STORY OF A CONNECTICUT LIFE

ELDREDGE

Yours Truly.
Chas 2 Eldredge.

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BY

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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by CHARLES Q. ELDREDGE

It is very generally expected when an autobiography is presented to the public, that there shall be something in it more interesting than found in the ordinary novel, and this I suppose is on the basis that truth holds up higher ideals, and could they only be told, presents more in facts, than the most successful novelist has ever attained in fiction.

It is very reasonable, however, for the writer of an autobiography to fall far short of what the public expects of him, for he is handicapped from the start, in that no one seems anxious to arrange with him for a publication of his biography, (and this he cannot understand), and so if his story is to be told he must use his own pen and tell it in his own way.

For several years and from time to time, I have received written requests from absent friends to write up the story of my life, but until recently I have never considered it.

Necessarily there will be a lot left out, but I will agree to put in only what really happened,

and maybe, if the reader or hearer of this story was writing his own life, there would be an occasional streak of forgetfulness? in the record.

Some wise novelist has said "Every story should have a beginning," and many of us have said in reading their effusions "The end should be proper close to it."

However, for a beginning, I was born in Old Mystic in 1845 and so far as I can remember there was no especial celebration or housewarming over the event.

The occasion had been repeated eight times in the family upon my arrival, and my birth to look back upon was of unusual interest only because it was the last one.

As the sewing machine came out the year of my birth, there was some talk of making it a national holiday, but as my father was a boss carpenter working for one twenty-five a day and ten hours in the day, he only approved of Sundays and the Fourth of July, as days of rest.

I have always been led to believe that it was a disappointment to my family that I was not born earlier in the month, so they could have had an enjoyable holiday upon the Fourth of July, but the Bible record makes the fifteenth of July my birthday and so far we have gotten along very well with it.

On general principles it reads better in a biography to have the hero born late, rather than early.

As it is quite the custom, my early years were spent with my parents who continued to make Old Mystic their home.

When I was four years of age I had a fall from the rear end of an ox-cart, cutting my forehead upon a stone as I struck the ground that caused a scar yet visible.

Some have said that this fall affected my brain.

The same year we moved from the large house afterwards owned and occupied by A. B. Taylor, to the place where I now live.

This was in 1849, and my father put on a scow, near where the Woolen Company's factory now stands, the small house that he had previously moved from Milltown, and brought to this place.

The lot he had previously bought of E. D. Wightman, cashier of the Mystic Bank.

And right here it will be proper to explain the local names, Mystic, and Old Mystic.

For something like one hundred and sixty years, the village at the head of the river was known as Mystic, and for very many years after it was so known.

The lower village was Mystic Bridge on the east, and Mystic River on the west, and there were Post Offices on both sides under these names.

Up here the John Hyde Co. operated two large cotton mills and another at Indian Town, supplied from this village.

We had two banks here, one a state bank, the other a national bank. The railroad ran from

Providence to Stonington only, and all freight came by water to Mystic Bridge.

Barges, which were large scows, met the incoming vessels there, and brought their freight up the river to Mystic, and carried down the output from the factories.

Captain William Taylor, Captain William Carpenter, Captain Amos Mitchell, Thomas Lymas and B. F. Collins, owned and operated this line of freighters.

This village was a lively one and the home of many hundreds of people.

When the railroad from Stonington to New London was completed, it seemed to change the old order of things.

The Hyde Company went out of business.

Banks started at Mystic Bridge and Mystic River, and the railroad found it impossible to sell tickets satisfactorily to so many Mystics.

As the lower village now increased rapidly, it was found that correspondents directed their letters to Mystic, and they came up here when intended for the lower villages; and the railroad tickets were printed Mystic, with the result that a general howl went up to Washington asking them to give the name of Mystic to the lower villages; and the people up here chose Old Mystic as the best they could do.

This made much feeling, some of which still exists.

I was out of the State, as will be shown later,

when this change was made, but I felt as all here did, that it was in a measure, at least, unfair.

When I think of our village as it used to be, employing hundreds of operatives in her factories, building gun boats for the government, as she did in 1812; building a large schooner of three hundred tons, named the Mystic Valley, in 1858; having a side wheel steamer with Capt. Rowland, master, carrying passengers up to the dock; and see her as a village, as she is now, with only one industry, and no bank, it looks as if the railroad had really taken more than we had been paid for.

Besides, Major Lamb had two factories over to Burnetts Corners, one of them built on the site of the Pequot Fort, destroyed by Mason, that drew all supplies and shipped all outputs from this village.

However, Mystic as now called may glory in the way she has gone ahead, and left us far behind, she can never rob us of our "Porters Rocks," or of the Oldest Baptist Church Organization in Connecticut.

Just outside the village we have in good repair, the first parsonage built in the United States for the use of this same society, and Old Mystic as now called, shows the longest pastorates that the world has a record of, a father, son, and grandson preached for this society a hundred and twenty-five years.

In my early days the choir was led by a bass viol, played by Ezekiel Gallup and it seems to me from memory, no pipe-organ has ever exceeded

the melody and harmony produced by that choir.

The Sunday School of the fifties was somewhat different from that of to-day.

I have one of the Infant Cathechism Books and also one of the books from the Sunday School Library.

Its title is "John Rogers, Burned at the Stake."

Nothing of a less serious nature was admitted.

At the age of six, I entered the common school taught by Miss Aseneth Williams.

The school-house was a two story one, near where the present school-house stands.

The younger pupils all attended down stairs, and when we were tall enough we went up.

On the left hand corner of the school-room, a piece of board was nailed across, with the edge down, about two feet from each side and I should guess some three and a half feet high.

At the beginning of each term we were lined up and told to measure.

If any of our heads hit the board we had to go upstairs to a man teacher.

I remember I "scrunched" one term, for Sarah Fellows was teacher and I just loved Sarah, and so I got an extra term downstairs. Sometimes those that went up were so very ignorant and stupid that the teacher would send them down to measure again, but so far as I remember they always confirmed the previous measurement.

Kindergartens and grades were unknown, inches only counted. There were no laws compelling

attendance, and home duties came first, so that inequalities in proficiency were frequent. The school in summer had few pupils, but in winter every seat was filled.

The fall term started late and after my last term downstairs, when I ought to have gone up, I entered barefoot, hoping I could get under the board again, but it was too conspicuous and altho I tried, and was the only barefoot one there, I was made to go upstairs.

I think for several winters I got along pretty well but I know we were pretty troublesome to the teachers, and rarely the same one taught us more than one term.

School visitors were not pleasant to us, tho an exception to this was Gen. Williams of Norwich, whom we all liked, for he told us nice stories with his good advice.

Esquire Sabin of Mystic was our special horror for he never commenced his address until five minutes of four, and generally talked till five o'clock.

At one time it was given out that the Committee, one of whom was Abel Hinckley, father of the one now living here, had hired a man for the coming winter that would be very strict and never let a day pass without flogging at least one boy.

Of course, this kind of talk nerved us up and when school was to commence we had out scouts to give notice of his approach.

There were forty-two of us boys, and forty-five girls. Our scouts reported him coming afoot

from North Stonington way. His name was Hibbard R. Norman, stood over six feet and was not a handsome man.

We formed two ranks from the school-house steps, up the road he was to come down.

We had the girls on the outer end.

Like a V we opened up, he entering by the middle of the road at the wide end.

He had an old-fashioned Kennebecker in his hand and as he came down the line, "with our eyes front and hats off," we received him.

As I remember it, he did not like it.

(He did not have much humor.)

We got into the school-house, which had four rows of double seats with desk in front.

From the platform, and teacher's desk, the right side was for boys and the left for girls.

All the larger, were way back, tapering to the smallest in front. We had all agreed that when our names were asked, which was the first thing to be done, that we would all give fictitious middle initials.

If there were those that had no middle letter they should put one in, and those that did have, should change it.

Now as it happened, I sat on the back seat to the left hand side and was the first to be called upon to give my name.

I suppose it was because my parents had so many children that they never gave them a middle name, anyway none of them ever got one.

So when he looked at me, saying he wished to enter the names upon the register, I responded Chas. Q. Eldredge.

Trouble set in immediately, for not only the boys, but all of the girls broke out into a hearty laugh.

My seatmate at this time was Albert F. Crumb, now of Groton Bank, and while he went back on his promise, and the false initial business ended right there, and while it made me a lot of trouble, I do not know as he ought to be blamed.

Of course, I was pretty mad at the time.

In those days the Roll Call was one of the most prominent things in school work.

To illustrate: In the morning at the opening of school the roll was called.

At twelve o'clock when school was to be dismissed, the roll was called.

At one o'clock when school was opened, the roll was called and at four o'clock, dismissal time, it was called again.

At first I could give no reason for it, but later when I had been repeatedly sent out by the teacher to cut young beach sprouts for use in his business, I decided that if it was not to note the dead, it certainly was to mark the wounded.

That first forenoon, when he called the roll at twelve the same howl went up from every seat except mine.

I, some way, did not feel like laughing.

At one o'clock again; and now he caught on, but

could not tell the exact why of it.

At four o'clock again they broke forth and he dismissed the school but "requested" me to stop.

Some of the boys tried to stay with me, but he made them all go.

As soon as they were out he told me to come up front, and in this case I considered it no honor.

If the man had had any fun in him, it might have been fixed, but he snarled out the question, "Why do they laugh when I call your name?"

As I look back I am afraid I was not entirely truthful in my reply which was, "Oh, they are always laughing at me; why didn't you keep THEM, I didn't laugh any."

(True so far.)

Next he said, "Is your name Eldredge?"

Of course, to this I could say, "Yes, sir."

"Well, isn't it Charles?" he asked.

"Always been called so," I said; and a queer thing, he did not ask me about the "Q," but told me I could go home.

I went, but even then I did not feel perfectly happy, for the streets, the Post Office and the stores were full of it, and where he boarded at Mr. Hinckley's he got the whole story, for there were two girls there, one now the widow of Allyn Avery of Mystic, that tried to tell him it was all fun and there was no harm in "Q" anyhow.

Was he appeased?

Not much!

Some way I feared trouble and went to bed

THE OLD HOMESTEAD
Built 1850

Where the School Officers delivered their ultimatum.

early and none too soon, for I had hardly gotten upstairs before Mr. Norman, the Committeeman, and Esquire Sabin came to the door, and entering the house, took seats in the kitchen from which a stove pipe ran through the ceiling and into my room.

We had a spare room in the house, but that evening it was not warmed.

I put my ear close to the stove pipe and heard the conversation plainly.

There was a lot said, and when all was summed up by Squire Sabin, it was that I was to come to school in the morning and when school was called to order, and before roll call, I was to apologize at length, and make a statement that all could understand, setting forth how sorry I was and making promises of good conduct and no capers for the future, and if I did not do this, I was to be immediately expelled, and that before the whole school and in the presence of the honorable Committee, who were to be in attendance and who were to have the pleasure of reading my sentence.

While the hearing of this was interesting, it was not very agreeable.

It gave me, however, time to think, and in a measure to prepare myself.

As a boy of about fifteen who really liked to go to school, and did not want to disgrace his parents by being expelled, the situation was a solemn one.

I slept little that night and had no strong de-

sire for breakfast. My parents in the morning told me of their callers, expressed their sorrow that a boy of theirs should do such a thing, and insisted that my grown-up brothers had arrived at manhood, and did fairly well without a middle name, and they could not understand why I should be so anxious for one, especially as it was such a disgrace to them.

However, they knew I would do the right thing when I went up to school, and they only hoped it would be a life-long lesson to me. And I will say right here in parenthesis "it has."

I hung around "Hank's Grove" till the last notes of the bell called me in, but even then as I sought the streets I was yelled to from the Post Office and Morgan's store, "Hello, 'Q' ", and this by adults, who were full of my story.

As I look back upon that morning and the condition of things at the opening of school, I almost wonder that I came out alive. First, every scholar was present.

Next, the committee in their best clothes, and with their high silk hats ranged in a row on the floor under the large blackboard.

Next, the teacher, H. R. Norman, six feet, three, and wide in proportion; and all against a little fellow that weighed about a hundred pounds, it seemed to me then and it seems to me now, that there was not an equitable division of forces.

I was the last to enter, and when I had come through the door, it was closed by the teacher, his

gavel descended on his desk, and he said, "Before roll call Charles Eldredge wishes to make an apology to the Committee of this school district, to the teacher, and to the scholars."

I had studied all night on what I was to say, but when he had made his remarks which were, of course, intended for an introduction, I could not think of a thing.

As I hesitated, every eye in school was turned on me, and even this did not really seem to help me.

After a little I stood up.

My Heavens! How still it was!

I think I can remember every word I said.

First, I made a somewhat low bow; this was to gain time; then I said, "The teacher has told you that I 'Want' to make an apology.

"As I want to be truthful I will have to say, he is mistaken when he says I 'want' to, but I am going to, as well as I know how.

"This trouble has all come about because I put a "Q" in my name.

"And I want to say I had no right to do it, and I am sorry for the trouble it has made, and I will promise to never put another "Q" in my name as long as I live."

With this I sat down and the teacher said, "Stand up again, sir."

Of course, I stood up.

"What he wants to say," said the teacher, "is that he has committed a grievous offence against

the morals and deportment of this school, that its magnitude can hardly be overestimated, that the generosity, and magnanimity of the school Committee and teacher, in forgiving, and pardoning the offence in consideration of this apology, is very much appreciated, and his future conduct will be based on this noble exhibition of their forgiving spirit—That's what you want to say, is it not sir?" he asked me.

I hesitatingly replied, "I suppose you understand it; I said it as well as I could."

So the incident was closed but the "Q" has lived on, and has had a legal place in my name for over sixty years.

My school life went on, attending winters and helping father, and working out more or less, summers.

The first money I remember of really working out by the day for, was driving a pair of white horses owned by Geo. F. Langworthy, around an oat stack, the horses treading out the grain.

For this I was paid eight cents per day.

Are there many of my readers who have seen grain thrashed in this way?

When John S. Schoonhover carried on a large tannery in this village I pounded bark for him for twenty-five cents a day.

I, also, at one time, worked for Elias B. Brown husking, filling as many baskets as the men, and for this I received twenty-five cents per day.

As I remember it, I had all the money I earned,

but the most of it went into clothes and very little for spending money.

Very few of the boys had much money "to burn" and my largest outside expenditure was for material to celebrate the Fourth of July, which was never neglected.

All of my boy chums worked out more or less summers and my record in this direction seems full.

In 1859 I made one of a gang of road workers, under the supervision of the Hon. Chas. P. Chipman, who had a yearly contract with the town of Groton to keep all of its roads in repair.

I was really the only boy in the crew but I held the "scoop-shovel" which entitled me to a man's pay.

In 1860, a Mr. Markham opened a quarry near my home and with a crew of Swedes and Scotchmen broke out paving stone that were shipped to New York City to pave the city streets.

Mr. Markham hired me to help break out the large blocks by hand drilling, which were then broken into pavers with twenty-four pound sledges in the hands of the Scotchmen.

This hand drilling seemed to come natural to me, and it was not hard work for me to get in the required number of holes, and after a few weeks, I kept the time and the books for Mr. Markham, doing this work evenings.

This crew of Scotchmen required some eight pounds of oat meal stirred into the water they

drank every day, which I shared with them, and while sometimes it was so thick a mixture we had to bite it off "to stop the run," it made a good drink and my weight increased as long as I was in the quarry.

The Presidential Campaigns of 1856 and 1860 were important epochs in my life and I still have the torch I carried for Fremont and Dayton in 1856.

It was in 1854 that my head would not go under the measuring board and I was sent upstairs to be under the teaching of Asa Perkins, a teacher that we all liked.

In 1862 my next elder brother having enlisted, and being stationed at Norfolk, Virginia, a member of Co. C, 21st C V, sent for his wife to come and see him, as he was badly disabled, and being cared for in a private hospital.

As his wife had a baby about six months old and it was difficult to provide proper board for it in Mystic, it was thought best to take it along and I was to go along to pilot the whole outfit.

I was about sixteen years of age, had never been more than seven miles from home, and certainly my selection as head of the expedition was not made because of my experience.

In those days, ordinary people had few trunks, but carpet bags were common.

The uncertainties of traveling, no Northern people could go south of Baltimore without a pass, the mother, the baby, and myself, especial-

ly the baby, called for no small amount of baggage and when it was all assembled, for I have the inventory yet, there were two carpet bags, two good sized square bundles, two medium sized round bundles, one ladies' hat box, one umbrella and the well-wrapped up baby.

Colonel Fish of Mystic was Provost Marshal at Baltimore and Elisha D. Wightman, cashier of the Mystic Bank, gave me a letter to him asking his assistance in getting me and my outfit through the lines.

We took the steamboat from Stonington to New York and another boat from there to Baltimore.

We arrived at Baltimore in the evening.

I was surprised at the number of people on the dock who seemed interested in our arrival and "will you have a carriage" was asked me at least fifty times.

My general instructions read, "If you get to Baltimore in the evening, stay at Hotel all night, for the military offices will not be open till nine o'clock in the morning."

No suggestions were given to me as to what hotel, so I asked one of the hackmen if he could tell me a good comfortable hotel to go to, that there was a lady and baby on the boat and myself.

"Oh, yes," he said, "bring them ashore and I will take you to the 'Barnum,' that is a comfort able hotel."

Remember, up to that time I had never spent a

night in a hotel in my life, and more than that, had never been inside of one. When the hackman saw my array of bundles, carpet bags, baby, etc., he opened the door of the hack without a word and we all got in.

As we drove up to the main entrance of the hotel, we were met by the bell-boys and we had baggage enough so every one got a piece.

I did not know but my sister would give up the baby, but she did not.

Our procession marched to the clerk's counter and I asked for two connecting rooms and we were all taken upstairs.

Some of the baggage was put into each room. as I think they were short of tables.

The boys seemed inclined to tarry with us and at that time I did not mistrust why.

After they finally left us, in looking about the room, I found fastened to the door a card of rates and prices and for each of our rooms, four dollars per day was the advertised charge, meals extra.

This was a knock-out.

My brother had financed this expedition from his savings as a soldier, drawing thirteen dollars per month, and the whole fund would be put out of sight immediately if these charges were to be met.

I held a consultation with my sister and we agreed that something must be done.

So I walked down stairs and to the clerk's

office and told my story, which in the main was that I had come to their hotel without knowing anything of its terms and that we were bound south to see a disabled soldier and had hardly enough money for our fares, and if he would let us out without charge and tell us some cheap respectable hotel we could go to, we should appreciate it very much indeed.

He wanted to know how much we expected to pay and I told him the limit we could spare would be two dollars.

"All right," he said, "stay here for that."

That I thanked him, goes without saying.

We did not have to be called in the morning and when it was fairly light we walked out upon the street, enquiring our way to the steamboat landing for Fortress Monroe.

We had a long walk but finally got there, and were told the boat did not go out till towards night and passengers were not allowed aboard till near sailing time, and must then show passes, etc. I had had such good luck at the hotel that I did not intend to fall down here, so I asked for an officer of the boat, and told my story, and while he had no right to let anyone aboard without a pass, he consented that my sister and baby could sit in the cabin until I got my pass and failing to get a pass, I would remove the whole outfit ashore without trouble.

I went to the Provost Marshal's Office at eight o'clock, and found a jam of more than a hun-

dred there, waiting to get in. They were all colors, shapes and sizes, male and female.

I finally got into the office, but as my ability to secure a pass was founded on the personal letter to Col. Fish, I had to wait until he came in.

At about eleven o'clock he came, and I got a pass to Fortress Monroe only, while I expected one to Norfolk.

With this pass I returned to the steamboat and secured passage to Fortress Monroe.

My pass from Baltimore ordered me to report in person to General B. F. Butler, the commanding general, who, if so disposed, would pass me on, but they were restricting passes and I might have trouble upon arriving at the Fortress.

I left my sister and all of our accessories aboard of the steamboat and went to the General's Office.

He received me in person, questioned me closely, and gave me a pass to Norfolk.

With this pass I again went back to the steamboat, but since it was not to leave for four hours, and it being dull, I went ashore, after reporting to my sister that I had fortunately secured our pass, and walked along the beach, down by the big fort. On a sand point ahead of me I saw a very large cannon mounted on an iron framework some fifteen feet high and iron steps leading up to it.

This gun was between the ocean and the fort,

which was quite high above it.

From the top of the fort to the gun was probably twenty rods. At this time the wind blew quite a gale ashore and as I went to the gun and saw the steps leading up I thought it would be interesting to go up them and examine it "first-hand," as it were. I think I had gotten more than half way up, when a darkey, hauling sand from a point half way between the gun and the base of the fort, attracted my attention by his loud calls, and as I stopped on my ascent to listen to him, he said, "Better come down, massa, they'll shoot."

I looked up over him to the fort and on top were some twenty men with guns at their shoulders and apparently pointed my way.

I immediately came down and the negro said they had ordered me three times to keep away from the gun and as I had paid no attention, they were getting ready to shoot.

The wind had prevented me from hearing their call.

They supposed I was going to spike the gun, and in those days a man's life was not very valuable anyhow.

Well, I thanked the darkey who had undoubtedly saved my life and the steamboat was good enough for me to stay in during the rest of the delay at the Fortress.

We arrived in Norfolk and found my brother able to be up around but not able to report at

the Co's headquarters.

As I was well acquainted with many of the men and officers of Co. C., I was allowed to wear my brother's uniform, draw his rations, and in fact did duty for some time as a hospital steward.

As some days I wore civilian clothes, and sometimes a uniform, I was enabled to become acquainted with most parts of the city of Norfolk and the surrounding country.

I got a pass one day to go over to Suffolk to see the Navy Yard that had been pretty well destroyed April 21st, 1861, and this was of course granted me in civilian clothes.

In looking around Suffolk, I saw a large vessel with many guns lying at the dock, and I was interested to go aboard.

There was a gang plank leading to her deck and a man with a musket and bayonet attached paced, or walked across the entrance. Why I waited till he got to the end of his beat I do not know, but I know I did, and then stepped aboard, and was out of sight before he turned.

I walked the length of the ship and as I came back I seemed to be attracting considerable attention.

Many men were stationed at small tables apparently making and comparing maps of some kind and they seemed quite surprised to see me.

I accordingly made for the gangway and I think I went faster than a walk but not fast enough to escape the point of a bayonet that not only

damaged my pants, but drew blood enough to entitle me to a pension, only the location of my wound prevented my ever making application.

I took part in one or two little raids made by the Co that resulted in the confiscation of a few pumpkins and they were called by the boys "pumpkin raids."

During my stay in Norfolk which extended over considerable time, a Connecticut Lieutenant was drilling colored troops in the city, when a resident doctor, David W. Wright, by name, came out of his office and insulted him.

The lieutenant pushed him aside and told him to keep away or he would put him under arrest.

With this the doctor drew a revolver and shot him dead.

The doctor was arrested, tried and convicted and sentenced to be hanged.

He broke jail twice, was recaptured and in September, 1862, was driven in a hack behind his own coffin, to the Fair Grounds outside the city, and our regiment had the honor of hanging him. I cut out a piece of the rope that strangled him and have it yet. The lieutenant whom he shot, had a wife and two children and although it did not give him back to them, I have always felt that it eased their loss.

I have always kept up my acquaintance with many of the survivors of this company and when, on October 20th, 1898, a monument was erected in New London to perpetuate the memory of the

regiment, I received a special invitation to attend the exercises.

It was on this occasion that Thaddeus Pecor of Noank offered a resolution that hereafter I should be legally known as a member of the company and moved that I be received and entered on the roll as a "Daughter of the Regiment."

This would have passed unanimously, had not General Taylor, a well known and conspicuous officer of the company objected, on the grounds that while I had been wounded in the service, the location of the wound was not commendatory, and would detract rather than add to their fighting record.

That there may be no misunderstanding, I wish to state clearly the fact that I am not legally numbered with the survivors.

We had less trouble in coming North than we had in going South, and our baggage was better arranged.

Soon after coming home I entered school and attended till the last Friday in December, 1862.

The Monday following, at 4 A. M. I started with Elisha D. Wightman for Wisconsin.

Without explanation this would seem sudden and though it was sudden I feel an explanation is necessary to understand this real turning point in my life.

The last Sunday in December, 1862, I went up to the village in the evening to attend Divine Service in the Baptist Church, previously alluded to,

as was my usual custom, and seeing a light in one of the stores which was a most unusual sight of a Sunday night, I stepped inside and found Mr. Wightman, before mentioned, buying a full box of Lillenthral's Fine Cut Chewing Tobacco.

A gentleman that had followed me in said to Mr. Wightman, "Buying tobacco heavy, aren't you?"

"Yes," he answered, "I start west in the morning and want a good stock."

"Who is going with you?" was then asked.

"Going alone," he replied, "unless Charlie Q. goes with me," turning to me and continuing, "how would you like it?"

I told him I guessed I would like it all right and asked where he was going.

He said "Wisconsin," and asked me into his house.

I spent the evening there instead of in church and agreed with him to start for Wisconsin the next morning, he to pay all expenses and deliver me back in Mystic one year from date on a salary of one hundred and twenty-five dollars, provided I could get the consent of my parents which I thought I could.

I went home and it was more of a job than I had anticipated to get their consent.

They were getting advanced in years, but as my brother's wife was with them I used her presence as a lever to boost my argument and won out.

Up to this time I had never worn woolen under-

wear and I might truthfully add, no other kind, and the boys of my acquaintance showed that I was no exception.

We drove from the village to Groton Bank, took the ferry to New London, the Central Vermont north, and the Canadian Route to Chicago.

The sceond day out at 4 A. M. a rail broke and derailed our train, the car Mr. Wightman and I were in rolling down an embankment, turning over three times and killed or wounded every person in the car except Mr. Wightman and myself; and this escape for us was because we, without thought, put our hands under the seat and held rigidly when the car made its turns.

The car was equipped with stoves, as all cars in those days were and fire destroyed the wreck, as was also the usual custom.

Thermometers in Chicago were thirty-four below zero, but I had no chance to get underwear till we arrived in Milwaukee.

A short stop here and then west on the M. and St. Paul railroad to New Lisbon, where Mr. Wightman stopped.

Then by team I went twelve miles north to our headquarters, Werner, Wisconsin.

My real introduction to the woolly west was when I was dumped out of the sled at Werner, onto the front porch of the hotel.

I found that the landlord was shut into his room with smallpox, that the man who usually cooked had started the day before for the doctor who was

Werner Hotel, where I landed in 1863

twelve miles away and had not yet returned.

There was a wood fire in the bar room and a pile of long wood out of doors, and the snow some three feet deep.

Water for the hotel was taken from a well thirty feet deep, nearby, and hoisted up with a windlass.

I found in this well a pole with a chisel on the lower end to cut the ice before water could be taken from it.

Mr. Wightman's interest in this section was derived from the foreclosure by his bank of a mortgage on pine lands which he purposed to develop.

The general custom was to take a crew of some twenty-five men and several ox-teams in the fall and go up the river some eighty miles, build a camp and a cattle shed, and when the snow came, have more teams, both oxen and horses, haul the logs to the river and when the snow melted and the freshet came in the spring, drive the logs down the river to the mill.

As we did not get there till January, it was late to make a start, but Mr. Wightman wanted to put in one camp anyhow, and so after a few days at this hotel, I was sent on with some twenty men and four teams to build a camp and go to logging.

An experienced state-of-Maine lumberman was boss of the outfit, and my position was the same as that of the other Irishmen and Kanucks which made up the crew.

It was a hard trip.

I wore the boots that I had brought from Connecticut and the second day out my feet and legs, to nearly my knees were frozen badly.

My boots were cut off any my feet and legs soaked in kerosene oil.

In a few days I could get around, but it was many years before I ever attempted to wear a boot.

Moccasins in that climate were necessary, for unless the joints work the foot will freeze.

To build a camp in three to four feet of snow with the mercury twenty-eight to thirty-five below zero, was a serious job.

This camp was thirty feet square, built with one log only outside and then drawn in like a Λ

There was a place for fire in the center 6x10 feet and a hole through the roof, 4x10 feet logged up like a chimney.

A constant fire burned all the time, using about one and a half cords of wood every twenty-four hours, yet in the drinking water barrel, in this camp, I saw ice make four inches in one night.

We slept on the ground under the edge of the roof with feet towards the fire, close together as we could lie and none too many blankets over us.

The blankets were all sewed together and the "end man" was allowed enough to tuck under and

"clinch."

I worked that winter as a "swamper," did a man's work and kept my eyes open.

We lived on salt beef, salt pork, beans, hot wheat bread every meal, tea and sorgum molasses.

No vegetables, no coffee, no sugar, no butter.

There was no sickness and men went out to work in the morning while the stars still shone, and never came in till they saw them again, except for a thirty-minute stop for dinner.

No card playing was allowed, and no talking after nine o'clock.

In the spring, I did not stay for the long drive but went down to the settlement to help get the mill ready for sawing.

It was eighty miles by "tote road" from the settlement where the mill was located to the pinery, and one hundred miles by the river.

Supplies were hauled by horse teams which made regular trips each week and they also brought the mail for the men.

My first winter in the woods is remarkable in looking back upon it for just one thing; that I really survived it.

Of course no one was expected to die in camp, and so the crew was selected, to so far as possible, avoid that possibility.

But I had not been selected, and was really a curiosity to the men, and a constant source of wonder as to how I would go thru the winter.

After the first few days that my frozen feet and legs bothered me I never lost an hour's time while in camp.

As I acted for the boss as time-keeper, and had charge of the "Wongen Box" where clothing and tobacco was sold to the crew, some little respect was shown me as being in a small degree the representative of the owners.

Sundays were spent in washing clothes by some of the boys, and writing letters to friends.

A lot of the crew did not consider either necessary.

Upon my return to the village in the spring, I was sent to the same hotel and found the landlord that had the smallpox, on duty but badly pox marked.

Gurdon S. Allyn of Mystic was in the village when I came down and I then learned for the first time that he held a controlling interest in the business which was known as E. D. Wightman & Co. George F. Langworthy of Mystic was the third partner.

Mr. Allyn, in talking with me, seemed to assume that I ought to know all about the business and gave me to understand that he should expect me to look out for things and report to him.

As I was but a boy, and he had three bosses that he was paying seventy dollars a month, I could hardly see how I could meet his requirements, especially as I was "green."

He stayed only a few days, but he gave the

impression to the people of Werner that I was his representative, and that in matters connected with the business it would be well to consult with me. Besides this, the money for payroll and expenses went through my hands and as this, at this time, was some ten thousand dollars a month, it had its influence.

As the company had not put in logs enough to keep the mill running all summer, we contracted to saw a few million feet at five dollars per thousand.

Several saw-mills were located on this, the Yellow River, and as the logs came down in the drive, each log bearing the registered mark of the owner, was sorted into the "booms" of the respective mills.

When our logs reached the mill, we started it at six o'clock A. M. and at twelve stopped thirty minutes for dinner; at twelve-thirty started again and ran till six o'clock, making eleven and one half hours of work.

Our mill was equipped with one large double rotary, and one sixty-inch single rotary, beside edgers, trimmers, shingle, picket, and lath saws.

Our average daily output was eighty thousand feet of inch lumber, twenty thousand shingle, thirty thousand lath, and five thousand pickets.

The logs were all white pine, mostly sixteen feet long and averaged two, to two and a half to the thousand.

From the mill, the lumber, loaded on cars, was

run to where it was rafted, a few hundred feet from the mill.

When a "fleet," as it was called, was ready, it was run or floated out of the Yellow River, into the Wisconsin, then into the Mississippi and down that river, till a market was found, sometimes a few hundred of miles only, and frequently to Hannibal or St. Louis, Mo.

As I became very intimately acquainted with the Mississippi River in later years, I will at a later period of my narrative refer to it again.

All through that summer of 1863 I was for the most part of the time in the company's store, helping out in the mill, and fitting into any vacancy that arose.

The store was simply a place where we kept things most needed for the help and was usually open only evenings.

There was no other store in the village, but a few years later a large store building was put up by the company and Benj. F. Miner of Mystic put in charge of it, who with half a dozen more young men from Connecticut, had been sent out by the management.

At the end of my first year, January, 1864, I settled up with the company, and of my contract price, one hundred and twenty-five dollars, I had sixty-two and a half paid me as balance due. I was unable to leave for a month, but February first, with ticket paid for by the company as agreed, I went home on a visit.

I stayed home two weeks, renewed my contract at a salary of five hundred dollars for the next year and returned to the lumber village.

The company was running three camps and had about one hundred men and twenty teams in the woods.

Before I left Mystic, Mr. Allyn suggested that upon my return, I go up into the woods, visit the several camps and report to him how I found things.

I followed the suggestion, stayed about three weeks, visiting all of the camps and noted as far as I was able, the way they were conducted, and the results.

Most certainly I offered few suggestions, and did not make myself conspicuous.

Preparing for the log drive, upon my return to the village and the preliminary work of a big season before us, kept me very busy until the logs came down.

We had a good drive and our "booms" were full of logs.

Very much to my surprise, I was told to get the mill ready for business and start it up.

This I proceeded to do and while our mill and rafting crews numbered several hundred men, I managed to get them into line and the work progressed satisfactorily.

One of the incidents that helped my standing with the crew came about when our engineer gave me notice at nine o'clock in the forenoon that he

should only work till twelve o'clock.

When asked for the reason he said he had no suitable society, there was nothing congenial in the village, and he could only stand it till noon.

I had hired him from Milwaukee.

He had a certificate from a technical school there, and a recommend from a firm in whose employ he had served.

We drove the mill with a one hundred and fifty horse, high power engine, fed from three large boilers, in which steam was made from the saw dust from the double rotary mill.

Two Norwegian firemen kept the furnace full.

The business of the engineer was to watch the engine and particularly the bells that led from all around the mill, and when rung meant "stop quick," someone might be in danger.

The engine was provided with a "starting bar" and could be quickly reversed.

I asked the engineer if he could not stay till Saturday night.

This was of a Monday morning.

He replied, "No, last Saturday night was enough for me."

I intimated that I really didn't engage him for a society man and our contract did not mention it.

Words seemed useless and I went down to the rafting crew and asked three men to come up to the mill with me.

These three men were brothers, large, husky fel-

lows, that came from Canada the year before, where lots of our help came from.

They were hard up when I hired them and they had been in the service of the company ever since and had proved reliable.

Early in the spring, one of them had fallen into the river above a crib of lumber and the current had taken him under the crib.

The four of us were on the crib when he went over and as this crib was against another below it, he would be kept under and drowned before he could get below the rafted lumber.

Instantly I started to make an opening between these cribs, the others helping me and the two of them held the cribs apart while I let myself down into the water, where I thought the body would come.

It struck my legs almost at once, and holding to the lumber with one hand, with the other I reached down and brought him up.

It was a close squeak but he came out all right and the brothers always seemed to feel that they could not do enough for me. I have told this story simply to show why I picked these men.

When I had them away from the crew, I told them about the engineer and told them I relied on them to help me.

The first thing they asked me was if I wanted them "to break him up."

Maybe I did not know just what they meant, but I told them, as he did not like the society

here, I simply wanted them to remove him from it, and they were to see that he went immediately to his boarding house, secured his "kennebecker" and walked out of the village, over the big bridge.

That was all; would they do it?

"You bet we will!" they replied.

So we went into the basement of the mill where the engine was located and asking the engineer to step out with us, I handed him seventy-five cents in silver and told him that was his pay up to ten o'clock and that he was excused.

He tried to talk but I informed him that the men with him would go with him to his boarding house and keep with him till he got his traps and then go with him out of the village and across the big bridge, and my advice to him would be "Keep on going."

It was only twelve miles to the next village so he could easily reach it before night.

I told the boys in his presence that if he hung back at all for two of them to take each an arm and the third to walk behind with one foot mostly in the air.

The instructions were implicitly followed and I never heard of him after that day.

I had never run an engine in my life but as there was no man in the crew competent, I handled it for some eleven days, till I got a man from New Lisbon, and most luckily I made good.

Another matter came up this season that attracted considerable attention.

Mrs. B. F. Miner

Our double rotary was sawing about fifty thousand feet a day and as I watched it, I was sure it could do more.

So I gave the "tail sawyer" another job and I took his place for four weeks, learning the business, or trying my best to.

At the end of that period I had the old tail sawyer come back and sent the head sawyer down on the rafting platform, and I took his place.

After my first week, the record for the three months I handled the saw was fifty-nine thousand, eight hundred and seventy feet per day.

After the mill closed for the season, I went down to the mouth of the Wisconsin on a raft and came back to get ready for the winter's logging.

B. F. Miner was running the store and keeping the books.

He got married and this step added much to my comfort, for they kept house over the new store and I was taken in, both as a boarder and as a friend.

And right here I want to say that Mrs. Miner was a great lover of books and one of, if not the best educated women I have ever met.

She seemed to think she could improve me educationally in many ways, and as I look back I can readily see that the need was very apparent.

In the early part of this narrative I had considerable to say about attending the village school, but I did not say that the studies were chosen in the main by the pupil.

This, however, was true, and personally the three R's were my limit.

Geography, Grammar, Algebra and History, though studied by some in the school, were never studied by me, and while in hearing them recite I caught on to the fact that Connecticut was one of the eastern states and that there was a lot in the Grammar about "he loves, she loves, and they both love," I got none of it first hand.

Having so few studies, I naturally ought to have excelled in them, but in all but Arithmetic I was only ordinary.

In Arithmetic I was at the head of our class.

I still have some sixty "Rewards of Merit" given me by several teachers, and I would like to ask those of the boys who were in my class and are still alive, if they can show as many.

My close acquaintance with Mrs. Miner lasted over fifty years and up to her death, a year or so ago, we were always the best of friends.

Positions that I have been called upon to fill, and lines of work that I have been called upon to perform, could never have been prosecuted successfully, had it not been for the educational help which she gave me in the sixties.

For two or three years before going to Mr. Miner's to board, I had been a boarder in the family of Dr. L. W. Bacon, who also boarded some other of the Mystic boys.

They were state-of-Maine people and the "salt of the earth."

Miss Virginia L. Bacon

The Post Office was in their house and I was Deputy Postmaster.

They had two girls in their family, the oldest about seventeen, named Virginia, and as handsome as girls are usually made.

All of us Mystic boys were in love with her and she "wound the whole of us around her finger," as the saying is.

How she could have held the lot of us as she did is still a wonder to me.

It was a pleasant place to live and we were a very happy company.

When the most of us had left Wisconsin, she married one of the Mystic boys, the best one, of course, and she and her husband have since visited my family here in Mystic.

An old log school house in bad repair and little used was situated just outside the village limits at the North, and the New England temperament of the lumber company induced them to build a nice frame school house in the village and paint it white, all at their own expense.

Every Sunday morning we held Sabbath school in this building, and strange as it seems to write it, for years I was the superintendent of the school.

Miss Virginia Bacon directed the singing and I think it was to see her and hear her sing, that always gave us a good attendance.

When the weather was fairly favorable we had a preaching service in the afternoon.

This was conducted by Rev. E. G. Piersons of

New Lisbon.

He had to walk some twelve miles to reach the village but I do not remember that he ever intimated that he was tired, and I do remember that his sermon was full of life and suggestions so practical and sensible that he was listened to with the closest attention.

In all the years he preached to us I never learned what denomination he belonged to, but he gave us evidence that he represented that church spoken of in the New Testament whose mission was to do good and help your fellow man.

If the community was not improved morally and spiritually by his teachings, it was not for lack of good example.

He was hired for no salary, and there were times when his cash receipts were very light.

At one time B. F. Miner, desiring to get up a donation in his interest, advertised a big dance in the hotel, stipulating that the "bar" should be closed and some eighty dollars was realized from this social event.

At another time a wrestling match between two burly raftsmen was timed to come off on Sunday, and it did, and the winner divided his ten dollars with the preacher, telling him he had earned it "by the sweat of his brow."

No collections were ever taken up in church and as a rule the money paid the minister was chipped in mostly by us Mystic boys.

While none of us as I remember belonged to

Rev. E. E. Piersons

any church, we had all been "raised" in New England and as far as my observation has extended, boys brought up there seem to require something in the way of church service and an observation of the Lord's Day.

The walk of twelve miles and the preaching service in the afternoon never prevented the Elder from making a trip around the village, calling on the sick, cheering them with words and many times helping them from his very small store, and then walking back the twelve miles home again.

He had an educational position through the week and I presume his regular duties and his walk of twenty-four miles almost every Sunday, kept him so fit that even the thoughts of a vacation never worried him; he certainly during my acquaintance with him never had one.

It was the wish of the company that I take one of the camps the winter of '64 and '65 and run it.

Their wish had up to this time been my law, but I thought this was a little more than I ought to undertake.

I cared nothing for the hard work, and knew I could stand it to be eighty miles from a settlement for five months; but it was the unwritten law that no one could run a camp but a State-of-Maine man and he, to be qualified, must have had years of training.

To take advantage of all favorable conditions, to be weatherwise, to drive the crew to the limit,

and still keep their good will, to properly order the supplies, to arrange the logging roads and cut the proper "Sections" owned by the company which the boss was also supposed to survey and run out, to keep up the tools, make an occasional ox-yoke, ax-handle, sled runner, or weld a chain link with thick pine bark for the fire, all of this was supposed to be done by the boss, and beside, if the man cook did not do the cooking properly, he was to be shown the right way by the boss.

Now when you think this over, for a boy of less than twenty, with the little experience I had had, to assume all of this, made me hesitate.

However, I went up with my crew, built my camp and outbuildings and put in the hardest winter of my life.

I did make an ox yoke, ax-helves, a lot of them, I did survey the timber land, was lost two days, but ran into a camp of Winnibago Indians, fed up on dried muskrats and came out O. K.

My hardest fight was to overcome the jealousy of those who felt they ought to hold my position.

The great majority of my crew were faithful to me, however, and our winter's work tallied out more logs than any camp equally situated on the river.

When my year was up the company advanced my wages to a thousand a year and that continued while I was with them.

I did not join the log drive in the spring as the

Governor had commissioned me to "scale," or measure logs at the sorting booms. This scaling or measuring of logs was a pretty lively job and attended with many difficulties.

The tool used was a straight stick or rule, forty-eight inches long with plain one inch marks and figures beginning at one end, and continuing to the other end.

On the lower end of the stick was a hook or bracket about three inches long that you caught under the log and sung out the figure that the rule indicated on top of the log, which figure was duly recorded by the clerk.

Each lumber company, logging on the river had their registered log mark.

The one our company owned was IIVII and this was "ax cut" into the side of the log and the log was also end-marked with a setting maul.

At the first boom up the river some 80 miles from camp, the owner of that mill had his logs selected or sorted from the others, and the mills down stream had their logs released to come to them, and this process took place at each mill. Ours was the fifth, down from the first.

The man who scaled the logs had to see the mark and call that, as he did the measurement, for the logs were all driven by the thousand feet.

To jump onto a log, roll it over, see the mark and call it off at the same time, to measure the length with your eye and call that too, was a pretty good illustration of the text "step lively," for the

water was always rapid, and very wet, and the logs coming swiftly, and sometimes a small one would go under water before you could catch the measure.

So the job was anything but desirable, and the applicants were very few.

The company thought it would be in their interest to provide a man for this work and so as before said the Governor commissioned me, and I filled the position with credit to the company which I represented.

When the mill was ready to start I insisted on running the big saw; and with a brother of Gurdon Allyn's to superintend, I ran the saw all of that season.

In the fall I made two trips on lumber down the river, selling the same and returning with the money.

In those days the Mississippi River was not merely a highway by name, and from St. Louis to LaCrosse, lines of steamers made regular trips and the river was full of life and activity.

I have seen six side and stern wheel steamboats at one time in motion up and down the river, and lumber rafts containing from one to three million feet of lumber were a common sight.

At that time the only railroad bridge across the river was at Rock Island; a few years ago when I made the trip from St. Louis to St. Paul, we went through twenty-eight bridges.

The railroads have taken the river traffic and

many of the river towns have gone into the discard.

Handsome side wheel steamers like the Andy Johnson, Harry Johnson and the Minnesota gave you passage and regular meals at about two and a half dollars a day; and many stern wheelers of which the Phil Sheridan was the most popular boat, kept the water constantly stirred up.

Their management was carried on as much in the interest of the patrons as of the owners, and many a time I signalled one of these big boats from my raft and they would send a boat and four men to take me aboard to go down the river with them.

My object was to go to some town further down and make sale of the lumber.

Every raft had its own special flag, and coming back up the river any steamer would stop and send a boat with me to my raft if desired, which raft I had located by its flag.

For some eight years the Mississippi River, during the rafting season was my home.

To procure subsistence for the crew, find markets for the lumber and pay off the men, were my most important duties.

It is generally conceded that the old time raftsmen and Mississippi steamboat men were the roughest, toughest, and all-round meanest combination that ever existed.

My experience would lead me to agree with this classification, but I should insist on exceptions.

I remember when our raft was tied up at Muscatine, Iowa, that every man, and there were over

thirty, left me alone on the fleet while they went ashore to spend the night at cheap hotels and rum holes.

When the trip was ended many of the men would not have a dollar in wages coming to them, but it was a part of the contract that they were entitled to "back pay," which meant buying them a return ticket to the place we hired them, and by the law we were obliged to buy the ticket rather than give them its cost in money.

I might as well say right here that when I entered the hotel in Werner in 1863 and received the intelligence of the landlord's sickness with small pox, it was told me by several drunken bums that were piled up in various shapes and conditions in the bar room, and their very cordial invitation to drink with them was refused, and for nearly the ten years I was in and around that country I never tasted a glass of rum or beer.

The only credit that is due me for this is, that I had engaged in this business to succeed and my continued observation confirmed my then formed judgment that I could not mix rum and success in the same glass.

After the last sales of lumber in the fall, I made the arrangements for the winter's lumbering, ably assisted by B. F. Miner, who attended to procuring the supplies and engineered the financial part of the business.

The winter following my running one camp, the three camps were put under my charge and I

spent a part of the time at each. The company made money and their credit was unquestioned.

Mr. Wightman moved his family from Mystic to Werner and developed a "bad lung" that had to be soaked in whiskey and which eventually resulted in the failure of the company, and no improvement to the lung.

Gurdon Allyn of Mystic saw how things were going and sold out his interest before the smash.

The fact that the business went into the hands of a receiver and even then paid ninety-five per cent. of all claims shows that sober management would have given continued profits.

If some reader of this story should look for the location of named places and fail to find on the map Werner, Wis., he need not think there was no such place, for in the sixties it had a Post Office, two large hotels, the largest saw mill on the river, and a good sized population.

The mill has gone, the hotels have gone, all of the houses have been torn down and moved away, and there is neither Post Office or church to mark the place.

Less than a life time has made this great change and it would be interesting to know how many of the old residents are yet on this side of the "Great Divide."

Originally settled by people from the State of Maine, they were reliable, honest and a fair minded lot.

The most of them were of large growth, both

men and women, and one of our Mississippi pilots whose home was here stood six feet and seven inches in his stockings and weighed over four hundred pounds.

The boys had a story they told about my "paying attention" (whatever that was), to one of these large sized "State of Maine girls," and while it seems needless for me to say that the story was not truthful I will tell it, as they told it, and as it is even told today by one of the surviving boys now living near here.

Mr. Moses Chase was landlord of one of the hotels, and he had a daughter Lucy, that was very entertaining and interesting and beautiful.

Now I have always argued that a big man ached harder than a small one, and if this is true, a girl of seventeen summers that weighed two hundred and eighty pounds and was proportionately good looking and sweet and entertaining must have been so to a very large degree.

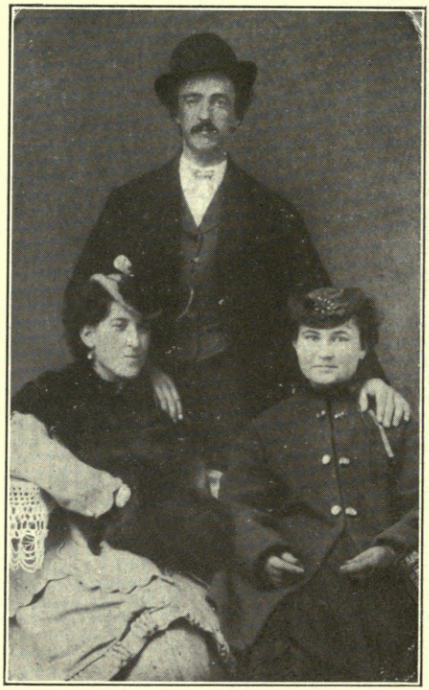
I know that many evenings found me a caller upon the fair Lucy in the parlor of the hotel.

So much loveliness had no chance to be neglected, and many other young men sought her society.

Now the story told about me was that at half past eleven in the evening a gentleman named "William Stevens" who had been sitting up with her, went to change the position of his arm, and ran afoul of my arm that had partially encircled her for hours, on the other side.

As before said I do not believe this story, and

Miss Alice Hale



C. Q. Eldredge
Miss Arabella Thew 1865 Miss Alice Hale

several girls with whom I have had the honor of sitting up, joined me in general denial in writing, on the grounds that they believed it unreasonable and not in accord with my general mode of procedure.

I only tell the yarn to show what foolish and unlikely stories may be circulated by jealous rivals.

The pictures of Werner girls that I am honored by being enabled to show in this book, will bear me out in this statement that they were attractive and interesting.

I am very sorry I can not show the picture of "Lucy," before mentioned, but I, realizing what I should ask for in requesting one, never had a volume of courage sufficient to make the request.

The years of my life on the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers contained many items that, taken individually, would make interesting stories, but to frame them into this history is not a part of my work.

Each year was much a repetition of its predecessor until the final breakup in 1869 when B. F. Miner and myself bought a nearby farm of one hundred and sixty acres for the purpose of raising hops, which were then selling for sixty cents a pound. When we had twelve acres of hops in condition to pick, which took two years, we had expended all the money we had saved from our salaries while in the lumber business and a hop market of four cents a pound instead of sixty cents

confronted us.

However, with the help of some fifty girls that we "imported" for that purpose, we harvested our crop, paid all our bills, but did not have funds enough left in our hands to buy a two bladed jackknife.

This failure in the hop business ruined hundreds of farmers and very many merchants who had advanced them money and stores on the security they thought they had in hops.

As Miner and I had some stock on the farm and a good pair of horses, we decided to go to farming.

This was one of the years when wild pigeons were so plenty they broke down thousands of small pine trees by lighting in them. We sowed some eighty acres to oats, but the land was sandy and the season dry and when it was time to harvest them, we found they were so short that a pigeon had to get on his knees to pick off the kernels.

While this land was suitable for hops, for general farming it was a failure.

Our bill of fare was, for the winter, venison, pigeons, hubbard squash with milk gravy.

This we changed every day in the order they were served, the goods were always the same.

In the winter of 1870, I came to Mystic to attend the Golden Wedding anniversary of my parents.

As the old house was small, the reception was held in Morgan Hall.

Some four hundred invitations were issued and

Christopher Eldredge

Nancy Eldredge

In 1870

the most of those invited, qualified.

To make the exercises all the more interesting, a grand-son of the celebrants was married during the festivities.

I would say while on the subject of marriage ceremonies, that my parents lived to celebrate their sixtieth marriage anniversary, that I was present and that all the good things said and done ten years before were repeated, except the marriage of the grand-son, he feeling that there was no need of more business on his part.

While on this trip east, George F. Langworthy insisted that I come to his house in the spring, run his farm and sell it if possible and that the money from the sale should be turned over to me and be invested by me in some business that I might desire to enter into.

I had, however, agreed with my brother, James, to purchase the sailing sloop, Maria, and run her as a freighter and for rockweed or kelp, and this would prevent my immediate acceptance of the Langworthy proposition.

We bought the Maria in the spring, and in April, 1871, I took out my papers from the Stonington Custom House as Captain, and we drove her through the season to the full limit and made her pay about a hundred dollars a month to each of us.

We made long days and many times they were the full twenty-four hours.

I thought a lot about what Mr. Langworthy had said to me and his proposition opened up some

possibilities that I thought worthy of investigation.

This resulted in finding that the title to the farm was in the name of Mrs. Langworthy instead of Mr., and that it was heavily mortgaged to the Norwich Savings Society to make good the notes Mr. Langworthy had put into the Wisconsin Lumber business.

There had been at this time two large dividends paid by the Wisconsin Receiver but these notes were not recognized by him as claims against the old firm.

If these mortgages remained, there would be practically no farm to sell.

After looking the matter over carefully, I made the Langworthys the proposition, that if they would have the Norwich Savings Society surrender their claim to me, I would endeavor to make the Receiver allow it; and if they would pay my expenses out and back to Wisconsin, there would be no other costs, and if I was successful I would run their farm a year unless sold quicker on the proposition Mr. Langworthy had made me. When Mr. Langworthy tried to get the securities from the Norwich Savings Society, they turned him down, and he told me he could get no one to help him.

I went to Mr. A. B. Taylor and put the case up to him. He questioned me closely and sharply and then turning to me said, "So you want me to go to Norwich with you and guarantee you for six thousand dollars, do you? While you take these papers and go to Wisconsin, where is my security

coming from?"

I said, "On my own account I would never ask it, but it is in the interests of the Langworthys.

"I feel absolutely sure that I can handle the Wisconsin end, and for you to have a souvenir while I am gone, I will leave you my personal note for the whole amount."

He said, "How about leaving your note with the bank?"

"Because," I said, "they wouldn't take it for a dollar."

He went to Norwich with me, pledged up to the bank all they required and they turned over to me their claim.

Believing I had justice on my side, I secured from the receiver after quite a struggle, the two dividends already paid and later ninety-five per cent. of the full claim.

I thanked Mr. Taylor for his confidence and his act was never forgotten.

I commenced to farm in Mystic in January, 1872, and among other departments opened up a village milk route.

I still have the milk-bell.

I kept three hundred hens and ran a small market garden.

Most of my eggs and vegetables were sold at the Pequot Hotel in New London.

A young lady from Lansingburgh, New York, visited at the farm in the summer and all work seemed to go easier after her arrival.

I kept no help, had very little help from Mr. Langworthy and yet I made the farm pay.

The hens averaged a dollar profit per hen and the milk route, though small, paid well.

I delivered for six cents per quart.

I sold the farm in July, 1873, for eight thousand five hundred dollars cash, to B. F. Lewis and A. B. Taylor.

We had an auction and disposed of personal farm property, and the furniture was sent to Hoosick Falls, New York.

I actually ran the farm eighteen months and made it pay about a thousand dollars.

I made a visit to Lansingburgh, New York, early in 1873, to renew acquaintance with the young lady from there who had visited the farm the year before.

Through her father a business opening in Hoosick Falls was found calling for about the amount of money received from the Langworthy's farm.

This was turned over to me, the Langworthys taking my notes payable, one thousand a year as made from the business.

The Langworthys set up house-keeping in Hoosick Falls, N. Y.

I entered as partner in the business of M. F. White & Co., and between the anxieties of a new business, the getting ready to be married which was arranged for September, and the home-sickness of the Langworthys, I had troubles without end.

The Langworthys decided to return to Mystic and instead of living up to our agreements both verbal and written, they demanded all of their money, and at once.

My father-in-law-to-be wanted me to have no trouble with them and he took my unsecured notes for something over six thousand dollars payable with interest, one thousand a year, and I am pleased to record the fact that each and every one of them was paid the day it became due.

I never got a cent for Wisconsin collections or the months of personal service rendered the Langworthys, without which they would have lost their farm entirely.

I was married in September, 1873, and lived in Hoosick Falls till 1893.

I had a large business which I increased from sales of thirteen hundred a month in 1873, to thirteen thousand dollars a month in 1893, when I sold out.

All of my savings had been invested in well selected real estate and next to Walter A. Wood I was the largest individual tax payer in town.

In 1892 the reelection of Cleveland upset all values and possibly no place was harder hit than Hoosick Falls.

My property outside of my business was improved real estate consisting of rented property with rentals ranging from six to thirty dollars per month.

This had given me so good an income that I

felt able to put a man in charge of the property as agent, and move to Mystic and there make a permanent home.

The gentleman with whom I entered into partnership in Hoosick Falls took me in because of failing health and he continued to get worse, and never visited the office a half a dozen times after the partnership was formed.

It made it pretty hard for me, a stranger to the business, and the place, to make a success of it, but I put in long days and skipped vacations till 1876, when I went to Philadelphia to the Centennial Exposition.

In November of that year my partner died, and though he left a will and executors, I was appointed to settle the estate which was a fairly large one, and in so far as I know, it was settled satisfactorily to all interested parties. Sometime after his death I purchased his interest in the business, and later the entire real estate connected therewith.

I could readily tell many things about Hoosick Falls that naturally seem a part of this story, but I feel that the village as the birthplace of the Walter A. Wood Mowing Machine Co. has notoriety enough.

I will, however, tell of an incident indirectedly connected with the village that has caused much comment.

This story relates to the only tombstone in the world where the survivors seem to get even with the doctors.

First Home in Hoosick Falls, N. Y.,
Built on lot bought of Gibson Sprague in 1873.

In Maple Grove Cemetery
Hoosick Falls, N. Y., stands
a Tombstone with this inscription:

'Ruth Sprague
' Daughter of Gibson and Elizabeth Sprague
'Died Jan. 11, 1816, Age
'9 years, 1 month and 3 days.
'She was stolen from the grave by Roderick B. Clow
'and disected at Dr. P. M. Armstrong's office in
'Hoosick, N. Y., from which place her mutilated
'remains were obtained and deposited here.
'Her body, dissected by fiendish men,
'Her bones anatomised,
'Her soul we trust has risen to God
'Where few physicians rise.'

The first house lot purchased by me in Hoosick Falls in 1873, I bought of this old couple and they were my neighbors for years. Having had very little experience in biography writing, I must ask my readers to pardon me if at times I am not consecutive in my recitals and have as it were to "back up."

When I went to Hoosick Falls in 1872, the village had twenty-five hundred inhabitants; in 1892 it had increased to seventy-five hundred.

I always gloried in the village, and for its success, was ever ready to sing its praises, and help furnish the music.

I built and ran a large wood-working factory

in connection with my lumber yard, built and conducted the only grist-mill for miles around, ran a machine shop, and furnished rooms and power to a shirt factory working several hundred girls, rooms and power to a toy factory, and worked a large crew of carpenters and masons building over two hundred buildings by contract in the years I was there.

I was also instrumental in erecting, equipping and superintending a knit goods factory, employing a hundred hands and was treasurer of the corporation for two years.

I was one of the two men that secured the incorporation of the First National Bank of Hoosick Falls, which institution has ever stood as a credit to its promoters.

Politically I was known as a Republican and for the success of the party I was ever ready to do my part.

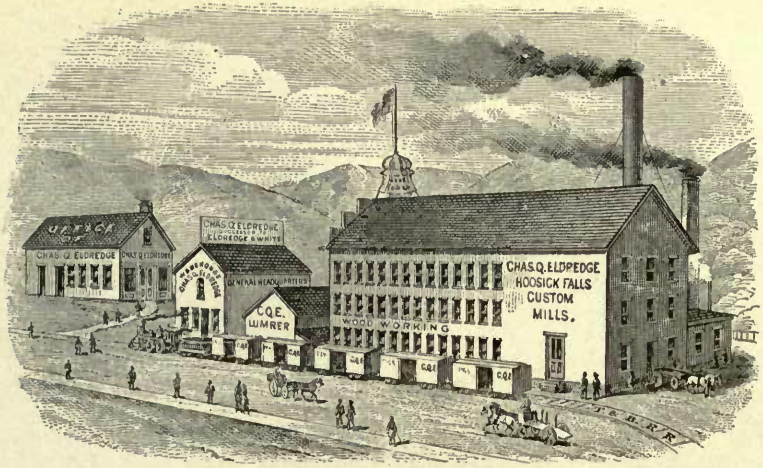
I refused many offers of a candidacy for political honors, rather preferring to devote my entire time to my business.

I made one and only one exception and that for a village office when Walter A. Wood and a hundred and thirty-five residents of my ward signed a petition asking me to run for trustee.

I was elected by a handsome majority.

While holding office, it was for two years, the Honorable Walter A. Wood died.

His death was a great loss to the village, and this, taken with Cleveland's reelection, sent all



Mill, Warehouse and Office of C. Q. Eldredge, Hoosick Falls, N. Y.
1880

House at Old Mystic, Ct., with Observation Tower
Called "Riverview."
Built in 1890

values down, practically closed the large manufacturing interests of the town, made the people unable to pay their rents, since they had no work, and rentable property became a drug on the market.

My wife, her sister and mother, had all died in one month of typhoid fever in the year of 1885, and their loss to me had broken up in a large degree the deep interest in business that I had taken up to that time.

I had the house in Mystic on my hands and thought best to use it.

I tried to get this built by contractors near Mystic but the only bid I received was from the Sherman Lumber Co. of Westerly and their price was some eighteen thousand dollars.

So I built it with my own men from Hoosick Falls, paying one railroad over a thousand dollars for transportation of workmen. Bentley & Co. of New London furnished the material and one barge of six hundred tons burden came from their yard to my dock, the largest vessel that ever came to the headwaters of the Mystic River.

But right here I want to say that when a boy back in 1861 there was sailing from lower Mystic sixteen ships, ten barks, ten schooners and four sloops; and from the masthead of one of them in 1862, I saw the Great Eastern steam westward through Long Island Sound.

We furnished this house "Riverview" so called in 1890. I had remarried and with my wife and

three children and hired help from Hoosick Falls, we spent the summers of '91 and '92 at Mystic.

In 1893 we moved to the house permanently, sending some furniture from Hoosick Falls and a car load from New York City as the house was large and required a lot of it.

I continued to own the Hoosick Falls real estate up to 1896 when the condition of the country and of Hoosick Falls in particular, was so bad that I determined to sell it.

This was no easy task, but I finally sold for eleven thousand three hundred dollars what had cost me in cash at a low figure one hundred and thirteen thousand dollars.

It took a lot of nerve to sign those deeds, for the property was never mortgaged for a dollar, and although through buying it, the purchaser has become the richest man in the village, I have never had a regret that I sold it.

In 1902 together with my wife, I made an extended trip south and west reaching in a roundabout way, St. Louis, and from there by steamboat up the Mississippi River to St. Paul.

Among the many pleasant incidents of this trip was a visit to Mark Twain's old home in Hannibal, Mo., and a half hour spent with him at the hotel in that city where he was then staying. The changes of forty years, I have very briefly touched upon, and a few things that emphasize those changes I desire to bring forward.

We met in the eight hundred mile passage only

Residence and Office, Owned and Occupied in Hoosick Falls, N. Y. in 1893.

one lumber raft, and instead of some twenty men with huge oars at each end of the raft, two small steamers took their place.

One steamer lashed to the raft across her bow, and the other endwise at the rear of the raft.

The only men in sight were those in the pilot house of the steamer.

When I was in the lumber business in Wisconsin we "ran" our lumber down the Wisconsin River to its mouth near Clayton, Iowa, and then fastened it together, making one large raft.

In coming down the Wisconsin River, all lumber had to pass through the "Dells."

So far as I know there is no natural scenery in the state of Wisconsin that compares with these "Dells."

For some six miles the river is cut through solid rock that rises sometimes fifty feet or more above the water.

At one place the whole river rushes through a cut where it is only fifty-two feet wide.

It was dangerous for raftsmen and many lost their lives here.

The strange shapes that the rocks have acquired from the action of the water are wonderful.

Today there is a line of pleasure and excursion steamers running from Kilboum City up through the "Dells" and no person going over the M. & St. Paul R. R. will ever regret a stop over at this place, and a careful inspection of this, one of nature's most wonderful works.

There were so many steam boat lines on the upper Mississippi in the sixties that great inducements were held out to the lumbermen to send their men back by this line, or that line, they offering better fare and cheaper mileage than their competitors. My position as paymaster, and manager of transportation for the men, brought me in direct communication with the captains and pursers of these boats with whom in the interest of the lumber company, I made the best terms possible.

Sometimes there would be a half dozen crews of raftsmen going up to LaCrosse on the same boat, numbering from a hundred and fifty to two hundred men, and as every boat had an enormous bar room and a saloon that would accommodate from ten to twenty sets of card parties, the trips were frequently lively.

In no instance did I see the officers of the boat interfere in the amusements? of the raftsmen.

It frequently developed into gun play and at one time I saw a card player accused of cheating, hung by the neck from the flagpole of the steamer till he acknowledged the crime, and tho I rode some three hundred miles further up the river on the same boat with him, he did not recover life enough to walk and was carried ashore by his comrades at the landing to which he was ticketed.

The captains and mates of these steamers were picked men, and altho many writers have undertaken to tell the rough way they handled their

crews, called "roustabouts" I have never seen paper with enough asbestos in its makeup to withstand the fire and brimstone that would flow from the pen that truthfully told the story.

They allowed the raftsmen to do as they pleased for the financial interest of the steamboat company centered in satisfied passengers.

The following incident taken from the New York World and dated July 11, gives a good idea of how business was carried on in those good old days.

The item reads:

"Davenport, Iowa, Christopher Leonidas and his son, long haired medicine men, wearing sharpshooter's medals and heavily armed, boarded the Diamond Joe Steamer, Dubuque, at Rock Island, Ill., and attempted to take possession of the craft.

"Mate Dan Green shot and killed both men when the boat was in front of Davenport, and their bodies were taken off here. The coroner's jury exonerated Green."

I was not on this steamer when this happened, but have been a passenger on her many times.

"Riverview" with its thirty acre park and three acre house lot gave me plenty of work and as the house was full of guests during the summer, relatives and friends, we were always busy. I built a fine dam on the west side of the park, one and a half miles of roads within its bounds, trimmed personally over six thousand trees, large and small, that grew wild on its acres, dug a well

near a log summer house and arranged the same with the old style "well sweep," set out over three thousand catalpa trees, arranged tables with seats, fireplaces and so forth, where many picnics were held, and built a tower one hundred and twenty-five feet high that gave a good view from its top of Block Island, Long Island and contiguous territory.

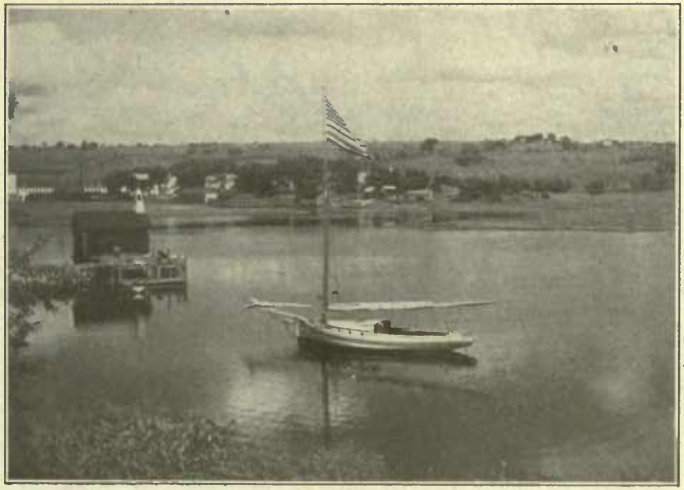
Some of the means employed to make it interesting for the friends who visited us in this rather isolated section of the country are possibly worthy of mention.

In the first place we had, besides our house-lot and park, the Mystic River, that is unsurpassed in natural beauty, and its power to furnish pleasure and enjoyment to those who obtain satisfaction from boating.

I built the yacht, James G. Blaine, with accommodations for six people, and furnished her with every thing necessary for comfort, row boats and power boats were ever ready at the landing and in stormy weather a regulation sixty-five foot bowling alley with shooting gallery adjoining, gave an opportunity for inside amusement.

I felt when I built "Riverview" that it was largely for my friends, and their enjoyment was to me the greatest of my compensations.

I tried to do some farming and one year raised the largest potatoes reported in the state, weighing two and a half pounds each, and one year three hundrd and thirty-five measured bushels of mer-



Yacht James G. Blaine

House in Mystic—As sold in 1913

chantable potatoes from a measured acre.

So for years the same conditions existed and the same line of work was pursued.

In 1904, my younger son, eighteen years of age, met a very tragic death and as I had counted on him to stay at home and run the place, it upset all of my plans and made me desire to get away from it.

I immediately commenced to advertise it for sale, but it was not until April, 1913, that I sold it.

In 1904, I made a personal trip to Jamaica, West Indies, staying several months and making quite a study of the manners and customs of the people in the thinly settled portions of the island. I brought back many curios and had many interesting experiences with the natives.

In December, 1905, my wife and I attended the Atlanta, Georgia, Exposition, and remained south during the winter.

We found it worked better to be away from Old Mystic winters rather than summers, as this plan did not interfere with the large numbers of friends that each year broke bread with us.

In 1911, having acquired a financial interest in a citrus fruit plantation in Porto Rico, I decided to visit it, and with Judge Willis E. Heaton of Troy, New York, and Frederic A. Barnes of Mystic, officers of the Fruit Co., we made the trip.

After a satisfactory visit to the Island, we continued south and visited Haitai, San Domingo,

Jamaica and the Isthmus of Panama.

The work was well along on the canal and Colonel Goethals made our visit very pleasant.

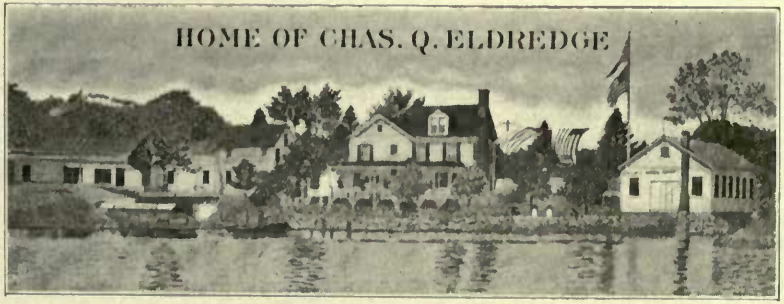
We returned to Connecticut early in 1912.

The old homestead, a couple of hundred feet south, built in 1850, had been destroyed by fire in 1900 and rebuilt by me for a tenant house.

My two surviving children had married and were living in neighboring states and my wife and I moved into the tenant house. This I immediately commenced to rebuild and enlarge until its present size and shape were obtained.

I built a large, private work-shop, 26x40 feef, and have a two-story garage, 20x20 feet, and wood house, 12x60 feet.

In building over our present home it was my idea to make it a model of convenience and comfort, and among some of the enjoyable features is a piazza on the river side, fifty-five feet long and eight feet wide; a fireplace in the library always ready for service and that burns wood four and a half feet long; hot and cold water from a never failing supply, all over the house; seventy-eight electric lamps placed around the house where they will be handy when you chance to want a light; the basement and three floors above heated by steam; the third floor above the basement arranged as an art gallery and a hundred and thirty pictures now hang there; a perfect sewer system; all pumps run by electricity; a dining room 18x18



"Riverview Cottage" our present home, showing also Workshop, Boat House, Garage and River Frontage.

The entire construction of this building, excavation, foundation, inside finish, tin work, roof, decorating and lettering were ALL personally performed by the owner, Chas. Q. Eldredge, in his seventy-second year. Something over 3000 Souvenirs and Curios are on Exhibition, and to view them, his friends are ever welcome.

feet in size to share with our friends.

In the workshop I have an eight horse power engine, air cooled, and turning lathe, splitting saw, jig saw, drills, and power grinding stones, and emery wheels; also a seventy-five light dynamo.

So far as I know I have a full set of tools for carpenter, machinist, plumber, blacksmith, mason, paper hanger, painter and tinman; and am fairly well able to use any and all of them as occasion may require.

A Government anemometer on the peak of the shop registers by electricity in the library in the house the velocity of the wind per hour.

In 1917, I conceived the idea of a place to keep and show my many souvenirs, collected in my many cruises in and about the country; and so built a small building 20x20 feet in size, with sixteen foot posts, as a showroom.

This has proved of much interest to the public as well as a pleasure to myself.

Over five hundred visitors registered in the book during the last twelve months, and in many cases their interest resulted in sending something to the Museum to add to the collection. The building has a large sign reading "Private Museum," but visitors are always welcome without charge or tip.

A very complete, illustrated catalogue of the curios in the museum has been prepared and is obtainable if visitors desire.

Personally I have never taken much interest in geneology, but should some member of my family ever have the courage to wade through the pages I have written, it might serve to reward them for their trouble to find that they are legitimate descendants of:

1. Samuel Eldred, born in England in 1620
   Died in Kingston, Rhode Island, in 1697.
2. His son, Capt. Daniel Eldredge of Kingston, R. I., and Stonington, Conn., was captain of the troops and deputy to the General Court. Died at North Kingston, R. I., Aug. 18, 1726.
3. His son, James Eldredge, born Dec. 5, 1696
   Died at North Kingston, R. I., 1738.
4. His son, Christopher Eldredge, born North Kingston, R. I., Jan. 22, 1722. Was wounded in the face during Arnold's attack on New London, Conn., Sept. 6, 1781 and died at Stonington, Conn., in 1811.
5. His son, Joshua Eldredge, born at Stonington, Conn., Aug. 9, 1798. Died at Stonington, Conn., Aug. 17, 1836.
6. His son, Christopher Eldredge, born in Stonington, Conn., Nov. 14, 1798. Died at Old Mystic, Conn., June 4, 1890.
7. His son, Charles Eldredge, known for over fifty years as Charles Q. Eldredge, born at Old Mystic, Conn., July 15, 1845.

Through seven generations the family record reaches back without a break and though in the

early days the final "ge" was not added, the evidence is clear that it was the same family.

Mr. William Henry Eldredge of Twin Falls, Idaho, has compiled a book of the family geneology and the above record is from his book.

In reading over the pages I have already written, I am assured of one very evident feature of my work, and that is, that it differs from an ordinary autobiography in every particular, except that the writer was "born."

This fact could not very well have been eliminated, yet in the biography of the self made man, this is sometimes attempted.

Before commencing this work I carefully read some suggestions made by the following very successful writers:

Franklin said, "Don't attempt to write a book unless you have to."

Sylvanus Cobb said, "Don't write a book until you are absolutely full of it."

Beecher said, "Don't write a book till you can preach a sermon, and the kind of a sermon that the congregation can enjoy, awake."

Edward Everett Hale said, "Remember it is much easier to write a book than to make the public read it."

Mark Twain said, "Before you write a book be satisfied in your own mind that it will make the reader laugh or cry."

Being pretty well satisfied that it will meet one of the requirements quoted above, I have acquired

a stock of courage, sufficient to hand it to the public.

I sincerely hope that the reader may find enough of interest to make him have a forgiving spirit, towards the uninteresting sections of the work, and that the time spent in going through it may not be considered entirely lost.

"What is writ, is writ—
Would it were worthier! but I am not now
That which I have been, and my visions flit
Less palpably before me, and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt, is fleeting, faint and low."