken banner of the Seventh and we at once began to bring out the provisions of which the reinforcements were really in great need. How they did eat!

Our return to Washington was a triumph, the city was much safer and the next day the President reviewed the Seventh.

About that time I had a surprise in the altogether unexpected arrival of my brother Henry. I was only half glad that he had come for I did not wish him to be a soldier. Our ranks were full and he could not enlist in the Rifles. It was a puzzle, for I could not let him go off by himself. The problem was solved by getting him a uniform and permitting him to serve with us as an unenlisted and unpaid supernumerary. We did the same thing for one of the "Fighting McCooks" a brother in law of our Lieutenant Davis. Henry soon became a prime favorite, for his social qualities were of a high order and he was such a handsome fellow!

Washington was as secessionist as ever and it did seem as if all the young women at all the pianos were drumming southern music. You could hardly pass a house without hearing the Bonnie Blue Flag or My Maryland or something, but the prime favorite was Dixie. It has a wierd, uncanny ring in it, for me, to this day. It died out of Washington suddenly. About



the next full regiment to get through Baltimore, after the attack there upon the Massachusetts Sixth, was the New York Twelfth and it was a very full regiment indeed. I heard that it was twelve hundred strong. I was on duty on Pennsylvania Avenue when the magnificent corps came in. It was formed at the depot and then it came sweeping down the avenue, full company front, flags flying, bayonets gleaming and my heart gave a great thump for it meant safety to us overworn fellows who had held the city. It had a large, splendid brass band and at that moment it struck up and the gallant boys swung forward to the tune of "Dixie!" O! How much marching music I at once discovered in that much abused lilt. On went the regiment and the band played nothing else until in front of the White House, where Lincoln waited to review them, they struck up Hail Columbia.

The Girls declared, in deep disgust, that the blessed Yankees had stolen their music and they did not play Dixie any more.

The political course to be taken by the State of Virginia was in no manner of doubt but the people were not to vote upon the Ordinance of Secession until the 23rd. of May. Until that date, therefore, The Virginia militia might gather unhindered for no cause of war legally existed. On the Sunday before the eventful day, I took a furlough and went for a look at the White House. It wore a deserted look. My latchkey let me in and I went up stairs. I went from room to room and all were empty for Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were at church and I don't know where the boys were. In my room were many patents awaiting my signature but I left them on my table and walked over to Nicolay's room to be greeted by a shout



from a distinguished, but now forgotten, Colonel Ellsworth of the Zouaves. He was a great favorite of the President and as much at home there as I was. We were talking war and the future when I picked up a carbine which stood in a corner and began to put Ellsworth through the manual of arms. As I did so, my orders brought him close to the south window. His movements had the precision of a machine and when the order came to "take aim," the carbine went forward recklessly. It went through a pane of glass and I ordered him to shoulder arms. When the others came in, we had a story to tell them of an assassin among the bushes out yonder who had doubtless mistaken Ellsworth or me for the President and had attempted assassination. Perhaps the yarn would have lasted longer if Ellsworth could have kept his face straight but as it was the fun ended and he and I went to our quarters to prepare for the invasion of Virginia.

The President wisely took the vote of Virginia for granted, and he was as ready for immediate action as if he had seen the ballots counted. Already a number of militia regiments were encamped in the vicinity of Washington and others were on their way. All day on the fatal 23rd. there were preparations going on and in the afternoon our company was posted on the bank of the Potomac, near the head of the Long Bridge. Our first duty was the gathering of boats, in case any crossing might be done by water. They were large fishing boats some of them, and when Major Smead came to inspect us he was accompanied by a number of much uniformed officers. He rode a light colored nag and the boys laughed when I remarked to them:

"Boys! The war's come. Death on the pale horse."



I believe Smead was in the habit of finding out what I was up to for he drew rein and inquired the meaning of the fun.

"Nothing at all, sir," I said, as I touched my hat. "I was only saying how glad I am that these are seine boats. I'd hardly like to risk any of the men in a crazy boat."

Small as the wit was, they all laughed and I heard him remark:

"That fellow's worth his weight in gold. He keeps up the spirits of the men, and some of them need it."

He was all wrong if he meant our fellows, for they were doing finely. I think it was nearly nine o'clock when we were ordered to fall in and form column of twos. We had been given the post of honor, the right of the line, and we were the first Union soldiers to invade the Sunny South, on the night when the war nominally began. We went across in a prime moonlight and were then informed that we were to be thrown forward on scouting duty, because so many of us were acquainted with the country. I said, for one, that I knew every inch of the Alexandria road and it got me an extra errand, that night. On we went until we reached the foot of the hill upon which Fort Albany was afterwards erected. Here we halted to load and rest and as we did so, a strong party of horsemen, supposed to be rebel cavalry appeared on the hill. They surveyed us for a minute and then galloped away without any battle. Then the word was "forward" for a distance and we were halted again. Our commanders had some idea of the neighborhood of hostilities and were disposed to move with caution. At that time there was a wide reach of swamp along the sides of the Alexandria turnpike. It





was bushes and reeds, then a couple of hundred yards of water and then more dense bushes. It was desirable to know if there were enemies in the really strong position offered by the other end of that long causeway. A column attempting it recklessly might be mowed down by marksmen in the bushes. We were halted in a double line and Major Smead explained the matter. He told us that scouts trying the position might be marching to certain death and that it was too dangerous duty for him to order men upon. It was as a forlorn hope and he must have volunteers. Every man willing to volunteer was to step one pace to the front at the word of command and he would pick from the volunteers. The men were standing at right shoulder shift and at the word "Forward!" every last soul of them stepped out as if on parade. No cheering was allowed but there was a puzzle until Second Lieutenant Matthews said to the Major that he would go if he might pick his own men, four of them. His offer was taken and I must say I felt a thrill of pride when his first name was called out:

"Stoddard Number One!" But I was not so well pleased when his next call was for Stoddard number Two. Two more were taken and forward we went. Then it quickly came to pass that the brave lieutenant was a greenhorn. He did not know the ground. He spread his men, right and left, and they were quickly lost in the bushes and he was stranded with them. I had but one stupid idea and that was the causeway. Probably it was a good thing for me that I was a solitary man and not a squad or a company. On I went, walking lazily, until I reached the opposite end of the viaduct. On either side of me, ten yards ahead, were thick bushes and I saw the military



reasons for considering that a pokerish place. Then I heard a considerable number of rattling clicks and I knew very well the sound made by a gun lock in cocking. I was within short range of Virginia rifle men, supposed to be good shots but I was well aware that they would not wish to have their presence discovered, not just for the fun of killing one man. So I stood still and turned to look back as if listening. I wish I knew to whom I am indebted for a long, shrill whistle that came at that moment from our end of the causeway, for I was able to nod my head and take it for a recall signal. I strolled listlessly away, whistling as I went, and I was greatly pleased with one personal discovery. I had always had an idea that I might be nervous under fire or in a tight place in actual war. Now, on the contrary, I knew that I had not felt the quiver of a nerve and I had at once a better opinion of myself. I went back and made my report and was thanked at the head of the column for heroic service but I never saw that adventure in the Associated Press despatches. At all events, it was now necessary to halt for reinforcements and for somebody to turn that position. How it was done I don't know, but believe the riflemen in the bushes considered themselves discovered and skedaddled. We were halted to rest at the roadside and before long there came swinging by the splendid column of the Twelfth New York. Following them were two New Jersey regiments and one from Connecticut and our scouting duty was over for the night. We marched back and when we drew near the end of the bridge, there were our old friends of the New York Seventh, hard at work throwing up earthworks. Some of them showed us their blistered hands and I advised gloves



It was in that night that my friend Colonel Ellsworth, was killed, murdered, at Alexandria. All the country felt badly about it but his most sincere mourners, perhaps, were in the President's household. It was only a few days later that I obtained leave go to go the White House to sign some patents and of course I went over into Nicolay's room to see him and Hay. The room was crowded with visitors, mostly distinguished, and I knew some of them. Among these was my old Syracuse friend, General Elias W. Leavenworth, formerly Secretary of State of New York. We were talking over old times and war times and we drifted toward the south window. I had but just spoken of Ellsworth when, as I turned, I saw a freshly put in pane of glass, still bearing the marks of the glazier's fingers. It was the pane that had replaced the one broken by the bright young soldier only a week ago and I said goodbye to Leavenworth and went out.

The next military duty of any importance performed by the Rifles was in camp at Tennally Town in Maryland. We were provided with tents and we were only too well supplied with everything else. Near that camp was a ferry and route supposed to be used by rebel spies and mail carriers. If that were not true, one of the sentries on guard at a path among the woods was killed, one night, and in those days a man was of more importance than afterwards. The next night it was my duty to patrol up and down that lonely and brush bordered place of danger. I did not mind sentry duty in the daytime but I believe I was an alert kind of watchman during my four hours of weary tramping up and down and I was not sorry to be relieved. My successor was an entirely newmade American from our German Company. He had



his instructions and to these was added by the boys the information that he might expect to be assassinated. Just how long it was I cannot tell, but the shades of night were still deep among those woods when our camp was startled by the crack of a rifle. The drum beat to arms and the squad on duty dashed bravely in among the trees after the supposable corpse of the massacred sentry. They found him still alive, standing behind a tree, reloading his rifle and ready to swear that he had killed some rebel or other who had come creeping in upon him through the bushes. Reinforcements having arrived, a search was made and there indeed was the body of the imprudent intruder,- a really fine, fat hog who had rooted his unwise way too near to the end of a brave volunteer's deadly rifle. Dead he was and he was also duly cut up for army rations.

We had grand times in camp, for the neighborhood was full of Union people who admired us. Just as we had our tents in flowery and evergreenery ornamentation we were compelled to move them to avoid sleeping on the damp, damp soil of Maryland. I remember one curious incident that gave me a new idea of soldier life and stern discipline. One of our fellows was a reckless young fellow from New York whose family was rich and let him have too much money. One morning we were astonished to learn that he had been found asleep on his post as sentry and was in danger of the death penalty. I had seen him marched to his post and an idea occurred to me. I at once made my way to battalion headquarters. There stood Major Smead, stern and silent, with several important military men. I walked up to him and saluted, saying that I had something to report.





He was evidently interrupted, annoyed, and his response was gruff:

"What is it, Sir?"

"If that man is courtmartialled, I wish to be called as a witness."

"What for, sir? What can you know about it?"

"He was drunk when he was put on post, sir. The sergeant had no right to put a drunken man on guard duty. Of course he went to sleep. That's all."

"Thank you sir!" exclaimed the major. "That ends it. Stoddard, you have relieved me of a terribly disagreeable matter!"

No more was heard of the death penalty but the culprit stood a long term of guard duty on the head of a big barrel.

Our camping was ended by a sudden call to arms at the beginning of a woefully hot day near the end of June. The rebels were reported preparing to cross the Potomac near Edward's Ferry and we were to be thrown forward to check them. Other troops were to follow fast but we were to make a forced march and seize the position. We made the march at the rate of over four miles an hour, losing a man a mile by sunstroke among our three companies. Among those who fell and were left till the wagons picked them up was my brother Henry. I believe he never fully recovered from that shock, although he seemed to do so. We reached a bluff near the ferry and threw ourselves behind the ridge with our rifles over it, but the rebels had fallen back and all their lives were saved. Next day I was ordered to take a carryall and convey Henry and three others back to Washington. The end of our three months term of service was near and I was willing to get back to the White House.



## Chapter Thirtieth.

## A New Life.

On my return to the city, I at once secured a good boarding house and went to the Interior department concerning patents. A large pile had accumulated and I began to sign the President's name at the rate of about nine hundred times per diem. During my three months of military service I had been a close student of war affairs and had really learned something. I kept up the study from that day forward and it led me to make the acquaintance of a large number of army and navy men of distinction. It has since been of value to me in my literary work. In social matters I had done more than at first I was aware of. For instance, it was natural for me at the beginning, to go to a Baptist church. It had not been an over loyal concern and I had not liked it. Moreover, it was now taken, with nearly all the others, for hospital purposes. I think it was at an earlier day than this that a member of Trinity Episcopal Church came to me with the story of the brave and splendid stand for the Union which had been made from the pulpit by that noble Christian man, Rev. Dr. Charles H. Hall of Trinity church, Episcopal. All his Secession parishioners had left him in a body and all their pews were to be let on a day named. I was there to bid, with a determination to get the pew of Jeff Davis if possible. The said Davis was then engineering the Confederacy and he afterwards did much for it in both ways. I was just one minute too late for his pew but obtained a good one, well forward in the left middle aisle. Soon I became a personal friend of the Doctor and am so to this day, for I did



not leave him, even when long afterwards, I gave up my pew to oblige somebody with a larger family, I forget who it was. Before long came the battle of Bull Run and it has not at any time been half described as to its Washington effects. That week in July was a strange experience but I was not among the disheartened fellows for I had an idea that it was what we needed to wake up the people to the reality of this thing. I had from the beginning expected a long, hard war. The Rifles had returned from upper Maryland, after a curiously unmurderous campaign and I went to see Major Smead as to what we were to do concerning further service. He was good enough to me, personally, but he strongly expressed his determination never again to "command a company of gentlemen." He had failed to make West Pointers of several of them. I did not see him again for a long time but one day I met him on the Avenue, patrolling with three or four army officers. Every man was a Major, for they were quartermaster and the like. I took them all to Gautier's, then the Delmonico of Washington, and gave them the biggest dinner the place could get up. It was a jolly time, but the next I heard of poor Smead he had been killed by a cannon shot while handling his battery bravely at the Second Bull Run battle. Of course, I went to the White House and it was but a few days after my return that I received orders to transfer myself to the correspondence desk in the northeast room which I was to occupy thenceforward. At first, I had to make visits to my old office to sign patents but that was ended by an order to have them all sent up to the White House for my presence there was needed hourly. It was one curious indication of the



great change which was making in the machinery of the government. In quiet days, one private secretary had been enough and the law provided for only one, with the vast salary of twenty-five hundred dollars per annum. That post was now held by Mr. Nicolay. The private Secretary to sign land patents was appointed under a law passed in 1836 when Andrew Jackson swore by the Eternal that he would not scrawl his name over any more blessed parchments. The salary of fifteen hundred had been a big one in those primitive days but it was not so now. John Hay was practically Assistant Private Secretary and in order to provide him with a salary he was appointed a clerk in the Interior Department and drafted to the White House for special duty. His pay at first was fourteen hundred and it was afterwards raised by making him a staff major and then a colonel in the army, with full pay and allowances for quarters, horses and rations. He actually did do some military duty with marked credit to himself. In after days, the increasing work on our hands did compel Nicolay to call for occasional clerical assistance but nobody but myself was ever allowed to meddle with the duties at the first assigned to me, for reasons which may soon appear.

The northeast room was not narrow and it was long. Its south door opened into the great hall and the Executive offices, as I have said, were over the way. In the middle of the eastern side of the room was a big fireplace with an extensive marble mantel. I hope no vandal of improvement has dared to remove those huge brass andirons or otherwise to destroy that antique of the nation. My desk, in front of the door, had at





its right, in front, the door into Nicolay and Hay's bed chamber. It was a huge, flat table desk, full of capacious drawers for documents. As for stationery and the like, the economies of the Republic had refused to increase the annual appropriation since the days of John Adams and it remained at two hundred and fifty. I had to buy for myself every pen and every sheet of anything but document paper that I used while I was in office and Nicolay and Hay had to scramble for themselves. The other expenses of the house were eked out in one way and another but they were always calling for more and not getting it, like so many Oliver Twists. In the far corners, by the north window, were two upright desks, old and apparently somewhat infirm, over which John Hay claimed supervision and he now and then sat down at one of them, but most of his time had to be spent in Nicolay's room for his peculiar abilities quickly began to manifest themselves. He was a born diplomat if ever there was one and he was a right down good fellow. He and I struck up a kind of queer partnership. Neither of us could dance worth a cent and we engaged the dancing services of a Professor Marini to remedy the defect. It was a laudable endeavor but it shortly broke down under the pressure of official duties which would come in at dancing hours and upset the professor's appointments. Hay may have afterwards become a good dancer but I never did, although I mastered schottisches and broke down at waltzing. Our next enterprise came out of the fact that Hay was a poor horseman. The War or some other department had assigned a pair of large bays to the White House "for special duty," that is to drag the Executive cab to



The Capitol when the Private Secretary was going there with a Presidential Message, that he might get there quickly and not be robbed on the way. So another requisition was put in for saddles, for horseback messages, and Hay and I began to take morning rides. That lasted some time but we found it too fatiguing in hot Washington weather. I had had twenty times as much previous practice as he had and he admired the ease of my seat. He did not know how really uneasy I found that army saddle. Our next undertaking was more in the line of duty. Both of us knew some French and so did some of the many Europeans who came to the White House, diplomats, army men, tourists and others, but it was needful for us to know more. It was especially necessary for me to be able to read the large number of letters which came to my table in that official tongue. So we called in a really good teacher, a Professor Marix, A Russian Jew whose pronunciation had the St. Petersburg improvement upon the Parisian dialect. We really did pretty well with that matter and the Professor boasted of me that I was the only man he ever knew who acquired a perfect knowledge of the French language in thirty days. I think he was willing to take some credit to himself and to leave out of account any previous work of mine under Professor Mixer at Rochester University. Hay and I got on well together, as we do to this day, and it was not long before he was down with a brief attack of Potomac fever. I took care of him and when he got out at the end of it I heard him say that he could not have been more assiduously watched if his own mother had been with him. I was used to sick people.



My relations with Mr. Nicolay were, from the first, of an entirely satisfactory character but my assignments to duty came through him from the President himself. In after years I saw little of Nicolay but a few months before his death he sent me a very cordial letter of remembrance and friendship which I was glad to get.

For all strictly historical matters I must leave everything to the books but there were some queer things at my desk. Among other curiosities in my drawers were all the recommendations for appointments to chaplaincies and brigadier generalships, which I was directed to sort and analyze and file. There was fun in many of them. A curious idea appeared to have entered the minds of many men that if a fellow had made good speeches and torn around actively in the presidential campaign, he was therefore the right man to head a brigade on a field of battle. If he had done well with a flour mill or a country store, he must know all about war and be ready to use up any mere West Pointer on the Confederate side. Mr. Lincoln and I had some small fun over those papers. The chaplaincies were not so funny for it did seem as if all the preachers that their own churches were tired of were eager to obtain major's pay, rations and a uniform. Some of the consequences were so disgusting that Mr. Lincoln one day exclaimed to me, "Why, Stoddard, I do believe that the chaplains are the worst men we have in the army. The whole system was given up after a while. The volunteers were now coming forward fast enough but the great difficulty was to find competent officers for them. Henry was now in pretty good health and it was time to set him at



work. Hardly was he back in Washington before a Senator, a friend of ours offered to obtain for him an appointment as second lieutenant but both Harry and I knew that the army was no place for him. He was, however, a well trained and remarkably efficient bank clerk and bookkeeper and there was the Treasury. The increasing needs of war finance were largely increasing the demand for clerks but the politicians were ready to offer ten times as many as could be employed and to fight hard for their nephews and other nominees. I determined to get Harry in and his application was duly registered but as yet I had not developed any influence. I was of less consequence than even a mere Congressman in the eyes of the appointing officials. Secretary Chase was at this time so busy that a large share of the appointing power really fell into the hands of one of his most active subordinates. I did not wish to ask a favor of Mr. Lincoln and so I went to the Assistant Secretary, so to describe him. He was polite and kindly, of course, but he was able to paint to me vividly the pressure he was under from the politicians and to assure me of the all but utter impossibility of granting my request. Things looked a little cloudy for Harry but I too was a little of a politician. Mr. McSmith, if that was his name, was a relic of the old time, retained mainly because of his ability and because no green hand could have done his work. That was a credit to him and so was his loyalty and his readiness to serve his country, but he had one misfortune. He was from Savannah and had originally been appointed as a citizen of Georgia, at a





time when it was well for an applicant for office to hail from below Mason's and Dixon's line. It was not so now and the Senate committees were only too rigidly scrutinizing all nominations sent in, with reference to that very matter. Every rejection opened a door for somebody else and Mr. McSmith knew that he had his watchful enemies. So it came to pass, one day, that a list of Treasury nominations lay upon my table, all but ready to go to the Senate. Every name was down in good hand writing, with the State and previous residence set opposite in due order. All were filled up except that of my impossible friend Mr. McSmith. I saw the blank and I saw something else. I was ready to say to Mr. Nicolay that I would run over to the Treasury and have the blank filled up before sending in that batch of nominations. He ordered me to be quick about it and so I was, for a President's Private Secretary could not be detained one moment in an ante room. He must be seen at once, no matter who else had to wait. I showed my list as sweetly as a bit of maple sugar but as soon as I gently suggested "Georgia?" his susceptible mind added the word "Rejection!" and he began to hum and haw in a dissatisfied manner. He even changed color.

"May I ask," I said, "how long you have lived in the District of Columbia? That is not a seceding state, is it?"

"Just the thing, Mr. Secretary! Just the thing! But can you-"

"I will fill it in now, Mr. McSmith, and I will see that the nomination goes to the Senate this morning, before anybody-"

"All right, Mr. Secretary! - By the way! I have found a place for your brother. Send him around right away. It's a twelve hundred dollar-"



"Thank you, Mr. McSmith. I must hurry now and get this in. I'll speak about your nomination to some of my friends. My brother is just the man for that place. He has the highest recommendations, you know."

There they were, on the paper before him and I smiled blandly as I picked it up and went out into the hall, where Harry was waiting for me. He was duly appointed and he was at his Treasury desk when the Senate confirmed Mr. McSmith, - of the District of Columbia. He and his very excellent family became close friends of ours and he was really an exceedingly valuable Treasury official. So was Harry, for his appointment was in Secretary Chase's own office before many days went by and he was duly promoted from grade to grade. Speaking of appointments for merit, the irregular volunteer whom I had saved from court martial for sleeping on post had "influence" behind him and obtained a commission as second lieutenant of marines. He at once drew upon his doting father for one hundred and fifty dollars to buy a horse. The draft was honored but the young warrior did not take any horse to sea with him.

Before long my sister Kate came on to join us and we made up quite a family. John had gone back to Syracuse, to a clerkship in the Onondaga County Bank, under one of the Whites.



## Chapter Thirty-first.

## The War City.

There was war, now, all along the lines, east and west. But the attention of the nation if not of the world was concentrated upon the City of Washington and the Army of the Potomac. Of course, the White House was a place of frequent resort for army correspondents and the local newsgatherers. Among the first of the newspaper men to make himself pretty well known to us was a bright young fellow from Ohio by the name of Whitelaw Reid. We all liked him very much and friendships sprung up which lasted through after years. He was in due time well known as a New York editor and also attained diplomatic appointments abroad. In those days, we considered him as decidedly the best fellow of the whole lot. As for myself, at an early day I received an invitation from my uncle Bright, of the New York Examiner & Chronicle, to write news letters for that Journal. I was glad to do so and the success which I attained led to my subsequent staff connection with the Examiner during many years. Speaking of newspaper men and distinguished editors, I must not forget my old friend Dr. Scroggs. He lingered in Washington until all the important appointments, such as he was adapted to, had been filled and then he sadly went back to Champaign, declaring that Stoddard had robbed him of his pay for printing the nominating editorial. Not long after I returned from the army, the Congressman from our district, a good friend of mine, came to me to say that there was a fight over the Champaign post office between the doctor and his rival editor Mr. Crandall. He remarked that that appoint-



ment properly belonged to my disposal rather than to his and asked me to decide. I had to laugh but promptly responded that Scroggs and his paper lived in Champaign while Crandall and his paper lived in Urbana.

"Make it a question of locality," I said, "and give it to Scroggs."

So the doctor got the post office instead of being tied down to a mere Comptrollership of the Treasury at Washington. -Or a place in the Cabinet.

The business of Private Secretary, per se, was generally pretty well absorbed by Nicolay and Hay, but there were odd days, first during Hay's illness, when I had to go over and take Nicolay's place in the opposite room. That gave me more than a little instruction. Among other things, I learned that the House and Senate did not recognize any individual but knew the Private Secretary only by the practical fact of his bringing a message from the President. It was therefore an important day for me when I proudly appeared at the doors of the Houses and was led in to be loudly announced to the Vice President and the Speaker as "The President's Private Secretary with a Message!" From that hour onward, by rule, I was free of the floor of both Houses. That privilege was afterwards continued to me during several administrations but a day came when the Democracy was again in power and Randall of Pennsylvania was Speaker of the House. I went to Washington on business which compelled me to see a friend of mine, a Congressman from Ohio by the name of Garfield. I went up to the Capitol and found at the door a new king who knew not this Joseph. He sent in my card, however, and in a minute or so Gen. Garfield came striding out to exclaim in some surprise:





"My dear fellow! Why didn't you come right in? I can talk with you at my desk. I can't stay out here-"

I kindly explained to him the difficulty in the way and he replied:

"You stand still a moment. I'll fix that!"

So he wrote something on a card and sent it in to Randall, whom I knew pretty well but who had not liked me over much and in less than no time out came a messenger to hand me a perpetual pass in and out, signed by the Speaker at the request of Gen. Garfield. I have that card in my box now and am proud of it as well as of a number of letters which came to me from Garfield, for whom I had a peculiarly warm feeling, for reasons which I may write down hereafter. He was then the House leader on the Republican side and afterwards was murdered for the crime of being President in the days of the political lunacy.

Among other incidents of my official life at this time was the discovery that fifteen hundred dollars was a small tightness for a man attempting to hold such a position as had somehow drifted under me and was lifting me up into larger expenses than might have been those of a clerk now or of even a Secretary in Andrew Jackson's time. It was therefore something worth while when a New York banker whose friendship I had acquired told me that two thirds of the up and down movements in stocks and gold were caused by false rumors or by misunderstandings of the course of current events. He proposed that I should keep him advised of the true state of affairs, as far as I could, and he would open a stock and gold account



for me. I was just the man for him and there was nothing in my position or sources of information which rendered it improper. It happened that my early guesses at truth were singularly correct and my bank accounts grew rapidly, both in New York and Washington. There was no manner of secrecy about my varied speculations. President Lincoln laughed at them. One day, however, a gentleman who loved me not was at Mrs. Lincoln's afternoon reception and struck me a deadly blow by remarking:

"Madame, I understand that your favorite Secretary has been quite successful on the gold market. He has cleared half a million!"

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed. "I'm so glad to hear it! I think a great deal of Mr. Stoddard. Glad of his good luck."

He subsided and that very evening she warmly congratulated me on my good fortune, advising me, however not to lose all my money.

Before my sister came on and even afterwards I had one bit of experience which I must not forget. A gentleman of some means and with affairs before Congress and the departments had opened what might be called a select political boardinghouse not far from the Executive mansion. I had made his acquaintance and was cordially admitted to the golden number of his distinguished "Day boarders." I dined there pretty regularly until, for some reason or other, he gave up keeping hotel. I had a regular place at the dinner table. At my left was regularly a gentleman who was Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives and who was in Washington to look out for the volunteers from Maine and for other New England affairs. I formed a strong liking for him and a friendship sprung up between us which lasted



to the day of his death. His name was James G. Blaine and he afterwards became pretty well known in national politics. On my right sat a prominent Treasury officer, a capital dinner table companion, by the name of Hugh McCullough. He also was afterwards nationally well known. Just beyond Blaine sat Senator Anthony of Rhode Island and with him also my friendship was lifelong. Other Senators and great men came and went and I was sorry when at last the thing broke up,- or down.

At about this time a curious incident came. I went to New York city on business, going and coming in the uncomfortable sleeping cars which were then running, and was away from my desk only a full day. When I came to my office in the morning, there on my table lay a heap of letters, all duly cut open but very few of them otherwise dealt with. I went on with my work for an hour or two before Hay came in, with a most rueful countenance. To understand the predicament he was in, I must explain a little. At the outset, he and Nicolay were to take their meals at the President's table. Ward Hill Lamon, appointed Marshall of the Supreme Court, was to have general charge of the White House, assisted by Mrs. Lincoln's friend, his wife. Hill, as we called him in Illinois, might have done well enough if he had had less government in him and had let the household affairs alone. In less than a fortnight he discovered that Mrs. Lincoln proposed to be mistress of her own house, wherever it might be, and Hill had no more tact than a drill sergeant. So he went out and the Commissioner of Public Buildings came in. He was also a very fine man but he did not know enough to restrain himself from giving orders directly instead of



through Mrs. Lincoln. His house power went to grass and she in some disturbance of mind transferred much of the load to my shoulders. That was the beginning of the process by means of which malicious people were afterwards able to speak of me as "Mrs. Lincoln's secretary." At all events, I understood her thoroughly and formed a much higher opinion of her real character than a lot of foul mouthed slanderers permitted to go out to the country. To return to Hay and his trouble.

"Stod!" he exclaimed. "I'm in the worst kind of fix! You know how it is. Nicolay and I are out with Madame. She is down on both of us. Now! You were away, yesterday, and I tried to help you along on the mail. I had seen how you did it and so I turned a whole pile of them over on their backs and sliced them open with a paper folder, before I saw the address on one of them. Then! O my soul! There they are! About a dozen of 'em are for Mrs. Lincoln and wont she give it to me!"

I was lying back in my chair and laughing, for he put it in first rate style and it really looked awkward.

"What shall I do about it?" he woefully demanded.

"Don't do anything," I told him. "Shut up and say nothing about it. I'll take the letters and go down and see Mrs. Lincoln. She wont know but what I opened them myself. I can make it all right."

He evidently did not believe I could and he awaited the result with some anxiety. Down I went to the Red Room and sent for Mrs. Lincoln. In she came and asked me what on earth was the matter.

"Bad conduct of this here impertinent paperfolder," I told her. "Opened





a lot of your letters, just because they were mixed in with the others. No fault of his, either. He didn't know they were there. Stupid fellow."

At first she laughed heartily but then her face grew sober.

"Mr. Stoddard," she said, "read them all. I want you, from this time onward, to open every letter or parcel that comes in the mail for me. You know my sister's handwriting and hers are the only exception.---NO! You may open hers, too. They accuse me of correspondence with the rebels. I want them all read!"

She was blushing an angry crimson, too, and I did not know the meaning of it until I read some of the infamous things which the political ghouls were sending her. The President's own mail was bad enough but it did seem too bad for the nasty devils of the enemy to torment his unoffending wife. She had good reasons for wishing her mail winnowed. So I went back and told Hay that she was going to appeal to the president and have him discharged, but he looked so badly that I let him up and told him the new arrangement. After that I had the mail to myself for nobody else would touch it if it could be avoided.

I doubt if there was any spot in the United States in those days, outside of a battle field, that was more continually interesting than was the correspondence desk of the Executive Mansion. I took pains at one time, to strike an average of the number of daily arrivals, other than newspapers, and was surprised to find that it was not far from 250. These were of every imaginable character, with quite a number that could not be reasonably imagined. The newspapers themselves were interesting. The



majority of them contained marked columns, editorial or letters and that sort of thing, abusive, complimentary or advisory, which the authors fondly hoped might reach the hungry eyes of the President. They did not do so. At one time he ordered me to make a daily digest of the course and comments of the leading journals, east and west, and I made one. It was wasted work and was discontinued, for Mr. Lincoln never found time to spend one hour upon those laborious condensations. He remarked to me, that it was of no consequence, after all. That is, I understood that he had no need for anybody to edit him. The letters were a study. Large packages of documents were all the while coming, relating to business before one or another of the departments. Some were in law cases. Some were in relation to claims. In any event, it was my duty to know where they properly belonged and to endorse them with the necessary reference from the President, favorable or otherwise, or perfunctory. I seemed to myself to know exactly what he would say about it and my decision was never found fault with except in a few cases and in these I was approved, as I remember it. There was a river of matter relating to appointments to office and these too were referred, except such as belonged in my custody. The very much larger number of the epistles belonged in one or another of the two tall waste baskets which sat on either side of me and their deposits were as rapid as my decisions could be made. It had to be swift work and one day there came a funny incident in that department of my judicial capacity. It did seem to me as if the foulest blackguards on earth had made up their stupid minds that they could abuse the president through the mails and



they tried to do so. Added to these were the lunatics. I imbibed an idea that whenever any man went "clane wud" he sat down and wrote to the president. Well, one day I and my paperfolder and my wastebaskets were hard at work. While we were at it, in came a portly, dignified, elderly party and sat down near me while he was waiting for an audience with Mr. Lincoln, to whom his card had been sent in. He appeared to be some kind of distinguished person, may be a governor or something of that sort, and he watched me with an interest which evidently grew upon him. He became uneasy in his chair and then he waxed red in the face. He himself may at some time have written letters and at last he broke out with:

"Is that the way you treat the President's mail? Mr. Lincoln does not know this! What would the people of the United States think, if they knew that their communications to their Chief Magistrate were dealt with in this shameful manner? Thrown into the waste basket! What does Lincoln mean? Putting such an awful responsibility into the hands of a mere boy! A boy!"

I had been all the while watching him as he fired up and I had an uncommonly dirty mail that morning. I had therefore put aside as I opened them a number of the vilest scrawls that infamy could put on paper. He had risen from his chair and was pacing up and down the room in hot indignation when I quietly turned and offered him a handful of the selected letters.

"Please read those, sir," I said, "and give me your opinion of them. I may be right about them. Do you really think, now, that the President of the United States ought to turn from the affairs of the nation to put



in his time on that sort of thing?"

The dignified party took the awful handful and began to read and his red face grew redder. Then it was white with speechless wrath. Perhaps he had never before perused anything quite so devilish in all his life.

"You are quite right, sir," he gasped, as he sank into his chair again. "Young man! You are Right! He ought not to see a line of that stuff! Burn it, sir! burn it! What devils there are!"

He may even have admired me but I returned to my work and he fidgeted around the room until the messenger came to summon him to his audience. I do not believe that he entered any complaint concerning "that boy," but he was correct about the responsibility for it was a big one for any fellow, old or young. It included many of the applications for pardons and all of these were at one time in my keeping. I remember some of them and what became of them. There were those who grumbled at Mr. Lincoln's strong objection to any kind of capital punishment and his tendencies toward mercy for all sinners. I may have been one of these. There came, one day, a pile of influential petitions on behalf of a southwestern guerilla of the most cruel sort. He was unquestionably a redhanded murderer but the movement in his favor was a strong one. It included even loyal politicians and next day a gang of big men of several kinds came up to see the president about it. They spoke of the high character of the papers in the case and these were sent for but they were not in my possession. They may have been duly referred and transferred to the War Office, as was sometimes the custom. Inquiry was made there but the papers could not be found. The delegation





went its way and that application for pardon was hung up. So was the woman and child killer who was the most interested party in the case and hardly had that fact been telegraphed before all the missing papers arrived at the White House. I think Mr. Lincoln did not more than look sidewise at me and I am sure he made no verbal commentary. There may have been other exceptional instances of the power of the paperfolder but I have forgotten them. I have not forgotten, however, the almost daily communications from "The Angel Gabriel," who professed to write in blood that appeared to me more like an inferior variety of cheap red ink. Besides, the angel mixed his inspiration terrifically and some of his work would have read well in "Puck." One day there came a really curious paper which afterwards perished with my collection of autographs in Arkansas. It purported to come from the spirits of a score or more of the old worthies of the Republic and it was certainly a strong and dignified document of advice and encouragement which would not have disgraced any of them. It was signed with the signatures of George Washington, John Hancock, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and others, as perfectly as the most expert forger could have done it if he had traced the names over the printed copy of the Declaration of Independence. It was a queer thing and so were all the letters from simple people who wished that the president would kindly step around among the several departments and attend to their business for them. Even inventors asked him to see about their patents and hurry them up. One of these, however, came from a curious party in Tolono Illinois. He stated that he had invented a "cross eyed gun." It was a two



shooter with diverging barrels and he proposed to form a regiment of cross-eyed men who could march up the Potomac and clean out the rebels from both sides of the river at once. He averred: "I know enough of cross-eyed men to make the regiment and, by thunder, Mr. Lincoln, I'm cross-eyed enough to be their colonel!" As to some other matters, I believe I really did do a number of helpful things for honest ignorances by my references and recommendations and suppose they attributed it to that good man Honest Abe. Mr. Lincoln laughed well over the cross-eyed letter, but there were many over which he could not have laughed. I was forbidden to show him any of the many threatening epistles. The idea of assassination was in the minds of bloodthirsty men from the beginning but those who really meant murder were not likely to write any warning of their intention. There were letters of another sort. I will only mention one. It was an intensely patriotic and eloquent letter, telling the president of one woman who was praying for him and for her country. I read it thoughtfully, for every here and there the paper was blistered, as if drops of hot water had fallen upon it. The writer had lost her four sons in the battles of the war and she was now alone in the world. Mr. Lincoln also was alone when I took that letter in and laid it open before him. I stood still, for a moment, saying nothing, and then I left the room for I saw a probability of more hot water. I could not see very clearly, just then, either. He could not.



## Chapter Thirty-second.

## Guns and Things.

At the outset of the war, one of the important problems before the Administration was the procuring of guns and ammunition for the armies it was gathering. A large quantity of the weapons and so forth which had been accumulated in former days had somehow been transferred southward before the outbreak of hostilities and the Confederacy obtained the benefit of them. With the general perplexities of the War Department I had nothing to do but a part of them speedily drifted into my northeast room. Every proposed vender of condemned European firelocks was possessed by the idea that he might make a sale of them if he could induce the President to overrule the decisions of the Bureau of Ordnance. In each case of that kind, I was likely to have a specimen gun deposited in the corner. At the same time came to the front a large number of inventors, and some of them had practical ideas and some had not. That tide continued almost unto the end of the war and not by any means without good results. At the first, however, I had an opportunity for studying quite a number of out and out cranks. I remember in particular one enthusiastic party who had invented a curious kind of farshooting rifle the weight of which required it to be mounted upon a spider wheel as high as your shoulder. O! how that genius did abuse the president for his inability to appreciate the spiderwheel gun and for his general bad management of the war. Then there were other curiosities, one after another, until my room looked like a gunshop. On my table at one time were specimens of steel cuirasses, designed for the loading down of



our volunteers on forced marches in hot weather. We might well have wished them to be worn by Stonewall Jackson's "Foot Cavalry," on their way to some of the mischief they did us by getting there first. Another item was a devilish kind of hand grenade, made to burst on striking and to scatter bits of iron in all directions. It would have been a terrible thing at close ranges, if the enemy would only stand still to let it be thrown among them. Swords were on hand in several patterns and so were various descriptions of cannon. As to the cuirasses, Mr. Lincoln decided that he would not take them unless the inventor would put on one of them and let some rifleman practise on the thing to be sure that it was bullet proof. The trial was never made that I know of. Mr. Lincoln was really deeply interested in the gunnery business and he was not at all ignorant concerning war and weapons. In fact, he had ideas of his own which were far in advance of some which were entertained by a few venerable gentlemen in the War Department, relics of old wars and forgotten skirmishes.

As to cannon, I was studying them and made trips to the foundry at the Navy Yard to study the processes of their manufacture. One of the results of this was a lifelong friendship with Admiral Dahlgren, then in command of the Yard. He taught me a heap of things and I invented a boatgun which he did me the honor to approve of. It consisted of steel bars wound with steel wire and soaked in a bath of melted brass to convey the explosive force laterally and so forth and the idea was afterwards made extensive use of but I got no credit for it. Speaking of inventions, while in Cham-





paign I had invented a new printer's chase. It was the first improvement upon the chases used in the old Franklin press and involved many new ideas. I obtained a patent for it which now rests among my old papers. I had then no time or opportunity to do anything with it, if I had known how, and the whole thing got away from me but that chase is the basis for many now in use in the power presses of to-day. I had also invented a news and book paperfolding machine but had then no time to perfect it and it passed out of sight. To return to guns and Abraham Lincoln. Among the new patterns in my room were several which seemed to promise good results and I knew that he was taking an interest in them but did not know how much until one evening when I was at work over a pile of letters and was dimly aware that somebody was coming in. I looked up to exclaim:

"Ah! Mr. President!" which was not my ordinary salutation.

"Stoddard," he said, "They say you are a pretty good marksman. I want you to be here early tomorrow morning; say half-past six. We'll go out to the Mall and try some of these guns. I can get a better idea--"

I do not remember my next saying but a talk on guns followed which was so interesting, - to me, - that it kept on until he was called to his late dinner in the other side of the house with a sharp reminder that he was to have distinguished company. That did not mean me.

The Mall is the wide grassy slope from the White House grounds to the Potomac and at that time it was badly littered with rubbish. Out in the middle of it was a huge pile of old building lumber. This was just the thing to set up a target on. I was at my room good and early and I did



not have to wait long before in came the president.

"Well," he remarked, "you didn't keep me waiting. Now, you take that thing and I'll take this and we'll go right along."

The weapon assigned to me was a breechloader made over from an old Springfield smoothbore musket. The new arrangement was a kind of screw twist and was fitted somewhat loosely. It carried the old cartridges, of which he brought a supply. His own gun was a well made affair, resembling the Spencer carbine. I think it was rifled. So the Commander in Chief and the White House division of the army of the Potomac marched away to the Mall, discussing guns and war as they went.

"Mr. Lincoln," I remarked, for an instance of the talk, "General Ripley says that men enough can be killed with the old smoothbore and the old cartridges, a ball and three buckshot."

"Just so!" he responded. "But our folks are not getting near enough to the enemy to do any good with them, just now, I reckon we've got to get guns that will carry further."

The entire field of breech and muzzle loaders was run over and I found that he was strongly in favor of the new movement in small arms. A hundred yards was paced off and a target was set against the lumber. We took turns in firing and I soon discovered two things. One was that the old Springfield barrel carried first rate and the other was that Mr. Lincoln was anything but a crack shot. I afterwards learned from Hill Lamon that he never had been. It did not exactly irritate him but he remarked:

"Stoddard, I declare! You are beating me. I'll take a good sight this



time-" and down he went to level his piece across one knee.

Now he had forgotten one thing that I had not and I already knew that there was trouble coming. There were stringent military orders out, forbidding all kinds of firing within the city or camp limits. Washington was then little better than a fortified camp. There were guards set every where and one had been posted on the avenue at the entrance to the Mall. It consisted of a very short corporal and four men and it was now coming after us at a double quick and it was swearing but I did not deem it my duty to stop Mr. Lincoln's long squint over that breechloader. The guard came within talking range just before the piece went off.

"Stop that firing! Stop that firing!" shouted the corporal and I am compelled to say that his additional remarks did not cause me to suppose him any kind of Sundayschool teacher."

"Bless you! You -Z---U--Stop that firing!" But at that moment the gun went off and the corporal was within a few paces when the President slowly uncoiled himself and rose to his feet. He looked like a very tall man and he may have looked even taller to the angry little warrior who was putting out a hand as if to take him in charge and hive him in the guardhouse. I think the other soldiers were first in catching the joke, if it was one, but Mr. Lincoln was now looking smilingly down into the face of the corporal and that had undergone a sudden change. It seemed to me as if all their lower jaws went down together but not one of them said another word right there. It was "'bout face" in a twinkling and they set out toward the avenue at a better pace than they had come with. I only heard, as



they went, some confused ejaculations concerning the preposterous fact that "We've been cussin' Old Abe himself!-----!"

He too was laughing as well as I, in his half silent, peculiar way.

"Well, Stoddard," he said, "they might have stayed to see the shooting."

That was all there was of it, except that the old Springfield, with its loosely fitted twist, had almost kicked my shoulder out of joint.

Among the other ornaments of my room were the first models of the turtle tinclad gunboats which were to be the right arm of our forces in the coming campaigns along the rivers of the West. These all owed their adoption to Mr. Lincoln, against the opinions of pretty good army men. More important still was the decision he made in the matter of the Monitor ironclad, the cheesebox on a raft, which was so scornfully treated by the wisest fellows in the Navy. I was not present at any of his examinations of the new invention but I was not ignorant, afterwards, of what he did to secure it for active service. Meantime, it was in charge of a gentleman named Cornelius S. Bushnell and he was let into the Northeast room on his arrival. My talks with him there resulted in a personal friendship which lasted to the end of his life. He was a splendid fellow. Through him it was that I became interested in the financial affairs of the Pacific Railway enterprise and formed my friendships with Thomas C. Durant and others of the strong men who carried that wonderful undertaking to success.

My interest in war matters of course led me to wish some information about forts and earthworks and I obtained a little. After I had seen a few I was better able to understand pictures and ground plans of all sorts of





defensive construction, the general principles being much the same all around. One of my excursions at an early day took me out to the camp of General Wadsworth of New York. It was just then a difficulty with many of our new brigadiers that their pay and rations made them richer than they had ever been before. Some of them were really men of property and they were launching out in a ridiculous manner, so that the headquarters displays were anything but popular with the rank and file of the army. At the headquarters of "Wadsworth of Geneseo," ex-governor of New York and said to be worth his millions, I had half expected to find military magnificence. On the contrary, I found that he had engineered a stinging rebuke to some of his newly rich neighbors. His quarters were in an old farmhouse and he had put into it nothing but camp furniture, although his elegant lady of a wife was with him. All was of the plainest kind, and when I came to the long, plank dinner table it had no useless cloth to cover the wood. The fare was only the regular army rations very well cooked. There was no silver to be seen, although I had heard that his home mansion abounded in that bright metal. In due course, it was in order to drink the President's health, at the general's own call, one of his official household being present. When it was so done, was there any flowing goblet of brigadier champagne? No! Only a black bottle with some whiskey in it was brought to me and the swarm of visiting officers obtained nothing better. The whole thing was admirably done and I afterward received an impression that he and a few others like him had done much to put away the unadvisable extravagance of men not quite so rich as they.



## Chapter Thirty-third.

## Society and Other Things.

From the beginning of my career at Washington, my social position had been all that I could reasonably have asked, if not a little more. It was continually making demands upon my valuable time. At this date, the winter of 1861-2, I was expected to be in attendance upon Mrs. Lincoln at all her public and private receptions and also at the regular weekly public receptions of the President. At the occasional absences of either Nicolay or Hay, I was also expected to leave Mrs. Lincoln to her own resources and take the vacant place on one side or the other of the President. After the arrival of my sister Kate, she became a great help to me in some of these matters, for Mrs. Lincoln took a fancy to her and liked to have her assistance at receptions.

My brother Henry was a fellow of unusual social abilities and before long he was taking a similar position with Miss Kate Chase and it was somewhat funny, considering that the Treasury beauty and the White House Madame were most of the time at war, to see how benignly he worked himself into the good graces of Mrs. Lincoln also. I believe she had a sufficient sense of humor to appreciate what I called his unfathomable impudence. John Hay did, anyhow, and he and Henry were good friends. He was always a welcome visitor in the northeast room, whenever his really severe and responsible duties at the Treasury gave him an hour off to come over for a chat with the private secretaries.



Among the friends whom I made at an early day were the Shermans and I valued them exceedingly. During that first winter, Miss Mary Sherman, niece of the great Ohio Senator, came to the capital for the season and on her first evening "out" I was introduced to her by my friend Miss Clara Harris. My acquaintance with Miss Sherman soon became of a most agreeable character. I was with her frequently. After that we were regular epistolary correspondents during several years and I fully appreciated the rare ability and high personal character which she has since exhibited as the wife of the commanding general of the Army. Several of the Harris family were now on hand. Judge Ira Harris had been the United States Senator from New York. I now discovered, by way of John Hay, that upon hearing of my probable appointment he had written a splendid letter about me to the President. On my way to Washington, I had visited at his house in Albany as of yore. I remember being almost shocked at the unceremonious way in which he helped me carry my trunk up stairs but he laughed heartily at my protest, asserting roundly that there was no snob in him. His older daughter, Clara, was a kind of society queen. She afterwards married her stepbrother, Henry Rathbone, and thereby follows one of the saddest of sadly tragic stories. My old chum, Will Harris, had graduated at West Point and was now an officer of artillery, stationed at Fortress Monroe. I saw but little of him, therefore. My cousin Enoch Stoddard, of New London, was now an army surgeon and could come to see me but once. Two of the Stoddard Morgan boys were in the army and so were a number of others of our family connection.

I became more and more interested in the Union Pacific Railway enter-



prise. It had been one of the leading features of the Republican party political position and now the deep earnestness with which the President watched its progress had my entire sympathy. One of the consequences of this was that I shortly found myself invited to attend various organizational and other meetings of capitalists and railway men in New York and I had great times at some of them. One of these social-financial gatherings was an all evening affair at Judge Roosevelt's then, if I remember correctly, the most prominent member of the family which has provided us with our admirable President at this later day. I liked him very much indeed. Another was at the house of a pretty well known drygoods merchant named Alexander T. Stewart and the acquaintance then began with him had some funny consequences at a then far future. There were several other gatherings which I need not mention. O! What lots of remarkable men I did fall in with. Among them was an exceedingly goodlooking fellow, whom I liked very much. He had invented improvements in sleeping cars, for which I was grateful to him, and was trying to get them introduced into the several railway systems. He and I had more than one good railway ride together and I believed that he would make it out, for he had great energy and was an adept at meeting and persuading intelligent men. I saw little of him in later years but whenever we did meet he was as cordial as I could ask. His name was George M. Pullman and in the course of time he accumulated property. Then he was poor. Another of the railway men with whom I then formed a lifelong friendship was that wholehearted, magnificently energetic man, Dr. Thomas C. Durant, of whom I can never think without longing to shake hands with him again.





One of the first fellows to turn up after I was settled in the White House was my old friend Hop Strong. He had married his young lady "Quail," Minnie Hoyt, and was not disposed to become an army man. He was wild after government contracts, without any distinct information as to precisely what the army might be most in need of. I think he was interested in a very remarkably impenetrable steel cuirass, for military clothing in hot weather or upon forced marches. He also brought in specimens of several lots of guns of which, I, as a rifleman, could not exactly approve. I could have wished the Confederates to be armed with them. I did obtain for him and one of our Rochester friends contracts for leathern infantry equipments and the like, and for artillery carriages and harness to be made by a Providence concern, but wish to register the fact that I had no interest of a pecuniary nature in these or in any other army contracts, from the beginning of the war to the end. All I ever made by any of them was a splendid lot of Havana cigars that was sent to me anonymously but which bore a strong, very strong, and high flavored family resemblance to some fine Cubans which I had sampled from the pocket case of a gentleman from Rhode Island. I admit smoking the cigars but do not think I had been bribed.

Hop Strong was visionary in business affairs and I was not sufficiently experienced to perceive it at once. I was much attached to him and wished to assist him but he cost me too much, altogether, in the course of time. He next came in with a newly invented arm and leg, for the expected cripples of the coming campaigns. I was making money and put in enough to set



that patent surgery going, only to lose every cent of it through the joint worthlessness of the inventor and his invention. Hop also brought to me a really valuable patent paint and I sunk several thousands of dollars in trying to make a whistle out of a pig's tail, the pig being the paint man and his tendencies toward the nearest rumship. I did several other costly things for Hop but he only got me into scrapes of one sort or another and I had to give it up.

On the whole, all my business, official, social and otherwise, appeared to be in an extraordinarily active condition during that opening period of the great conflict for the Union, but I must not leave out some of the incidents which are in the nature of illustrations.

One evening in the earlier days I was at my desk, over my correspondence when the President came in, with a large portfolio under his arm. I produced some letters which I had wished to show him,- if I could.

"Not now," he said, as I told him about them. "Come! I want you to go over to Seward's with me. Bring along that-"

It was to be seen that he was intensely absorbed by something or other and I took up the portfolio which he had laid down on my desk, without inquiring what could be taking him to the house of the Secretary of State at that unseasonable hour, or why he did not rather send for the Secretary and make him come to the White House. I did not even ask him whether or not we were likely to be out late. The fact was that there were times when no wise man cared to ask Abraham Lincoln any questions.



This affair might be none of my business but a worse case for any curious party to pump for information than Abraham Lincoln had not then been invented.

Out we went and down stairs and when we reached the front door we found that it was raining. The door had been opened for us by old Edward Moran and he too saw that it was raining. He began to look quizzical and to rub his hands with invisible soap, as was his custom.

"Edward," said Mr. Lincoln, "go up to my room and bring my umbrella. It stands in the corner, by my desk."

Edward went and Mr. Lincoln stood in the doorway, as absorbed as ever, gazing out into the darkness as if he wished he could see through it. Back came Edward and he brought no umbrella but he washed his hands with peculiar diligence while he drily reported:

"Your Excellency! It's not there. I'm thinking the owner must have come for it. -Just a minute, sir. I'll get another."

He very quickly did so, but his small joke and his way of making it had broken the Executive ice sufficiently to bring out a laugh and to make the situation somewhat easier for me. We walked on under cover of a queer old rain tent that certainly was neither young nor handsome and the president shortly had a story to tell.

"Old Edward!" he said. "Well there's fun in him. Did you ever hear the answer he gave to President Fillmore?"

I never had heard a word of it and he went on to tell:

"The way of it was this. Just after President Taylor's death, when Fillmore succeeded him, Fillmore needed to buy a carriage. Some



gentleman here was breaking up housekeeping and had one for sale and Fillmore took Edward with him when he went to look at it. It appeared to be a pretty good turnout but Fillmore looked it all over, carefully, and then asked Edward:- "How do you think it would do for the President of the United States to ride in a second hand carriage?"

"Sure, your Excellency," replied Edward, "you're ownly a sicond hand president, you know."

"Fillmore used to tell the story, himself," said Mr. Lincoln, and then he had other pleasant things to tell and I discovered part of what our business was to be at the house of the Secretary of State. I even learned whom we were to meet there. We had but a short distance to go and we went in with small ceremony, for Mr. Lincoln was expected,- if I was not. We were shown into a large room at the right of the hall, half office, half reception room, and I put my portfolio down on a long centre table. There was a log fire blazing in the fireplace. We did not have to wait long before the hall door opened and in came Mr. Seward, accompanied by Major General John A. Dix, ex-governor of New York, ex-United States Senator, ex-minister to England, ex-Secretary of the Treasury under Buchanan, to whom had recently been assigned the military district including Maryland, West Virginia and some other doubtful regions. He was a short, slightly built man and one of the most perfect gentlemen I ever met, so far as manners or anything else might be concerned. The President expressed his pleasure at meeting the General, introduced me as





his private secretary, and then began decidedly the most important conference I had attended, up to that date, for it included the entire policy to be pursued by the Administration with reference to the Border States and the Union people of the South, a subject concerning which General Dix held pronounced ideas of his own, to the forcible presentation of which the president listened with profound attention. So did I. Dix had been regarded as the stiffest Union man in President Buchanan's cabinet, and from him had gone out the then famous order. "If any man attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot!"

It was a late hour when the conference terminated, but my part in it had been limited to the production of papers and maps from my portfolio and neither of the other gentlemen present had annoyed me with questions as to my views upon the important questions before - us - or upon the line of policy which we then and there decided that the government was thenceforth to pursue. On the whole, however, I inwardly agreed with them. The president and I went out into the rain again. I noticed that he appeared to feel relieved but that he was still thoughtful. So was I.

"Mr. Lincoln," I ventured to ask. "What do you think of General Dix? I never saw him before, but I've heard a good deal about him."

"Neither did I." replied Mr. Lincoln. "This is our first interview. What do I think of him? Well, if I am to judge by what he has said tonight,- by the advice he has given,- General Dix is, -I should say,- a wise man. A very wise man!"



I recall that at the parapet of the stone wall of the walk near the White House portico, the president stood still for a whole minute, it seemed to me, and stared southward as if he were trying to look across the Potomac through the dark. He could not have seen anything more than ten feet away, but I kept still and we then went on into the house. He went into his office and shut the door and I carried my portfolio into my own room. It had been a wonderfully interesting evening but I had not the slightest idea that I had really formed a permanent acquaintance with General Dix or that one day his memory of that first meeting would be to me a matter of exceedingly great importance.

I can hardly help laughing when I look back to another of the social incidents. It was the great dinner party given to a number of visiting journalists and politicians from the north and west by Colonel John W. Forney. The colonel himself was a prominent politician and journalist. He was the editor and proprietor of the Philadelphia Press and The Washington Daily Chronicle and was at the same time Secretary of the Senate, an office of much distinction. I had formed a warm friendship for him at an early day, but for some unknown reason both Nicolay and Hay were at the time a little out of his books. He had a big house on Capitol Hill and he determined to give the biggest political dinner that it would hold. He really needed to have it stretched a peg or two. When the evening appointed came his dining room for the occasion went all the way through the two large parlors and the adjoining rooms and the up-stairs spaces



took the overflow.

It was a distinguished company when it assembled. It included military and naval men, cabinet officers, Senators, Congressmen, editors and all sorts of incidental celebrities. But the gallant colonel had invited his guests in the most patriotic and political and liberal way, without any reference whatever to his own personal acquaintanceships and he had failed to agree with himself beforehand upon any regular plan of operations. I saw the point as soon as I got in and that was at an early hour. Some of the celebrities were gawking around as if they had lost their way and I at once followed Colonel Forney's example, greeting every man I met as if he were a long lost brother and offering to introduce him to his new neighbors. I had indeed met a great many of them at the White House and the rest may have known that I was President of the United States. My next discovery was that the other Private Secretaries were not to come and that I was really the sole representative of the National Executive. Of course, I had sense enough to shy that rock as soon as I could and to keep carefully away from it all the evening. I did not intend to make myself prominent but the fates hurled distinction upon me in a most unexpected manner. The dinner got itself going, nobody knew exactly how. Perhaps the waiters and the soup did it. I didn't. It was not long, however before it was time for the patriotic oratory to begin. The guests were swarming miscellaneously around and among the refreshments when Colonel Forney came hastily to me, with dismay in his face, and exclaimed:



"My dear fellow! You must help me out with this! I don't know half of 'em and I don't know what to do next. You're the only man here what knows everybody. Can't you set 'em going? Call out somebody."

I overcame my naturally retiring disposition and at once stepped to my proper place at the head of the long table, as being really the host himself and the oldest dignitary present. Perhaps the most distinguished literateur present was Morton McMichael of the Philadelphia North American, but it was much more to my purpose that he was distinguished as an unsurpassed dinner table orator. I called the crowd to order, therefore, and then, with a brief eulogy upon him and the press and the flag and that noble bird, the eagle, I introduced Hon. Morton McMichael and announced that he would respond to the first patriotic toast, which may have been "Our Country," for all I can now remember. I selected it on the spot, as I did others which were to follow and the men who were to respond. I made a Cabinet Minister take care of the toast to the President and completely escaped any oratorical display of my own. Which was good of me. The speeches made were really splendid and the affair was a grand success. Colonel Forney could hardly express his gratitude and I could hardly tell myself how I had gotten out of my sudden scrape. I think it was after two o'clock in the morning when I wandered into the wine room. I had wisely abstained from stimulating and was as clear as a bell. An astonishment was waiting for me right there, however, for against the wall were piles of bottles, stacked up like cordwood for a hard winter and I exclaimed:





"Good heavens! Forney doesn't expect them to drink all that?"

Of course, he could not have done so. It would have been preposterous on his part:- for my next glance told me that every last bottle was empty, although it had been full when that dinner began. Not long afterwards, I was laboring down Pennsylvania Avenue with a cabinet minister on one arm and a pair of great men just behind me, and the patriotic story of the evening did not cease until I had landed my heavy and eloquent friend at the top of a flight of stairs. He explained the situation of this and other countries to the very last. I took one good lesson from it all, nevertheless: "Never drink wine at a big dinner party."

Not long afterwards I was at another distinguished "high" and there was a splendid lot of women, young and old, in the drawingroom, by themselves, while the financial and political grandees at the table were slow and I was silently aware that no President, like myself, was needed. My place was at the right of the host and next to me sat an exceedingly distinguished Senator who was said to do his best oratory when he had just come into the senate chamber from one of the "cloakrooms." He was a first rate good fellow and was talking well, but before long he turned in his seat to gaze admiringly at me, who had said nothing, and remark:

"Stod-d-dard, my b-oy! Hic! One of us has been drinking. You ort not to ever drink at er dinn'r party. Jes' sho, my b-oy!"

I turned to my host to say, in the kindest manner:

"Mr. ZZZZZ, if the senator is right, you ought to excuse me. I'd bet-



ter go up into the parlors. But I'm glad he's entirely sober."

I was excused and so I got off without disputing the great man and without missing a really good time up stairs, although I frankly informed my handsome hostess and the girls of the manner of my escape.

The trouble in this direction was that the city of Washington had been born and educated on the old southern plantation hospitality plan. Every house was a bar-room and so were most of the public offices,- in many of the bureaus but not in all. All over the city, drinking went on almost without cessation. In the Capitol itself, the refreshment rooms and the committee-rooms were so many rumholes, and the celebrated "Hole in the Wall," near the Supreme Court room, was really no worse than were several others. When a fellow made a social call, he was almost sure to be bored with a bottle. There were a few notable exceptions, beginning with the President's house, but it would now serve no good purpose to specify the other temperance houses by name. I will add, however that at Mr. Lincoln's own table I have seen him smell of a highly recommended glass of champagne and put it down without drinking.

The fact that he was a total abstinence man was well known in Illinois, but not so well elsewhere. Of that fact I received a somewhat peculiar illustration, that first Fall. Very naturally it was understood all over the country that the Executive Mansion was a place of necessarily expensive hospitality. It may have been with this idea in their heads that several of his admirers in New York clubbed together to send him a



peculiarly fine assortment of wines and liquors without letting him know precisely from whom it came. It was an altogether unexpected kind of elephant and Mrs. Lincoln at once sent for me in a good deal of a quandary as to what she was to do in the remarkable premises. We went down to look at it, in the basement where the express men had left it, but all that I could discover was that the assortment was miscellaneous. I remember remarking that the generous donors did not seem to have left out anything that they could think of.

"But, Mr. Stoddard," said Mrs. Lincoln, in evident dismay, "what is to be done? Mr. Lincoln never touches any and I never use any. Here it all is, and these gentlemen,- what is to be said to them?"

I had to laugh at her discomfiture, but advised that the only course I could see was to acknowledge the gift in due form, to the only address that was provided. As for the wines and liquors, she had better send them to her favorite hospitals and let the nurses and doctors take the responsibility of their future.

"That's what I'll do!" she exclaimed, and that was the end of it, for she was positive that her husband would not allow all that stuff to remain in his own house.

At the great public, official reception which was afterwards maliciously described as "My Lady President's Ball," although it was not at all a dancing party, there were wines furnished with the refreshments, out of deference to established custom, but that was an exceptional case.



Now! As to that "Ball!" I had some fun with it. It was a rigidly formal or rather official affair. The invitations were limited to certain kinds or species of men and women. Senators, Congressmen, Judges of the Supreme Court, members of the Cabinet, generals and high naval men, for there were then no admirals, members of the diplomatic corps, made up quite as large a mob as the White House had room for, but from all over the country came to prominent Washington men urgent applications for invitations, as if these were but free tickets to "the Greatest Show on Earth."

To have granted any of these requests, by favoritism, would have given just offence to the multitude who could not be gratified. The first applicants to be disappointed and to get mad about it were the local representatives of the great northern journals, nearly all of whom appeared to consider themselves sufficiently official or military or naval or judicial or diplomatic to be entitled to tickets. Nicolay and Hay were masters of the situation but for some reason, perhaps because it was disagreeable and I was young, it was shunted over upon my shoulders, in part, and I found all explanations in vain. A certain number, of course, could be admitted as "reporters" but when I mentioned that fact the fat was all in the fire. In the language of one excited scribe, "If we cannot come as gentlemen, we will not come at all!" -Which was hard upon any fellow who ceased to be a gentleman when he became a reporter. I was in my room, one day, when Nicolay sent Hay to see me, in hot haste. Two of Mrs. Lincoln's favorite Congressmen, one of whom was my old friend Caleb Lyon,





of Lyonsdale, New York, and the other my especial friend Gen. Daniel E. Sickles, had asked for tickets for two New York literateurs, an editor of the Herald, a daily paper, and Mr. George Wilkes of the Spirit of the Times, both of which journals had been anything but complimentary to Mr. Lincoln.

"Stoddard!" exclaimed poor Nicolay. "I can't do anything! It will make all sorts of trouble. She is determined to have her own way. You will have to see to this. She wouldn't listen to me."

"Give me the tickets," I said, "and I'll attend to it."

Down to the Red Room I went and there were present all the parties to the case and Mrs. Lincoln was smilingly expecting the cards which she had sent for under the pernicious beguilement of Dan Sickles and Caleb Lyon. They also smiled at me, as I came in.

"May I see you for a moment, Mrs. Lincoln?" I said, and she could see that I was boiling over, wild mad about something, furious but restraining myself, and she followed me into the Blue Room at once.

"What is it, Mr. Stoddard?"

"Mrs. Lincoln! O! But wont I give it to Dan and Caleb!"

"Why? What for? What have they done?"

"Why, Mrs. Lincoln, I suppose you have a right to know. They have demanded of Mr. Nicolay invitations for those two fellows in there that have been abusing you, personally, and Mr. Lincoln, like pick-pockets. If we are to give out extra cards, we had better send them to



our friends, not to our enemies. Besides, it would offend some of the best friends we have. I wish you would put your foot down on this and stop it. They can't have the invitations--"

"Of course they can't!" she said. "I'll go right in and tell them so."

"And I'll give Sickles and Caleb a wiggling!" I declared.

Into the Red Room she went again, to say very firmly:

"Gentlemen, Mr. Stoddard, who has absolute charge of this business, tells me that I cannot give you the invitations. I am sorry, of course, but I must abide by his decision."

There was no help for it and they had to give it up, but I did have an interesting little mill with Caleb and the General in the vestibule. As for Mrs. Lincoln, I had felt sure of her. She never really went back on me and she was wide awake to any attack upon her husband. Nicolay and Hay were ready to pat me on the back when I went up stairs, and they expressed much wonder as to how I did that thing. At all events, in this case as in some others, all the ugly part of it fell on me and sometimes I was not making friends as fast as you might think.

The only other tellable incident which I remember, connected with that party, was felt by me at the time as of vast importance. It was the singularly good natured way in which Secretary Seward chaffed me for an awful international blunder that I made in misunderstanding my instructions and leading him and his whole Diplomatic corps, marching solemnly behind him, through the wrong door, so that they wandered away out into the vestibule.



## Chapter Thirty-fourth.

## A Very Busy Year.

The administration of public affairs by Abraham Lincoln actually began on the day of his nomination for the presidency. From that day forward, he became an important factor in all the political movements in the United States and also in some which apparently belonged across the Atlantic. All the country and a large part of the outside world was listening and waiting to discover what there might be in him. The interest deepened and his actual administrative work increased enormously upon his election, although it would even then be months before he could take the oath of office. Nobody did understand him as yet and as for myself, I was but dimly aware of the manner in which I was studying him. I was only doing so, at first, after my arrival in Washington, to get my head clear as to what decisions he and I were to make, without his assistance, upon the many affairs brought before my judicial highness by the mails. I did get a better and better idea of him as I went along, so that I appeared to myself to know, as if by a kind of instinct, precisely what he would do in any given matter. At all events, I referred papers to Departments and bureaus and officials, with remarks and recommendations, or put untellable quantities of stuff into my waste baskets, with the most supreme calmness, and not once was my decision overruled, not even when a western murderer, a guerilla, was hung in consequence, while his advocates were trying to engineer his pardon. I do not now remember if in



any earlier page of these reminiscences I have recorded one queer incident connected with my manner of dealing with the mails. If so, it must be told twice, for it is on my mind just now. I was behind my desk, one day, with my faithful baskets on either side, rapidly going through a large arrival of all sorts. Entered from the hall an exceedingly dignified looking party, elderly and well dressed, such, perhaps as might be a governor or an influential citizen of high rank, and entirely aware of it. Edward gave him Andrew Jackson's chair to sit down in, near the left end of my desk, and he almost immediately appeared to be taking a deep interest in what I was doing. I had known many others to do the same, but saw that this dignitary was developing personal feelings. It was my belief that as soon as any unfortunate being in the United States went clean crazy, his first lunatic operation was to sit down and write to the President. Also, many of the most corrupt and foul minded blackguards poured their vilenesses upon paper and sent it by mail to him or to his wife, with the crude idea that they were annoying him. Fools!

Well, it happened that this was a productive mail for rascals and lunatics and I carefully put aside a number of the worst specimens of their literature, at the side of my pile. I saw that the dignified observer was becoming more and more uneasy. His face grew red as he saw me filling my baskets, and his feet came to the floor with stern emphasis. Then he arose to his feet, to his full height, and demanded:

"Is that the way you deal with the President's mail? This is mon-





strous! Mr. Lincoln cannot be aware of this! What does the President mean? A mere boy placed in a position of such responsibility!"

It was on my mind as entirely possible that he himself had at some time sent a communication to the President and had not received a full reply by return mail, but I turned to him with undisturbed politeness and handed him the lunatic, beastly collection.

"Please take a look at those, sir," I said, "and tell me if you think the President can put aside the affairs of the nation to use his time in reading that kind of thing."

No doubt he was a moral man, particular as to his reading and so forth. Might have been a Sunday School Superintendent. He took the letters, the vilest of their kind, and began to read. Redder and redder grew his face. Stampier became his feet. He strode up and down three paces.

"You are right, young man! You are right! He ought not to see them.- What villains there are in this world!"

Perhaps I do not quote with literal correctness, but it is near enough to indicate the entire conversation between him and me, in which I obtained from him his unreserved approval, except as to my age.

If I was beginning to understand Mr. Lincoln, I believe he understood me perfectly well, or he would not have placed such confidence in me.

He must have seen how entirely I was devoted to him and to the correct performance of my duties. I think I did not understand myself very well. I was really only a very green, energetic sort of fellow, who was fast



growing into a knowledge of the ways of a new world which was itself growing along in the mistiest kind of semi-darkness. Nearly all the men and women whom I met, great or small, conveyed to me the idea that they were at sea, or at least were lost in a fog. I could see into it only a little distance, myself, but I could see Mr. Lincoln.

The year 1861 was exceedingly busy, but it was a time of the confused, perplexing reorganization of an entirely shattered government. It cannot be too distinctly understood that the old Republic had temporarily disappeared and that all men evidently expected Mr. Lincoln to assume the undefined powers given to the President in emergencies by the unwritten clauses of the Constitution. He became practically Dictator, by the common consent of the people, and was therefore not unjustly held responsible for the results of all sorts which were crowding upon us. I did not see much of him, and for that matter, nobody else did. Nicolay and Hay never entered his office except on business and they both performed admirably well their manifest duty of keeping out of it as many intruders as they could, high or low. The winter passed slowly, with the armies apparently almost inactive in their camps and with general dissatisfaction all over the country, as well as a wonderful and increasing amount of utterly devoted patriotism. Opposed to this was also the tremendous natural reaction which called itself the Democratic Party, although the Old Democratic Party was pouring recruits into the army and many of its leading men were among the staunchest supporters of Mr.



Lincoln and of whatever he might see fit to do. The Democratic Cave of Adullam was gathering its clans rapidly, however, and the Republican Party itself was greatly in need of a more thorough organization, all over the country. Not only it was new, but a large part of its effective membership was in the army. How the work of reorganization was to be accomplished was ingeniously pointed out to us by our good friends the enemy. Even before the war, and much more so after it began, the whole South had been honeycombed with political secret societies. One of these was known as The Golden Circle and it was well understood that it had its branches all over the North. How many other such vipers were wriggling in and out among the anti-Administration elements of the loyal states was more than any one could guess and as for myself I had somehow let my imagination loose in guessing at them. Evidently this devil might be fought with his own kind of fire and several organizations of Union men took form in some of the seceded states. One of these, of which I was afterwards a member, grew to considerable strength in the Southwest. It's outside name may be called the Loyal League and it was more than Masonic in its secrecy. In West Virginia, for similar reasons, a secret affiliation called The Union League was beginning to make itself useful and Mr. Lincoln saw that this kind of usefulness might be extended as well as increased. When or how he took the matter up, he did not take the pains to come over to the northeast room and tell me, but I remember noting that Judge J. M. Edmonds, the Com-



missioner of the General Land Office and a close friend and counsellor of the President, was making an unaccountable number of shut-the-door visits to the Executive office. He was one of the shrewdest of long, hawknosed, twinkle eyed, sharp smiling old men, and was said to be the best informed and most capable politician in the country.

Well! One day, he came loping over from Lincoln's room into mine and I was glad to see him, for I liked him particularly well.

"Stoddard," he said. "Good morning. I want you to come down to my room in the Land Office at about seven this evening. Don't tell any one you are coming. Not even Mr. Lincoln,"-

I told him I would be there, and then I half wondered why Mr. Lincoln should send me on an errand which he wished me to conceal from him and not to let him know that he had sent me. At all events, I went at the hour appointed and did not notify the President that I had obeyed him. It might be that here was something that he wished to conceal from himself. At that hour, the Interior Department building was closed and the watchmen at the doors would not let in even a known clerk without special orders or a permit in writing. At the north door, however was a guard with a list in his hand and my name was on the list, for he let me in without speaking and I went up to the Commissioner's room. It was large, it was badly arranged, it was sadly in need of some brooms, but it soon had in it over a dozen men, perhaps more than a score, including several of considerable importance,- like myself. Very soon, and before any





talking was done, we were all solemnly sworn not to tell that we were there or what we were there for. We were to be and to allow all others to be as ignorant of that meeting and its doings as Mr. Lincoln himself. Then we went to work upon a plan which was all ready for operation, not appearing to require any discussion, and we organized The Union League of America. The only remaining relic of it that I know of is the Union League Club of New York City which grew out of one of its earlier Councils. That night, among other things, it was decided to organize a dozen Councils in the City of Washington itself. The construction of Number One was assigned to Judge Edmonds and of Number Two to myself. He was at once a success, of course, and I did gather a wonderful crowd in Number Two. What was especially wonderful, also, they elected me its president and I was thenceforth called upon to preside, once a week, over a packed assembly, more than half of which consisted of Congressmen, Senators, Cabinet officers, their assistants, department clerks and army officers. It imparted to me a queer feeling of advanced age and increasing dignity. As for the League, it spread with feverish rapidity all over the North. In order that it should do so, large funds were needed, for traveling agents and the like, the hire of halls, all sorts of things, and we had started our machine without a dollar. It was apparently a difficult financial problem, but it was unexpectedly solved. A number of army contractors became members of our Washington councils and they speedily became liberal contributors. So did they also become successful bidders for army



and navy contracts but I was never able to perceive any real connection between the contemporary successes. There may have been none, but a good man who put in a hundred thousand dollars obtained so heavy a line of army supply contracts that he was afterwards driven into bankruptcy by an unexpected rise in prices of the materials he had joyfully agreed to deliver. But the Treasury of the League was full.

I wish to recall some points concerning the creation of our present system of finance and paper money, for all that we now have is a direct result of the Civil War and its financial requirements.

At the outset of the war, there was absolutely no gold coin in circulation in the United States. Almost the same might have been said of silver coin, since what little we had was altogether insufficient for ordinary trade purposes. Also, whatever we had, of either metal, was steadily disappearing, owing to the demand for foreign exchange, all such balances being for the time against us. Cotton, with the proceeds of which our foreign accounts had previously been balanced, had ceased to be an important feature in the exchange market. Added to this were the timid hoardings of coin and the pernicious offerings of the silversmiths of two and afterwards even four or five percent premium for silver, for manufacturing purposes. The State banks were said to be increasing in number but they were by no means improving in character. It was upon this state of things that there now came a tremendous government requirement for an unlimited circulating medium. I will not now detail



the curious history of the first government loans, of all sorts, but the day came when the administration tyrannically declared its power, under an Act of Congress, to issue legal tender for its expenses without any reference whatever to such a fiction as a gold reserve for redemption or any visible promise to pay,- except what was on the paper, and that was something which called for patriotic faith. Vast was the outcry of the antiques, including all the original Andrew Jackson men, who loudly averred their unswerving attachment to a "specie basis," but the new currency flowed out like a river, in spite of them, and every man in the country took all he could get of it, even after it went down to little more than half its face in gold value. It was near the very beginning of this paper flood that some dry joker trifled with the feelings of a large number of his fellow countrymen. Out in front of the White House was a respectable railed enclosure known from ancient times as Lafayette Square. In the present day, that day, it had in its centre what purported to be a life size bronze statue of the great Frenchman, but I had sometimes dreamed of him as a larger man. It had been there long and the rain and shine had entirely changed the color of the garments of the noble hearted friend of George Washington. He was now, therefore, anything but a stylish or handsome hero. Well! One morning, a Washington daily paper announced in conspicuous type that "The Original Greenback" would be on exhibition in front of the White House at nine o'clock. Admission free to all. The announcement was of interest, even to me,



for I knew that editor and had conversed with him upon financial subjects the previous evening. So I went and pre-empted a post of observation in the portico and awaited the results. Just before nine o'clock these began to come. One column of free Americans marched up Pennsylvania Avenue from the East and another of like character from toward the setting sun. As each of them reached a White House gateway, it wheeled and marched in and advanced steadily to the front of the Executive Mansion. On arriving there, each citizen in turn came to a halt and turned to gaze admiringly at the emerald rusted statue of Lafayette, facing the other way in the middle of the "square." He did so because of a small boy who was ready to point out to him The Original. Then it was an interesting undertaking, for a student of human nature like myself, to note the rapidly changing expressions of so many countenances. Also, many of them made remarks of an exceedingly varied and often vigorous, if not eloquent, character. I did not keep any count of those two processions but believe that all their membership were ready to consider this as a strictly mercantile transaction. It was a complete sell.

From the beginning of the greenback era, with its well known characteristics, I may as well step right forward across the intervening time to the day when it became only too plain that no more legal tender currency could be put out without dropping the entire mass to something like the fate of the old Continental currency which disappeared altogether at the end of the War for Independence. It was almost as plain that no





more government loans could be floated, largely on account of the many reverses suffered by our armies and the dispirited condition of the nation. In this emergency, the National Bank scheme was brought forward. As is well known, it proposed a loan of four hundred millions of dollars, with the privilege to the takers of the bonds of employing them as a basis for banking, including the issue of bank notes as money. The entire scheme was bitterly opposed, even by many sincere patriots, especially by all the old fashioned "Jackson Democrats." These gentlemen discovered in it a resurrection of the United States Bank which had been done to death by Old Hickory. There was an all but desperate state of affairs created, after several of the preliminary votes in House and Senate had appeared to indicate the probable defeat of the bill. The entire organism of the government was threatened with financial paralysis and already the pay of the soldiers was in danger of getting behind hand as badly as in a former day had that of George Washington's Continentals. Moreover, there was to be discerned an increasing jealousy among many legislators of what they called "The interference of the Executive with the Constitutional powers and freedom of the Legislative branch of the government." I will cut the story short, for there came an evening when a number of leading statesmen, Republicans, who were most strenuously opposed to the Bank Act, were all invited to attend an important meeting of the Central Council of Twelve of The Union League. I was a member of that important body, as well as honorary Grand Corresponding Secretary, and the meeting was to be at the rooms of Judge Edmonds in the General Land Office. I think that only selected members of the



Grand Council were present, but there was a rare lot of intelligent statesmen and they had wonderful reports to hear of what the Union League was doing and could do, especially in their own states and districts. It was, indeed, as if we were proud to show and explain to them how very much we could do for them at the next election. Judge Edmonds was a capital hand at lucid explanations and I have never heard anything done better. They listened with intense interest and then, as the still time floated by, they found themselves led on into a discussion of the needs of the treasury and the absolutely imperative need for the four hundred millions of dollars provided for by the Bank Act. Of course, I cannot imagine why Edmonds now and then appealed to me, on point after point, or how, at last, I came to be faced so sharply by Senator Timothy Howe, of Wisconsin, as spokesman for himself and other recalcitrant anti-bank men. He and I had been good friends, however, and he was a genuine patriot. I can pretty well recall, now, one of the fag ends of that controversy, and how deeply, or ridiculously, I felt that the fate of all the banks to come, or not to come, depended upon me and upon my ability,- or cheek,- to give convincing answers.

"Well! Now!" he said, at last. "I did not so understand it. If I could only be assured that the President felt so deeply about it, personally. I did not know that his views were so positive-"

"The President, Mr. Senator," I replied, "is always cautious, and wisely so, about saying or doing anything which might be construed as Executive interference with the independence of the Legislature-"



"Of course he is!" exclaimed Howe. "But then! I had no idea! Do you mean to say, of your own knowledge, that he regards,- that he has said,- or that he would look upon any man who voted against that bill as a public enemy?"

"By no means, Mr. Senator!" I at once responded. "Do not misunderstand me. I have said nothing of the sort. He has said nothing whatever nor would he assume such an attitude. Far from it! He would only feel and would be compelled to say that the men who defeat the bill are cutting off pay and supplies for the armies in the field; starving the soldiers; forcing the abandonment of campaigns; preventing enlistments; acting as reinforcements to Lee and as supporters of Jeff Davis. That is all I meant. Of course, he would not influence in any way-"

"That'll do, sir!" rasped the Senator. "That'll do. I do not want to hear any more. He shall have his bill! Judge Edmunds, is there any more business for us to attend to?"

That was about all, but somehow, every enemy of the Bank Act went home that night in company with a fellow who believed it the only salvation of the army and the country besides being a blessing to the whole world. Many long years afterwards, however, I discovered that Mr. Howe had really never forgiven me for my anti-Jackson raid upon his patriotism.

I suppose I hardly need to say that my duties in the Red Room, in care of Mrs. Lincoln's receptions, brought me in contact with a large variety of remarkable people. So did the President's public receptions, at which also I was on duty with the Lady of the White House. On the whole,



nevertheless, I must give the palm to the old northeast room for rare studies of human character or the lack of it. As to the latter, I must not fail to record one remarkable specimen. He was pointed out to me at a later day as being probably the worst man in the United States, but the first time I saw him he was in the hallway, waiting to obtain an interview with the President. He was of medium height, with long, silvery white hair and the most sanctimonious of faces. He was dressed in shining broadcloth, with a white necktie of voluminous folds and a diamond pin, a new silk hat and a costly overcoat. From his outfit, he might have been a doctor of divinity and he may have imagined that he had taken in an old hawkeye of a criminal lawyer like Abraham Lincoln, for he did get into the office. He had not quite done so. The next day, he came again and for some reason I was standing at the door of my room when I saw him suddenly emerge from the Executive Chamber with the likeness of a large and propulsive boot just behind him. I asked no questions and cannot say how it was that I was so very quickly thereafter down in Willard's Hotel, gazing into its gorgeous barroom. There, at the bar, had gathered a splendid array of "sporting men," as they would have called themselves, and with them, as sleek and unabashed as ever, was the whitehaired party whom they addressed as "General." There were glasses out and as he lifted up his own he rolled up his pious eyes and exclaimed, sonorously: "Brethren, let us drink!"

Speaking of sporting men, Washington City had always been a favorite field for the gambling fraternity. The legends were many concerning





the cardplaying propensities of some of the oldtime statesmen and quite a number of those now on hand were well known faro and poker players. There were old and all but famous gamblinghouses which were in full blast but to which the entree was not easy to obtain. Smaller and meaner resorts were open to all who came, but only "gentlemen" with long purses were welcome in the grand and costly-luncheoned hells. There was a great increase in the gambling mania as greenbacks grew more plentiful and easier to get hold of. I found, too, that the old custom of "making the game interesting" still obtained at private parties, whether of whist or euchre. I was fond of whist but did not care much for either euchre or poker. A sort of club rule generally prevailed of making a limit of not to exceed five dollars a corner at whist and two and a half at euchre.

Partly because of the legends and partly out of curiosity, born of my studies of human nature, I visited the really celebrated Joe Hall's and some of the other hells, a number of times. I was much interested in what I saw but could not entirely understand why any fairly good mathematician should go crazy over that particular method for throwing away his money. At Joe's, which was decidedly the best specimen den, I saw, on one occasion that was not more remarkable than another, among the distinguished crowd in the elegantly furnished rooms, Baltimore and northern business men, planters, judges of courts, lawyers, prominent members of Congress, army contractors and the like. One of the faro dealers came to me to ask if I saw any army paymasters, commissaries or quartermasters. He said that fighting generals, if we had any, would



not be out of order, but the War Office had sent a notification that they must not admit any government officers, not even from the Treasury, whose duties put them in charge of public money. I was able, after a brief search and after sending a man out, to assure him that his coast was clear and that he was free to plunder anybody I saw there. They never plundered me and I do not think I was out out for a gambler. In fact, I was more than once sarcastically informed that I was about the coolest young party in Washington and was inquired of as to whether anything on this earth could excite me. I remember that on one occasion a well known banker was told by a friend that he believed he had met me on Pennsylvania Avenue, but he was not sure.

"Well," said the banker. "Was he walking fast?"

"Ye-es, pretty fast, seemed to be in a hurry."

"Doubtful. Did he have a cigar in his mouth?"

"No. He didn't."

"That's all. You didn't meet Mr. Stoddard. Not if he was in a hurry. He never was.- And no cigar, either."

That too was at a time when John Hay was almost angrily telling me that he considered me a kind of miracle of hard work and that I could do more without showing it than any other man he had ever seen. He abused me, also, for being what he called "statuesque" and always inclined to strike attitudes and take positions,- but I replied that the latter was just what we were wishing the army would succeed in doing.





































