Country Byways

Country By-Ways

BY

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BOSTON
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1881

The Riverside Press, Cambridge.
Stereotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

To

T. H. J.,

MY DEAR FATHER; MY DEAR FRIEND;

THE BEST AND WISEST MAN I EVER KNEW;

WHO TAUGHT ME MANY LESSONS AND SHOWED ME MANY THINGS

AS WE WENT TOGETHER ALONG THE

COUNTRY BY-WAYS.

CONTENTS.

RIVER DRIFTWOOD.

AT the head of tide-water on the river there is a dam, and above it is a large mill-pond, where most of the people who row and sail keep their boats all summer long. I like, perhaps once a year, to cruise around the shores of this pretty sheet of water; but I am always conscious of the dam above it and the dam below it, and of being confined between certain limits. I rarely go beyond a certain point on the lower or tide river, as people call it, but I always have the feeling that I can go to Europe, if I like, or anywhere on the high seas; and when I unfasten the boat there is no dam or harbor bar, or any barrier whatever between this and all foreign ports. Far up among the hills the ocean comes, and its tide ebbs and flows.

When the tide goes out, the narrow reaches of the river become rapids, where a rushing stream fights

with the ledges and loose rocks, and where one needs a good deal of skill to guide a boat down safely. Where the river is wide, at low tide one can only see the mud flats and broad stretches of green marsh grass. But when the tide is in it is a noble and dignified stream. There are no rapids and only a slow current, where the river from among the inland mountains flows along, finding its way to the sea, which has come part way to welcome the company of springs and brooks that have answered to its call. A thousand men band themselves together, and they are one regiment; a thousand little streams flow together, and are one river; but one fancies that they do not lose themselves altogether; while the individuality of a river must come mainly from the different characters of its tributaries. The shape of its shores and the quality of the soil it passes over determine certain things about it, but the life of it is something by itself, as the life of a man is separate from the circumstances in which he is placed. There must be the first spring which overflows steadily and makes a brook, which some second spring joins, and the third, and the fourth; and at last there is a great stream, in which the later brooks seem to make little difference. I should like to find the very beginning and headwater of my river. I should be sorry if it were a

pond, though somewhere in the ground underneath there would be a spring that kept the secret and was in command and under marching orders to the sea, commissioned to recruit as it went along. Here at the head of tide-water it first meets the sea, and then when the tide is in there is the presence of royalty, or at least its deputies. The river is a grand thing when it is river and sea together; but how one misses the ocean when the tide is out, for in the great place it filled the stream from the hills, after all, looks of little consequence.

The river is no longer the public highway it used to be years ago, when the few roads were rough, and railroads were not even dreamed of. The earliest chapter of its history that I know is that it was full of salmon and other fish, and was a famous fishing-ground with the Indians, who were masters of its neighboring country. To tell its whole story one would have to follow the fashion of the old Spanish writers whom Garcilasso de la Vega says he will not imitate, in the first chapter of his Commentaries of the Yncas, — that delightful composition of unconscious pathos and majestic lies. When his predecessors in the field of literature wished to write on any subject whatever, he solemnly tells us, they always began with a history of the globe. One cannot help

wishing that he had not disdained to follow their example, and had given his theories, which would have been wildly ahead of even the fancies of his time, in general, and full of most amusing little departures from the truth when he came down to details. But the earliest history of the river can well be ignored; it is but seldom, as yet, that people really care much for anything for its own sake, until it is proved to have some connection with human-kind. We are slow to take an interest in the personality of our neighbors who are not men, or dogs, or horses, or at least some creature who can be made to understand a little of our own spoken language. Who is going to be the linguist who learns the first word of an old crow's warning to his mate, or how a little dog expresses himself when he asks a big one to come and rout his troublesome enemy? How much we shall know when the pimpernel teaches us how she makes her prophecies of the weather, and how long we shall have to go to school when people are expected to talk to the trees, and birds, and beasts, in their own language! What tune could it have been that Orpheus and Amphion played, to which the beasts listened, and even the trees and stones followed them to hear? Is it science that will give us back the gift, or shall we owe it to the successors of those

friendly old saints who talked with the birds and fishes? We could have schools for them, if we once could understand them, and could educate them into being more useful to us. There would be intelligent sword-fish for submarine divers, and we could send swallows to carry messages, and all the creatures that know how to burrow in the earth would bring us the treasures out of it. I should have a larger calling acquaintance than ever out-of-doors, and my neighbors down river would present me to congenial friends whom as yet I have not discovered. The gods are always drawing like toward like, and making them acquainted, if Homer may be believed, but we are apt to forget that this is true of any creatures but ourselves. It is not necessary to tame them before they can be familiar and responsive; we can meet them on their own ground, and be surprised to find how much we may have in common. Taming is only forcing them to learn some of our customs; we should be wise if we let them tame us to make use of some of theirs. They share other instincts and emotions with us beside surprise, or suspicion, or fear. They are curiously thoughtful; they act no more from unconscious instinct than we do; at least, they are called upon to decide as many questions of action or direction, and there are many emergencies of life

when we are far more helpless and foolish than they. It is easy to say that other orders of living creatures exist on a much lower plane than ourselves; we know very little about it, after all. They are often gifted in some way that we are not; they may even carry some virtue of ours to a greater height than we do. But the day will come for a more truly universal suffrage than we dream of now, when the meaning of every living thing is understood, and it is given its rights and accorded its true value: for its life is from God's life, and its limits were fixed by him; its material shape is the manifestation of a thought, and to each body there is given a spirit.

The great gulls watch me float along the river, curiously, and sail in the air overhead. Who knows what they say of me when they talk together; and what are they thinking about when they fly quickly out of sight? Perhaps they know something about me that I do not know of myself yet; and so may the musk-rat, as he hurries through the water with a little green branch in his mouth which will make a salad for his supper. He watches me with his sharp eyes, and whisks into his hole in the sunny side of the island. I have a respect for him; he is a busy creature, and he lives well. You might be hospitable and ask me to supper, musk-rat! I don't know

whether I should care much for you if I were another musk-rat, or you were a human being, but I shall know you again when I see you by an odd mark in the fur on the top of your head, and that is something. I suppose the captive mussels in your den are quaking now at hearing you come in. I have lost sight of you, but I shall remember where your house is. I do not think people are thankful enough who live out of the reach of beasts that would eat them. When one thinks of whole races of small creatures like the mussels which are the natural and proper food of others, it seems an awful fact and necessity of nature; perhaps, however, no more awful than our natural death appears to us. But there is something distressing about being eaten, and having one's substance minister to a superior existence! It hurts one's pride. A death that preserves and elevates our identity is much more consoling and satisfactory; but what can reconcile a bird to its future as part of the tissues of a cat, going stealthily afoot, and by nature treacherous? Who can say, however, that our death may not be simply a link in the chain? One thing is made the prey of another. In some way our present state ministers to the higher condition to which we are coming. The grass is made somehow from the ground, and presently that is turned into

beef, and that goes to make part of a human being. We are not certain what an angel may be; but the life in us now will be necessary to the making of one by and by.

There is a wise arrangement in this merging and combining. It makes more room in the world. We must eat our fellows and be eaten to keep things within a proper limit. If all the orders of life were self-existing, and if all the springs that make up the river flowed down to the sea separately and independently, there would be an awful confusion and chaos still; but this leads one to think of the transmigration of souls and other puzzling subjects! I shall have to end with an ignorant discourse about the globe instead of having begun with it. My river, as I said at first, leads to the sea, and from any port one can push off toward another sea of boundless speculation and curious wonderings about this world, familiar, and yet so great a mystery.

There are a thousand things to remember and to say about the river, which seems to be of little use in the half dozen miles I know best, after it has made itself of great consequence by serving to carry perhaps a dozen or twenty mills, of one kind and another. Between its dams it has a civilized and subjected look, but below the last falls, at the Landing, it

apparently feels itself to be its own master, and serves in no public capacity except to carry a boat now and then, and give the chance for building some weirs, as it offers some good fishing when the alewives and bass come up, with bony and muddy shad, that are about as good to eat as a rain-soaked paper of pins. I think its chief use is its beauty, and that has never been as widely appreciated as it ought to be. It is the eastern branch of the Piscataqua, which separates the States of Maine and New Hampshire; and I, being a lawless borderer, beg you to follow for a raid on the shores, not for pillaging the farms and cattle-lifting, but to see the trees and their shadows in the water: the high, steep banks where the great pines of Maine thrive, on one hand, and the gently sloping Southern New Hampshire fields fringed with willows and oaks on the other. When you catch sight of a tall lateen sail and a strange, clumsy craft that looks heavy and low in the water, you will like to know that its ancestor was copied from a Nile boat, from which a sensible old sea-captain took a lesson in ship-building many years ago. The sail is capitally fitted to catch the uncertain wind, which is apt to come in flaws and gusts between the high, irregular banks of the river; and the boat is called a gundalow, but sometimes spelled gondola. One sees them

often on the Merrimac and on the Piscataqua and its branches, and the sight of them brings a curiously foreign element into the New England scenery; for I never see the great peaked sail coming round a point without a quick association with the East, with the Mediterranean ports or the Nile itself, with its ruins and its desert and the bright blue sky overhead; with mummies and scarabei and the shepherd kings; with the pyramids and Sphinx — that strange group, so old one shudders at the thought of it — standing clear against the horizon.

A hundred years ago the northern country was covered for the most part with heavy timber, and the chief business at Berwick was receiving this from the lumbermen, and sending it to Portsmouth to be reshipped, or direct to the West Indies, to be bartered for rum and tobacco and molasses, which might be either brought home at once, or sent to Russia, to be exchanged again for iron and sail-cloth and cordage. Not forty years ago there were still twenty gundalows sailing from the Landing wharves, while now there are but two, and long after that the packet boat went regularly every other day to Portsmouth. Until the days of the railroads most of the freight came by water, and the packet skippers were important men. I have always wished to know something

more of the history of the quaint little packet storehouse which, until within a year or two, stood in the mill-yard, just below the falls. It was built of heavy timbers, as if it might some day be called upon to resist a battering-ram. The stories were very low, and the upper one projected over the water with a beam, to which was fastened a tackle and fall to hoist and lower the goods. It was a little building, but there was a great air of consequence about it. It was painted a dark red, which the weather had dulled a good deal, and it leaned to one side. Nobody knew how old it was; it was like a little old woman who belonged to a good family, now dead, save herself; and who could remember a great many valuable people and events which everybody else had forgotten. It was the last of the warehouses that used to stand on the river-banks, and I was sorry when it was pulled down. The old wharves have almost disappeared, too, though their timbers can still be seen here and there.

It sometimes takes me a whole afternoon to go two miles down the river. There are many reasons why I should stop every now and then under one bank or another; to look up through the trees at the sky, or at their pictures in the water; or to let the boat lie still, until one can watch the little fish come

back to their playground on the yellow sand and gravel; or to see the frogs, that splashed into the water at my approach, poke their heads out a little way to croak indignantly, or raise a loud note such as Scotch bagpipers drive out of the pipes before they start a tune. The swallows dart like bats along the surface of the water after insects, and I see a drowned white butterfly float by, and reach out for it; it looks so frail and little in the river. When the cardinal flowers are in bloom I go from place to place until I have gathered a deckload; and as I push off the boat it leaves the grass bent down, and the water-mint that was crushed sends a delicious fragrance after me, and I catch at a piece and put a leaf in my mouth, and row away lazily to get a branch of oak or maple leaves to keep the sun off my flowers. Cardinals are quick to wilt, and hang their proud heads wearily. They keep royal state in the shade, and one imagines that the other flowers and all the weeds at the water's edge take care to bow to them as often as the wind comes by, and pay them honor. They are like fine court ladies in their best gowns, standing on the shore. Perhaps they are sending messages down the river and across the seas, or waiting to hear some news. They make one think of Whittier's high-born Amy Wentworth and her sailor lover, for they

seem like flowers from a palace garden that are away from home masquerading and waiving ceremony, and taking the country air. They wear a color that is the sign of high ecclesiastical rank, and the temper of their minds would make them furies if they fought for church and state. They are no radicals; they are tories and aristocrats; they belong to the old nobility among flowers. It would be a pity if the rank marsh grass overran them, or if the pickerel weed should wade ashore to invade them and humble their pride. They are flowers that after all one should not try to put into vases together. They have, like many other flowers, too marked an individuality, and there is more pleasure to be taken from one tall and slender spire of blossoms by itself, just as it is pleasanter to be alone with a person one admires and enjoys. To crowd some flowers together you lose all delight in their shape and beauty; you only have the pleasure of the mass of color or of their perfume; and there are enough bright flowers and fragrant flowers that are only beautiful in masses. To look at some flowers huddled together and losing all their grace and charm is like trying to find companionship and sympathy by looking for a minute at a crowd of people. But there is a low trait of acquisitiveness in human nature. I pick cardinal flow-

ers by the armful, and nothing less than a blue-and-white ginger pot full of daisies is much satisfaction.

But to most people one tree, or flower, or river is as good as another, and trees and flowers and rivers are to be found without trouble, while there are some who would never know who has lived beside my river unless it were told here. That says at once that their fame at best is provincial, except for peppery little Captain John Paul Jones, who gathered the ship's company of the Ranger from these neighboring farms. Old people, who died not many years ago, remembered him as he walked on the wharves at Portsmouth, with his sword point scratching the ground; a little wasp of a fellow, with a temper like a blaze of the gunpowder whose smoke he loved. One can imagine him scrambling up the shore here to one of the old farm-houses, as short as a boy; but as tall as a grenadier, in his pride and dignity; and marching into the best room, in all the vainglory and persuasiveness of his uniform, to make sure of a good fellow whose looks he liked, and whom he promised to send home a gallant hero, with his sea-chest full of prize-money. And afterward he would land again at one of the stately old colonial mansions that used to stand beside the river, at the Wallingford house by Madam's Cove, or at the Hamilton house, and be received with befitting ceremony.

There were many fine houses in this region in old times, but only one still lingers, — this same Hamilton house, — which seems to me unrivaled for the beauty of its situation, and for a certain grand air which I have found it hard to match in any house I have ever seen. It is square and gray, with four great chimneys, and many dormer windows in its high-peaked roof; it stands on a point below which the river is at its widest. The rows of poplars and its terraced garden have fallen and been spoiled by time, but a company of great elms stand guard over it, and the sunset reddens its windows, and the days of the past seem to have come back, when one is near it, its whole aspect is so remote from the spirit of the present. Inside there are great halls and square rooms with carved wood-work, arched windows and mahogany window-seats, and fire-places that are wide enough almost for a seat in the chimney-corner. In the country about I have heard many a tradition of the way this house was kept; of the fine ladies and gentlemen, and the great dinner-parties, and the guests who used to come up the river from Portsmouth, and go home late in the moonlight evening at the turn of the tide. In those days the wharves that are fast being washed away were strong enough, and there were warehouses and storehouses and piles

of timber all along the river. The builder of the house was a successful man, who made a great fortune in the lucky West India trade of his time; he was poor to begin with, but everything prospered steadily with his business interests, and one owes him a debt of gratitude for leaving so fine a house to delight our eyes.

A little way up the shore there was formerly a ship-yard, and I know of four ships that were built there much less than fifty years ago. My grandfather was part owner of them, and their names, with those of other ships, have been familiar to me from my babyhood. It is amusing that the ships of a family concerned in navigation seem to belong to it and to be part of it, as if they were children who had grown up and gone wandering about the world. Long after some familiar craft has changed owners even, its fortunes are affectionately watched, and to know that a ship has been spoken at sea gives a good deal of pleasure beside the assurance that the cargo is so far on its way to market at Canton or Bombay. I remember wondering why the smooth green bank, where the dandelions were so thick in spring, should be called the ship-yard by my family, and even why any one should call that corner of the town the Lower Landing, since nothing ever seemed to land,

unless it were the fleets that children built from chips and shingles. It is a lovely, quiet place, and I often think of an early summer morning when I was going down river in a row-boat. The dandelions were sprinkled all over the short green grass, and high on the shore, under a great elm, were two wandering young musicians. They had evidently taken the wrong road, and discovered that this was a long lane that led only to the great house on the point and to the water's edge. They must have been entertained, for they seemed very cheerful; one played a violin, and the other danced. It was like a glimpse of sunshiny, idle Italy: the sparkling river and the blue sky, the wide green shores and the trees, and the great gray house, with its two hall doors standing wide open, the lilacs in bloom, and no noise or hurry, — a quiet place, that the destroying left hand of progress had failed to touch.

One day I was in one of the upper rooms of the Hamilton house in a dormer window, and I was amused at reading the nonsense some young girl had written on the wall. The view was beautiful, and I thought she must have sat there with her work, or have watched the road or the river for some one whom she wished to see coming. There were sentimental verses, written at different times. She seemed

to have made a sort of scrap-book of the bit of wall, and she had left me the date, which was very kind of her; so I knew that it was 1802, and in the summer, that she used to sit there in her favorite perch. This is one of her verses that I remember: —

> "May you be blest with all that Heaven may send,
> Long life, good health, much pleasure in a friend;
> May you in every clime most happy be,
> And when far distant often think of me."

It was very pleasant to catch this glimpse of girlhood in the old house. I wondered how she liked life as she grew older, and if the lover — if that were a lover — did think often enough of her, and come back to her at last from the distant climes. She could have wished him nothing better than much pleasure in a friend. I do not know the history of many members of the family; Colonel Hamilton and his consort are buried under a heavy monument in the Old Fields burying-ground, and at the end of the long epitaph is the solemn announcement that Hamilton is no more. It would be a strange sight if one of his heavily-laden little ships came up the river now; but I like to think about those days, and how there might have happened to be some lumbermen from far inland, who were delighted to gossip with the sailors and carry back up into the country the stories of their voyage. When

the French prisoners of war came into Portsmouth, I have heard old people say that there was a great excitement, and as the ships came in they looked like gardens, for the Frenchmen had lettuces for salads, and flowers growing in boxes that were fastened on the decks; and it was amusing to hear of these prisoners being let out on parole about the country towns, in Eliot and Newington and Kittery, and all up and down the river. Perhaps more than one of them found their way to the hospitable families in Berwick and were entertained as became their rank and fortunes. In an old house in Eliot there is a little drawing made by one of these men, and I have an exquisite little water-color painting of a carnation, with the quaintly written request that charming Sally will sometimes think of the poor Ribère, who will never forget her. It is all that is left of what must have been a tender friendship between this gallant young Frenchman and my grandmother. I found it once among her copy-books, and letters from her girl friends, and love-letters from my grandfather which he sent home to her from sea. She was very young when the poor Ribère was so sorry to part from her, for she married at eighteen (and died at twenty-five). I knew very little about her until I found in the garret the little brass-nailed trunk that had kept her se-

crets for me. I am sure she often made one of the company that used to come up the river to take tea and go home by moonlight. She was a beautiful girl, and everybody was fond of her. The poor Ribère sat beside her in the boat, I have no doubt; and perhaps it was in the terraced garden with the rows of poplars round it, that she picked the flower he painted, and no doubt he carried it away with him when he was set free again, and was not a prisoner of war any longer.

There was formerly a bright array of clerical talent in the river towns, and it was most amusing to listen to the anecdotes which the old people of the last generation delighted to tell of the ministers. Not to speak of the well-known Portsmouth divines, and of Dr. Stevens, of Kittery Point, there was the Reverend Mr. Litchfield, of Kittery, who was called the fisher parson, and his neighbor, Parson Chandler, who might have been called the farmer parson, for he was a celebrated tiller of the soil, and his example was a great blessing to the members of his Eliot parish. The fields there slope to the south and west, and the grass grows green sooner than anywhere else in the region, and the fruits of the earth grow and ripen quickly. He taught his neighbors to improve upon the old fashions of agriculture. An old friend of

mine told me that once he was driving from Portsmouth to Berwick, in his early manhood, with Daniel Webster for company, and when they passed this clergyman's house Mr. Webster said that he should be perfectly satisfied if he could be as great a man as Parson Chandler; and judging from the stories of his wisdom and eloquence, the young lawyer's was no mean ambition. Mr. Litchfield spent much of his time on week days in the apostolic business of catching fish; and he was a man of rare wit and drollery, with a sailor-like serenity and confidence in everything's coming out right at last, and a true mariner's readiness and intentness when there was work to be done. Once, at a conference in Portsmouth, the preacher failed to come, and some one had to furnish a sermon in his place. It fell to Mr. Litchfield's share; and old Dr. Buckminster said, when the discourse was ended, — it being extemporaneous and very eloquent, — "My friends, the fisher parson beats us all!" It is interesting to find that many of the clergymen of that day seem to have been uncommonly practical men. One fancies that they all preached the better because much of their time was spent in a way that brought them in close contact with people's every-day lives. It was no ideal human nature, studied from sermons and theological works, and classi-

fied and doomed at the recommendation of the old divines. One can believe that it was not abstract generalities of a state of sinfulness so much as particular weakness and shortcomings that they condemned from their pulpits. Parson Litchfield could preach gallantly at some offender who stole from and lied about his lobster-pots when he took his text from Ananias and Sapphira, and Parson Chandler could be most impressive and ready with illustration when he chose the parable of the sower for the subject of his discourse. In Berwick there was a grave and solemn little man, whom all his great parish long remembered admiringly. The church where the whole town centred was at the Old Fields, and it ought to be standing yet, but I do not know that anything is left of it but a bit of paper I found one day, on which is written the names of the men who built it and the sums of money and bundles of shingles or pieces of timber that each contributed.

I do not know why this should have been so superstitious a neighborhood, but there seems to have been a great deal of trouble from ghosts, and it was the duty of the ministers to drive them away, or to "lay" them, as they called it then. An old man told me once that the parsons made a great secret of it. They met together in a room, which nobody was allowed to

enter; so whether it was a service with mysterious rites, or they only joked together, and thought it well to keep up the reverence in the rustic mind for the power of the priesthood, nobody knows to this day. There is still standing at the Landing a house that has always been said to be haunted. Its ghost was laid properly, but she seems to have risen again defiantly. It formerly stood very near the shore of the little harbor, if one may give that name to what was simply the head of navigation on the river. The family who built and owned it first all died long ago, but I never go by the house without thinking of its early history in those days, when the court end of the little town was next the river, and the old elms shaded the men who were busy with their trading and shipping, and the women who kept up a stately fashion of living in-doors, and walked proudly to and fro in the streets dressed in strange stuffs that had been brought home to them from across the seas. There was a fine set of people in the little town, and Berwick held its head very high, and thought some of the neighboring towns of little consequence that have long since outgrown it and looked down upon it in their turn. It even has given up its place as the head of the family of villages into which the original township has been divided. It is only South Ber-

wick now ; but I like to call it Berwick here, as it has a right to be called, for it was the oldest settlement, and the points of the compass should have been given to the newer centres of civilization which were its offshoots.

The oldest houses are, with one or two exceptions, by far the finest ones, and the one of which I have spoken still keeps up as well as it can the pride as well as the name of its first owner. One cannot help being interested in this man, who was one of the earlier physicians of the town, and also had a hand in the business that was connected with the river. I have heard that he came from Plymouth in Massachusetts and was a minister's son, but if ever a man's heart gloried in the good things of this life it was his, and there was not a trace of Puritan asceticism in his character. His first house was the finest in town, and stood at the head of some terraces that still remain, bordered with rows of elms, and overlooked the river ; but that was burnt, and afterward replaced by another, which was for some mysterious reason built at the foot of the terraces near the water. The doctor was said to be a very handsome man, and he dressed uncommonly well, delighting himself with fine broadcloth cloaks with red linings and silk facings ; and his visits to his admiring patients were paid on

horseback, as was the custom then, but he always rode an excellent horse, and dashed about the country in great splendor. He made an elaborate will, entailing his property in English fashion. He waited to see how much General Lord or the other rich men of the town would pay toward any subscription, and then exceeded the most generous. He even asked how much the richest man in the town was taxed, and paid of his own accord a larger sum than he, and somehow contrived to keep up year after year this appearance of great wealth, and expected and received great deference; though those who knew him best were sure he must be poor, the pride that went with it forbade familiarity and sympathy alike. There has always been a tradition that his first wife came to her death by foul means, and there is a dislike to the house, which seems never to be occupied for any length of time, even after all these years. The people in the neighborhood believe, as I have said, that it is haunted, and I have often heard stories of the strange cries, and the footsteps that sometimes follow you if you go up the hall stairs in the dark. The doctor himself died suddenly, though he has often been seen since in a grand brocade dressing-gown and close velvet cap. His business affairs had naturally become a good deal tangled, but no one

knew how much so until after his death. For several years he had been in the habit of carrying back and forth a little padlocked box when he went to Portsmouth, which was supposed to hold money and valuable papers; but when this was brought home from the bank, and broken open, it was found to contain only blank bits of paper.

His wife, whom the old people in town still remember, must have had a hard time of it in the house on the wharf after she was left a widow; but she was still the *grande dame*, and when she went into society her old laces and silks and her fine manners made her the queen of her company. She gave no sigh of disappointment at her altered fortunes, and as long as the doctor lived and after he died, she was as serenely magnificent and untroubled as he. The Guard could die, but it never surrendered, and the old prestige was kept up bravely. She lived alone, and might sometimes have needed many of the good things of life, for all one knows; but she was always well dressed, and kept up all possible forms of state, and was rigorous in observing all rules of etiquette. By way of doing a great favor to one of her neighbors, she allowed a stranger the use of one of her rooms for a short time, and this person used to hear a bell ring in the morning, after which Madam Hovey

would move about in her room; then she would go down-stairs, breakfast being apparently announced; and so on, through the day. There was often a bell heard tinkling in the parlor; she would apologize for opening the outer door herself, and when the lodger called the mistress of the house was always quite at liberty, and seemed to have been awaiting guests in her parlor, with a bit of lace to mend in her fingers, or some silk knitting, as if she occupied her leisure with such dainty trifles. It was some time before the lodger discovered, to her amazement, that there was not a servant under the roof to do my lady's bidding, but that she still kept up the old customs of the house. Poor soul! it was not all silly pretense. If I were to spend a night (which the saints forbid!) in that beloved mansion where she lived in solitary majesty for so many years, I should not expect to be the guest of the proud doctor's first companion whose death is shrouded in mystery, who cries dismally and walks to and fro in the night, to beg for pity and help. I should look over my shoulder for the lady in the high turban, with a red India shawl around her shoulders, who stood so straight, and used to walk up the aisle to her seat in church on Sunday as if she were a duchess. The cries and the steps behind me would be most annoying, but Madam Hovey,

if she also haunts her house, would receive me elegantly. One can imagine her alone in her house at night, with the jar of the river falls and the wind rattling her windows, fearful of her future, and of the poverty and misery old age held in its shaking hands for her. But she carried a brave face in the daylight, however troubled she may have been under the stars, and she gave to the towns-people the best of lessons in behavior; for she was always gracious and courteous, and fine in her own manners, a high-bred lady, who had been in her day a most apt scholar of the old school.

My cruises down the river rarely reach beyond High Point, or Pine Point, or the toll-bridge; but one is tempted to linger there late for the sake of the beautiful view. The salt grass is a dazzling green, if the time is early summer and the tide is partly out, and from the bridge to the Hamilton house the river is very wide. The fine old house faces you, and at its right there is a mountain, which is a marked feature in the landscape on a clear day, when it looks far away and blue in the distance. The great tops of the Hamilton elms look round and heavy against the sky, and the shores of the river are somewhat irregular, running out in points which are for the most part heavily wooded, and form back-

grounds of foliage for each other. Being at different angles, the light and shade of each are distinct, and make a much finer coloring and outline than could be if the line of the shore were unbroken by so many bays and inlets. It is very pleasant to push the boat ashore in one of these coves, for in the little ravines that lead down to them there are crowds of ferns and wild flowers, and it is easy to find exactly the place for a little feast at supper time. I know many a small harbor on the eastern shore, where a willow or a birch stands out in front of the dark evergreens, and at one place an oak reaches its long branches far out over the water; and when you are once under its shade, and watch the sunset grow bright and then fade away again, or see the boats go round the point from the wide bay into the narrow reach of the river above it, and listen to the bells ringing in the village or in some town farther away, you hate to think you must take the oars again, and go out into the twilight or the bright sunshine of the summer afternoon.

I miss very much some poplars which stood on the western shore, opposite the great house, and which were not long since cut down. They were not flourishing, but they were like a little procession of a father and mother and three or four children out for an afternoon walk, coming down through the field

to the river. As you rowed up or down they stood up in bold relief against the sky, for they were on high land. I was deeply attached to them, and in the spring, when I went down river for the first time, they always were covered with the first faint green mist of their leaves, and it seemed as if they had been watching for me, and thinking that perhaps I might go by that afternoon.

On a spring day how the bobolinks sing, and the busy birds that live along the shores go flitting and chirping and whistling about the world! A great fish-hawk drops through the air, and you can see the glitter of the unlucky fish he has seized as he goes off again. The fields and trees have a tinge of green that they will keep only for a few days, until the leaves and grass-blades are larger and stronger; and where the land has been plowed its color is as beautiful as any color that can be found the world over, and the long shining brown furrows grow warm lying in the sun. The farmers call to each other and to their horses as they work; the fresh breeze blows from the southwest, and the frogs are cheerful, and the bobolinks grow more and more pleased with themselves every minute, and sing their tunes, which are meant to be sung slower and last longer, as if the sweet notes all came hurrying out together.

And in the summer, when the days are hot and long, there is nothing better than the glory of the moonlighted nights, when the shrill cries of the insects fill all the air, and the fireflies are everywhere, and a whiff of saltness comes up with the tide. In October the river is bright steel color and blue. The ducks rise and fly away from the coves in the early morning, and the oaks and maples dress themselves as they please, as if they were tired of wearing plain green, like everybody else, and were going to be gay and set a new fashion in the cooler weather. You no longer drift lazily with the current, but pull your boat as fast as you can, and are quick and strong with the oars. And in the winter the river looks cold and dead, the wind blows up and down between the hills, and the black pines and hemlocks stare at each other across the ice, which cracks and creaks loudly when the tide comes up and lifts it.

How many men have lived and died on its banks, but the river is always young. How many sailors have gone down to the sea along its channel, and from what strange countries have the ships come in and brought them home again up this crooked highway! A harbor, even if it is a little harbor, is a good thing, since adventurers come into it as well

as go out, and the life in it grows strong, because it takes something from the world, and has something to give in return. Not the sheltering shores of England, but the inhospitable low coasts of Africa and the dangerous islands of the southern seas, are left unvisited. One sees the likeness between a harborless heart and a harborless country, where no ships go and come; and since no treasure is carried away no treasure is brought in. From this inland town of mine there is no sea-faring any more, and the shipwrights' hammers are never heard now. It is only a station on the railways, and it has, after all these years, grown so little that it is hardly worth while for all the trains to stop. It is busy and it earns its living and enjoys itself, but it seems to me that its old days were its better days. It builds cheaper houses, and is more like other places than it used to be. The people of fifty years ago had some things that were better than ours, even if they did not hear from England by telegraph, or make journeys in a day or two that used to take a week. The old elms and pines look strong yet, though once in a while one blows over or is relentlessly cut down. The willows by the river are cropped and cropped again. The river itself never grows old; though it rushes and

rises high in the spring, it never dries up in the autumn; the little white sails flit over it in pleasant weather, like fluttering moths round the track of sunlight on the water; one troop of children after another steals eagerly down to its forbidden shores to play.

ANDREW'S FORTUNE.

IT was a cold day early in December, and already almost dark, though the sun had just gone down, leaving a tinge of light red, the least beautiful of all the sunset colors, on the low gray clouds in the southwest. The weather was forlorn and windy, and there had already been a light fall of snow, which partly covered the frozen ground, and was lying in the hollows of the fields and pastures and alongside the stone walls, where the wind had blown it to get it out of its way. The country was uneven and heavily wooded; the few houses in sight looked cold and winterish, as if the life in them shared the sleep of the grass and trees, and would not show itself again until spring. Yet winter is the leisure time of country people, and it is then, in spite of the frequent misery of the weather, that their social pleasures come into stunted bloom. The young

people frolic for a while, but they soon outgrow it, and each rising generation is looked upon with scorn by its elders and betters for thinking there is any pleasure in being out-of-doors in cold weather. No wonder that a New England woman cheers herself by leaving her own sewing and going to the parish society to sit close to an air-tight stove and sew for other people; how should she dance and sing like an Italian peasant under a blue and kindly sky! There should have been another Sphinx on some vast northern waste where it is forever cold weather, and the great winds always blow, and generations after generations of people have lived and died. Life is no surprise on the banks of the fertile old Nile, it could not help being, but the spirit of the North seems destructive; life exists in spite of it.

Along the country road a short, stout-built woman, well wrapped with shawls, was going from her own home, a third of a mile back, to the next house, where there were already lights in one of the upper and one of the lower rooms. She said to herself, "He must be livin' yet," and stepped a little faster, even climbing a low wall and going across a field to shorten the distance. She seemed to be in a great hurry, and as she went she left behind her a track of broken-down golden-rod stalks and dry stems of grass

which had been standing, frozen and dry, with the thin snow about their roots. "Land sakes, how this field has run out!" said she, not without contempt; "but I don' know 's I ever expect to see it bettered."

She opened the side door of the house and went into the kitchen, where several persons were sitting. There was a great fire blazing in the fire-place, and a little row of mugs and two bowls, each covered with a plate, stood at one side of the hearth to keep warm, as if there were somebody ill in the house. And sure enough there was, for old Stephen Dennett, its master, was nearly at the end of his short last sickness. There were three women and two men in the kitchen, and they greeted the new-comer with subdued cordiality, as was befitting; it was a little like a funeral already, and they did not care to be found cheerful, though, to tell the truth, just before Mrs. Haynes came in they solemnly drank a pitcher of old Mr. Dennett's best cider, urging each other to take some, for there was no knowing that there might not be a good deal for them all to do before long. With this end in view of keeping up their strength, they had also shared a mince pie and a large quantity of cheese. "We 'd better eat while we can," said old Betsey Morris, who was hostess, having been housekeeper at the farm for a good many years. "I

don't feel 's if I could lay the table," said she, with unaffected emotion, and the mourners in prospective begged her not to think of it; but they were hungry, hard-working men and women, and were all glad to have something to eat. When some doughnuts were brought out they até those also, all trying in vain to think of some apology for such good appetites at such a moment; but since they had to be silent the feast was all the more solemn.

It was evident that the sickness was either sudden, or had become serious within a very short time, for the family affairs had gone on as usual. It seemed as if the household had been taken unawares by the messenger of Death, and surprised in the midst of fancied security. It was Wednesday, and the clothes-horse, covered with the white folds of yesterday's ironing, stood in one corner of the kitchen, while the smaller horse, which Betsey Morris always facetiously called the colt, was nearer the fire, with its burden of flannels and blue yarn stockings. It was a comfortable old kitchen, with a beam across its ceiling, and two solid great tables, and a settle at one side the fire, where the two men sat who were going to watch. The fire-place took up nearly all one side of the room; the wood-work around it was painted black, and at one side the iron door of the brick oven looked

as if it might be the entrance to a very small dungeon. There was a high and narrow mantel-shelf, where a row of flat-irons were perched like birds gone to roost; also a match-box, and a turkey-wing, and a few very dry red peppers; while a yellow-covered Thomas's Almanac, — much worn, it being December, — was hanging on its nail at one corner. There was a tall clock in the room, which ticked so slowly that one fancied it must always make waiting seem very tiresome, and that one of its hours must be as long as two. On one of the tables there was a spare-rib which had been brought in to thaw. Jonas Beedle and Nathan Martin sat on the settle, while Mrs. Beedle and Mrs. Goodsoe and Betsey Morris were at different distances from the fire in splint-bottomed chairs. They had seen Mrs. Haynes coming across the field, — it was still light enough out-doors for that, — but they had not spoken of it to each other, though they put the cider-jug and the rest of the doughnuts into the closet as quickly as possible.

"I told 'em one day last week," said Jonas Beedle, "that Stephen seemed to be all wizened up since cold weather come. Why, here 's Mis' Haynes! Take a cheer right close to the fire, now won't ye? It 's a dreadful chilly night. We 've just ben a-havin' some ci— "

"Yes," said his wife, nudging and interrupting him desperately. "We was just a-sayin' we wondered where you was, but I misdoubted you was n't able to be out on account of your neurology."

"I went over to Ann's this morning," said Mrs. Haynes, still a little out of breath from her walk. "One o' her children 's took down with throat distemper, and she expects the rest 'll get it. Joseph, he brought in word after dinner that somebody goin' by said Mr. Dennett had a shock this morning, and wa'n't likely to come out of it, and I told 'em I must get right home. I felt 's if 't was one o' my own folks. How does he seem to be?"

"Laying in a sog," said Betsey Morris for the twentieth time that day. "The doctor says there ain't much he can do. He had me make some broth and teas, and he left three kinds o' medicine, — there 's somethin' steeping now in them mugs, in case he revives up. He said we could feed him a little to a time if he come to any, and if we could keep his strength up he might get out of it. He 's coming again about six. He was took dreadful sudden. I was washin' up the dishes after breakfast, and he said he was goin' over to the Corners: there was a selec'men's meeting. He eat as good a breakfast as common, but he seemed sort of heavy. He

went out and put the hoss in, and left him in the barn, and come back to get his coat. Says he, 'Is there anything you 're in need of from the store, Betsey? It looks like foul weather.' And I says, No. I little thought it was the last time he 'd speak to me," and she stopped to dry her eyes with her apron, while the sympathetic audience was quiet in the firelight, and the tea-kettle began to sing as if it had no idea of what had happened. "He always was the best o' providers. It was only one day last week he was a-joking and saying he was going to keep me better this year than ever he did. Says he, 'I 'm going to take my comfort and live well long 's I do live.' There 's everything in the house; we killed early, and there 's the other hog he set for the first o' January; and he 's put down a kag of excellent beef. The sullar 's got enough in it for a rigiment, I told him only yesterday; and says he, 'Betsey, don't you know it 's better to have some to spare than some to want?' I can see him laugh now."

"There 's plenty will need it, if he don't," said Mrs. Goodsoe, who was a dismal, grasping soul, and sat farthest from the fire.

Mrs. Haynes gathered herself up scornfully, — she did not like her neighbor. "You were a-sayin' he was going to the selec'men's meeting," said she.

"Yes," said Betsey. "He said he 'd got to get some papers, and I offered to fetch 'em; but he never wanted to be waited on; and he went up-stairs, — I s'pose to that old chist o' drawers overhead. I heard a noise like something heavy a-falling; and my first thought was he 'd tipped the chist o' drawers over, for I know the lower drawers, where the sheets and pillow-cases is kept, sticks sometimes; and then something started me, and come across me, quick as a flash, that there was something wrong, and I got up-stairs as quick as ever I could, and found him laying on the floor."

"I s'pose he did n't know nothin'?" asked Mrs. Haynes.

"Bless you, no! I tried to get him up, and I found I could n't. I thought he was dead, but I see Jim Pierce a-goin' by, — he was some use for once in his life, — and I sent him for help. Mis' Beedle come right over, bein' so near, and Jim met the doctor up the road, and we got him into bed, and there he lays. It give me a dreadful start. I ain't myself yet."

"Andrer 's here, I s'pose," said Mrs. Haynes, as if she thought it of very little consequence.

"Yes," said Betsey. "He 'd walked over to the saw-mill right after breakfast to carry word about

some boards his uncle wanted, but he got back just as the doctor was leavin'. He 's been real faithful; he ain't left the old gentleman a minute. He 's all broke down, he feels so. I never saw him so distressed; he ain't one that shows his feelin's much of any."

"I think likely he 'll be married right away now," said Mr. Martin. "Stephen told me in the summer that he 'd left him about everything. He ain't no such a man as his uncle, but I don't know no harm of Andrew." A silence fell between the guests, and the fire snapped once in a while and made such a light that the one little oil lamp might have been blown out for all the good it did; nobody would have missed it.

"I told our folks last night there was going to be a death over this way," said Mrs. Goodsoe. "I was a-looking out o' the window over this way last night just before I went to bed, and I see a great bright light come down; and I says, There 's a great blaze fallen over Dennett's way, and my father always said it was a sure sign of a death. 'He' laughed, and says my eyes was dazzled from setting before the fire. I 'd like to know what he 'll say when he hears o' this," — triumphantly. "He went up to the woodlot, chopping, before day."

"I did hear a death-tick in the wall after I went to bed, two or three nights ago," said Betsey Morris; and then there was another pause.

"I s'pose I might go up easy and jist look in, bein' a connection," ventured Mrs. Haynes meekly; and luckily nobody opposed her. In fact, they had all had that satisfaction.

"You might ask Andrer if he could n't rise his uncle's head by and by, so I could give him a little o' the broth; he ain't eat the value o' nothin' since morning, and he 's a hearty man when he 's about," suggested Betsey.

"You ought to help natur' all you can," said Nathan Martin; and armed with this sufficient excuse Mrs. Haynes went up-stairs softly.

Andrew Phillips sat by the bedside, looking as dismal as possible, — a thin, dark young man with a pleasant sort of face, yet you always felt at once that you could get on just as well without him. "Perhaps we had better wait now until the doctor comes," answered he when he heard the message from Betsey. "Do sit down, Mrs. Haynes. I have been wishing somebody would come up, — it 's lonesome since it got dark. Susan has n't sent any word, has she? I sent Jim Pierce over right after dinner, but I suppose he stopped in at every house" —

"Not as I 've heard of," said Mrs. Haynes. "I 've only just got here. I was over to Ann's to spend a day or so, and I never got word about y'r uncle till past two o'clock. How does he seem to be?"

"I don't know," said the young man. "He 's lost that red look, but he seems to have failed all away;" and they both went close to the bed to look at the face on the pillow, which showed at once that Death had come very near. The old man's eyes were shut, and he looked pinched and sunken, and as if he were ten years older than in the morning. One hand that lay outside the bed moved a little, and the fingers picked at the blanket. "He has n't stirred all day except his arm, and that hand once in a while, as you see it now."

Mrs. Haynes knew better than he what it meant, and she gave a long look and turned away with a heavy sigh. "He 's death-struck," she whispered, "but he may hold out for a good spell yet. He 's been a master strong man; I should ha' said yesterday he had as good a chance as any one of us. He 's been the best neighbor I ever had, I know that," and she sat down by the fire, and did not speak for a while. She had not taken it in that her old neighbor was nearing his end until she saw him, and her excitement and curiosity at hearing the news gave

way to sincere sorrow. "He 'll be a great loss," said she in a changed voice, after some little time. "I do' know but I shall miss him more than anybody, except it was one of our own folks."

"He 's been like father and mother both to me," answered the young man, sorrowfully. "I can't bear to think of getting along without him."

"Yes, you 'll have to look out for yourself now, Andrer," said Mrs. Haynes. "I don't know 's you 're to blame for not being of a turn for farming, but I s'pose you 'll have a wife to look after, and it 's a poor sort of a man that can't keep what 's give to him. Susan 's a good smart girl; it 'll be a great thing for you to have a stirrin' wife." Andrew winced at this thrust, which had not been given through any malice, for Mrs. Haynes was a kind-hearted woman, if she did happen to be a little wanting in tact. "You 'll have to put right to it, next summer, to fetch the place up. I come across the seven-acre piece to save time as I come along, and it 's run out dreadfully within a year or two. It did n't look to me as if it would be fit for much more than pasture, unless it had a sight laid out on it. I don't see how the old gentleman come to neglect it so; he used to take a good deal of pains with that piece years ago, — he cut a sight of hay off of it one pell."

It seemed heartless to young Phillips that she should speak slightingly of the man who lay there unable to defend himself. "He has been breaking up this good while," said he, "but I never seemed to see it before."

Down in the kitchen the neighbors were talking together. The pitcher of cider had come from the very oldest barrel in the cellar, and it had set the tongues of the company wagging. Mrs. Goodsoe had gone home; she said with a heavy sigh that there was nobody but herself to do anything, and she would be over again before bed-time if her lameness was n't too bad. She tied a great brown-checked gingham handkerchief over her head, and pinned a despairing old black shawl tight round her thin shoulders, and went out into the night.

"If you can make it convenient, I hope you 'll be over in the morning, Mis' Goodsoe," said Betsey.

"If it 's so that I can," groaned the departing guest.

"She would n't miss of it," snapped Mrs. Beedle, as the door was shut. And Betsey answered, —

"There! I did n't want her no more 'n an old fly, and she always did make my flesh creep, but I knew Mr. Dennett would n't want nobody's feelings hurt."

"I don't see what folks always wants to be com-

plaining for," said Mrs. Beedle. "She always was just so when she was a girl. Nothin' ever suits her. She ain't had no more troubles to bear than the rest of us, but you never see her that she did n't have a chapter to lay before ye. I 've got 's much feelin' as the next one, but when folks drives in their spiggits and wants to draw a bucketful o' compassion every day right straight along, there does come times when it seems as if the bar'l was getting low."

Mr. Beedle and Betsey chuckled a little over this, approvingly. Mr. Martin was dozing at his end of the settle, but presently he roused himself, and asked Mr. Beedle, drowsily, "Do ye know what Otis got for them sticks o' rock-maple?"

"I don't," said Mr. Beedle; "they 're for ship timber, I understood. I heard yisterday he was going to cut some o' them white oaks near his house, the second-sized ones; they was extra nice ones for keels o' vessels, I was told."

"They ain't suitable for keels," said Nathan scornfully. He had once worked in a ship-yard, and was always delighted to parade his superior knowledge before his land-locked neighbors. "They might be going to use them for kilsons or sister-kilsons." This was added after grave reflection, and Mr. Beedle tried to remember what part of a ship a sister-keelson was,

but he could not do it; and he asked Betsey Morris for the lantern, and the two men went out to the barn to look after the cattle, leaving the women alone together.

"Mis' Haynes seems to be stopping up-stairs quite a while," said Mrs. Beedle.

"I expect Andrer 's glad to have her; he ain't much used to sickness. Poor Andrer! I expect he 'll take it very hard, losing of his uncle," said Betsey.

"Well, I tell ye a fat sorrow 's a good sight easier to bear than a lean one; and then he 's got Susan. How that girl, that might have taken her pick, ever come to take up with Andrer Phillips is more 'n I know." (Mrs. Beedle's own daughter had at one time paid Andrew a good deal of attention.) "She wa'n't one to drop like a ripe apple off a bough the first time she got asked."

"Now Mis' Beedle," said Betsey with a good deal of spirit, "Andrer ain't the worst fellow that ever was. She might ha' done a good deal worse, even if he wa'n't expectin' property. I don't doubt she had an eye to the means, myself, but he 's stiddy as a clock, and his uncle always said he had a good mind. He ain't had to work for his livin'; and the old sir never was one that wanted to give up the reins. He

expected the boy to live here after him, and he never had it on his mind to put him to a trade. He 'll make a farmer yet; there 's a sight o' girls turns out good housekeepers that never had no care before they was married. And Andrer 's got a sight o' book-learnin'."

"Book-learnin'!" said Mrs. Beedle, with a jerk of her head. "He 's a book-fool, if ever there was one. But I ain't goin' to set in judgment," she added in a different tone, suddenly mindful that the young man was likely to be her nearest and richest neighbor in a few hours. "I always set everything by his mother. Her and me was the same year's child'n, and was fetched up together. Don't ever hint I said anything that was n't pleasant. I ain't one that wants to make trouble, and he 'll find me a good neighbor. Anybody has to speak out sometimes."

"I ain't one to make trouble, neither," said Betsey. "I 've wondered sometimes, myself, he did n't spudge up and be somebody; his uncle never would ha' thwarted him, but then he never give a sign he was n't satisfied. And Andrer never give him a misbeholden word, — I can answer for that."

The doctor came and went, telling the women that he could not say how long the patient might last.

"I s'pose folks knows of it all over town?" asked

Betsey, meekly conscious of the importance of the occasion and her own consequence.

"Yes, yes," said the doctor, who stood warming his great fur coat before the fire, having declined the offer of supper or something hot, for he was in a hurry to get home. His gig rattled away out of the yard, and silence once more fell on the house. Andrew came down-stairs for a little while, looking grieved and tired, and said that he meant to watch, at least until midnight; the doctor thought that his uncle might be conscious before he died. Then Mrs. Haynes came down, and after a while Mrs. Beedle and Betsey tiptoed up the stairs, and as they listened outside the door they heard some one speaking.

"You don't suppose he 's got his reason?" whispered one to the other, and they waited a minute or two; it was very cold in the little entry.

"Yes, sir," they heard Andrew say gently, "you 've had an ill turn;" and then all was silent again.

"I must n't forget those town orders. I can't seem to think where they are," said a weak voice that was as unlike as possible the cheerful loud tone in which Mr. Dennett had usually spoken.

"Don't try to think, uncle," said Andrew. "Don't you feel as if you could eat a little broth?" But there was no answer.

"I sha'n't stand for selec'man another year; it 's a good deal o' trouble," said the weak voice, after a minute or two.

"He thinks it 's this mornin', poor creatur'," whispered Betsey. "I guess I 'll step down and get that broth; what do you think? Perhaps he would take a little." But when she came back she found it was not wanted. Mrs. Beedle had gone in, and the master of the house lay dying. They stood by the bedside watching, with awe-struck faces, while the mortal part of him fought fiercely for a minute to keep its soul, which had gently and surely taken itself away. There was this minute of distress and agony, and afterward the tired and useless body was still. The old man's face took on a sweet and strange look of satisfaction, — a look of rest, as if it found its sleep of death most welcome and pleasant. So soon it was over, the going away which the bravest of us shudder at sometimes and dread; but dying seems after all, to those who watch it oftenest, a simple and natural and blessed thing, and one forgets the lifeless body in a sudden eagerness to follow the living soul into the new world.

The funeral was appointed for Saturday, and everybody was busy. Andrew instinctively took command, and Betsey and the women who came to help her

consulted him with unwonted deference. The house had to be swept and dusted and put in order, and there were great preparations going on in the kitchen; for old Mr. Dennett had been a hospitable man, and it should not be said that any one went away from his house hungry.

"I declare, it don't seem more than yesterday it was Thanksgiving, and he made me make up double the mince pies I did last year. I little thought what they was going to be for," said Betsey Morris, whose heart was very sad.

The morning after Mr. Dennett had died, a letter came for him from an old friend in Boston, who had left that part of the country in his boyhood, and had made his fortune and become rich and prominent. None of his own family were living there, and he claimed Mr. Dennett's hospitality on the score of their early friendship and the occasional business letters which had passed between them since. Andrew was a little afraid at first to tell Betsey of this additional care, but she received the news graciously. She said, mournfully, how pleased the old gentleman would have been; but she thought also that she would show the city guest that they knew how to do things if they did live in the country, and since her pride as a housekeeper was put to its utmost test, she was not

sorry to have so worthy a spectator among her audience.

But a new interest quickly followed this, for one of the women whispered to another that Andrew could not find the will. He had supposed that it was safe in the keeping of old Mr. Estes, who was the only lawyer in that region; but Mr. Estes had happened to say that two or three weeks before, Mr. Dennett had taken it home with him. Andrew was told that it was written on a sheet of blue letter-paper, and sealed with a wafer.

"I looked all through the papers in the desk upstairs," said he to Mrs. Haynes, "and in my uncle's coat pockets, but I can't seem to find it." It was an evident relief to tell this, and Mrs. Haynes was at once much interested. "It must have slipped between some of the other things, or he may have tied it up with some old bills, or something, by mistake. I suppose Betsey don't know?"

But she did not, and was deeply concerned, for she had long indulged hopes of a legacy. She helped Andrew look all through the pigeon-holes again, and in every likely and unlikely place they could think of; but it was no use, and the fear took possession of them that Mr. Dennett might have destroyed it, meaning to make another will, and never had done

"He told me only a week or two ago," said Andrew, "that everything was going to be mine, and I might do as I chose. I was speaking to him about the barn; you know he had set his mind on altering it. I don't know what to think," and he went to the bedside and lifted the sheet from the dead man's face; but he looked white and indifferent, and kept his secrets.

The days crept by until Saturday, and each night two neighbors came to watch, after the old custom; and those who were lying awake in the house could hear them every little while tramp up the stairs and down again, and the grumble of their voices as they talked together in the kitchen, trying to keep themselves awake. On Friday Mr. Dunning came, and was shocked to find that the only person he really cared very much to see had so lately died; but he accepted Andrew's invitation, and made up his mind to stay until the funeral, discovering that it was expected of him and looked upon as desirable. There was a strange contrast between him and his old friend; the city man looked much younger in his well-fitting clothes, and his quick, business-like manner gave him an air of youth which was in great contrast to Mr. Dennett's slow, farmer-like ways. As he had grown older he had found himself thinking

more and more about the people he had known when he was a boy, and the places where he had worked and played. It seemed strange at first to see hardly any familiar faces, and he had a curious sense of loneliness as he sat, himself an object of great interest, among the mourners; and the pomp and piety of the old-fashioned country funeral interested him not a little. The people gathered from far and near to pay respect to the good man who had died; and they came in by twos and threes, with solemn faces, to look at him, and many of them touched his face, lest they might have bad dreams of him. It was the first time his friends had come to his house and he had not welcomed them, but he lay in his coffin unmindful of them all, looking strange and priest-like in the black robe in which they had shrouded him. It was a bleak, cold day, and he would have looked more comfortable, and certainly more familiar, in his own old coat that was faded a little on the shoulders.

Betsey Morris was dressed in proper black, and was crying softly, with a big pocket handkerchief held close to her face, which she occasionally moved aside a little as the people came in, to dart a glance at them. Andrew looked worn and anxious. Every one told him that the will must be found, but he was by no means certain, and if it did not come to light

he was left penniless. He was only the nephew of Stephen Dennett's wife, and though he had been always treated as a son he had never been formally adopted. Several people noticed that he had a manly look that they never had seen before, but for his part he felt helpless and adrift.

After a long and solemn silence the old minister rose to speak of the departed pillar of the church and town, as he called Mr. Dennett, and the old clock in the kitchen ticked louder than ever in the hush that followed. After the remarks were ended he lifted the great Bible which was lying ready on the light stand, and read slowly and reverently the short and solemn last chapter of Ecclesiastes ; and, though there were fewer young people to heed the preacher's warning than old people to regret their long delay, it seemed to fit the occasion best. " Or even the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl broken," he read in his trembling voice ; " for man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." He thought of his kind friend and generous parishioner, and it was said afterward that, though the old parson was an able preacher and gifted in prayer, he never had spoken as he did that day. He knew this chapter by heart ; he had read it at many a funeral before and he repeated the last few verses, lowering the

Bible as he held it in his arms, for it was heavy And out from between the leaves slid a thin folded paper, which went wavering through the air to the floor; it was sealed with a big red wafer, and one or two persons who sat close by and saw it, knew by a sudden instinct that it was the missing will.

Andrew Phillips turned very pale for a moment, and then as suddenly flushed. He started from his chair, but his respect for the time and place checked him, and with great propriety he nodded to the old woman at whose feet it had fallen, — a distant connection of the family, a feeble, wheezing old creature, — who had made a great effort to be present. She stooped over stiffly and picked it up; she looked as if it were only a commonplace paper, which must not litter the floor on such a day. The minister had already begun his prayer, but when he besought the Lord that the memory of the departed might be a lesson, and that the young man on whom his mantle was to fall might prove himself worthy of it, Andrew prayed for himself still more heartily, and before the coffin-lid was screwed down he bent over and kissed his uncle's forehead. Some of the women's eyes filled with tears; he might not be a go-ahead young man, but his fondness for his uncle was unaffected, and, being his uncle's heir and standing in his place, his feel-

ings were much more to be respected than if he were still a dependent.

When the mourners were called out he meant, as he went by old Mrs. Towner's chair, to take the will. He had tried to call her attention, and make her understand that he wanted the paper; but she was dull of sight, and sat there watching the proceedings with intense interest. Andrew was shy, and he had a horror of seeming anxious about the property before all the people; and when he and Betsey were called (Mr. Lysander Dennett and family, the only cousins, not responding), he went out into the yard, a little uneasy at heart, to take his place at the head of the procession.

They walked two by two across the wind-blown field to the little family burying-ground. It was a long procession, and the doctor was one of the mourners; he had pleaded in vain critical cases in the next town, for his wife, mindful of the exactions of society, would not hear to any excuses. He shivered and grumbled as he walked with her to the grave. "I shall be out every night for a week after this, looking after lung fevers," said he. "I don't see why people must go through with just so much!" and he hastily brushed away a cold tear that had started down his cheek when he caught sight of the clumsy coffin as it

was carried unevenly along in the hands of the bearers. He had been deeply attached to old Mr. Dennett, but the people who walked before him thought he showed very little feeling. When they were nearing the house again some one came running out and spoke to the doctor, who followed him hurriedly ; the word was passed from one to another that old widow Towner was in some kind of a fit, and Andrew's first thought was of the will, for it was she who had it in her pocket.

She had stayed behind to keep the house, being so feeble, and spent with a long walk in the cold. "Foolish for old people to be out in such perishing weather," said the doctor to himself as he bent over her. "She 's gone, poor soul," he told the startled people who were crowding round him. She was lying near the fire-place, on the kitchen floor ; she had been putting on some wood. "I 've been expecting this, — she 's had a heart complaint these twenty years," said the doctor.

And the will had disappeared again. They looked in her pocket, but it was not there, and there was no trace of it anywhere ; only at the side of the fire were some scraps of half-burnt writing paper, — the order in which people had been called out to take their places in the procession. "I meant to keep that," said Betsey

Morris, almost angrily. Whether the old widow had been a little dazed and had burnt the will also, nobody knew, but it was certainly gone. She had been trying to put the house in order a little; some of the borrowed chairs were already standing outside the door, for she was familiar with the contents of the house. Poor little drudge! she had worked to the very end.

It was almost too great an excitement for the townspeople; most of them had just heard of the missing will for the first time, and the crowd of wagons disappeared slowly. This sudden death was a great drawback to the funeral feast, but Betsey managed skillfully to muster those guests who were to stay, for that was an important part of the rites. Poor old widow Towner was comfortably disposed of, and wrapped in some coverlids, and carried away on the floor of a wagon to the desolate little black house where she had lived alone for many years; and then the tables were laid, and the company gravely ate and drank their fill.

Andrew saw his lady-love alone only for a minute after the funeral. "I wish I could stay and help you look for it," said she, "but father says there 's a storm coming and we 'd better get home." It annoyed him to find that her only thought was of the will. To be

sure, it was uppermost in his own mind, but he had too lately seen his oldest and kindest friend put into a frozen grave to be quite forgetful of him, and he would have liked best for Susan to sympathize with the better part of his thoughts. It flashed through his mind that he had once heard some one say that Susan had an eye to the windward, but he held her hand the more affectionately for a moment, as he helped her into her father's wagon, and tucked in the buffalo skin with care by way of making amends for such injustice. There had been times when it had seemed to him that Susan could not understand his best thoughts, and that she was a little bored if he talked about subjects instead of people, and he sighed a little and felt lonely as he went back to the house. "The higher you climb, the fewer you have for company," he said to himself; and it struck him as being a very fine thought.

There was a good deal of conversation going on in the house, and as he opened the kitchen door, where the women were busy clearing away the supper, there was a sudden hush. To tell the truth, they had been taking sides on the question of Susan's being willing to marry him if the will could not be found.

"You need n't tell me," said our friend Mrs. Beedle, as she stood at the closet putting away some

plates. "Susan never 'd had him in the world if it had n't been for the property. I always thought she 'd a looked another way if the dollars had n't shone in her eyes. I don't blame her. I should n't pick out Andrer for his self alone. I 'd as soon live on b'iled rice the year round. I like to see a young fellow that 's got some snap to him."

"But there, now he 's got to be his own master he may start up," suggested some one. "I always thought well of Andrer."

"Land, so did I!" said Mrs. Beedle, with surprise. "I ain't saying nothing against him. What do you guess old lady Towner could a done with the will? It don't seem like her to have burnt it. But she need n't have burnt the paper o' names for the procession; they 're usually kept. I know we 've got 'em to our house for every funeral that 's been since I can remember: gran'ther's, and grandma'am's, and old Aunt Hitty's, and all. She had an awful sight o' folks follow her. You know she wa'n't but half-sister to grand'ther, and owned half the farm. 'T was her right to have a good funeral, and she had it; they set out the best there was. Her own mother was a Shepley, and she had over thirty own cousins on the Shepley side, and they were a dreadful clannish set. I know we set the supper table over five times;

mother always said it was a real pleasant occasion; 't was in September, and a beautiful day for a funeral, and all the family gathered together. I don't more 'n just remember it myself. Aunt Hitty was in her ninety-fourth year, and of course her death was n't no calamity, for she had n't had her mind for above two years. I was small, but I can see just how she looked. She 'd get a word fixed in her mind in the morning, and she 'd keep it a-going all day; sometimes she 'd call grand'ther by name, and I rec'lect one day she said divil, divil, divil, till it seemed as if we could n't stand it no longer."

"I do hope I sha'n't out-live my usefulness," whined a thin little old woman in black. "I always had a dread o' being a burden to others."

"I say," said Mrs. Beedle stoutly, "that old folks has a right to be maintained and done for; it ain't no favor to them. It looks dreadful hard to me, that after you 've toiled all your good years, and laid up what you could, and stood in your lot and place as long as you had strength, the minute you get feeble you 're begrudged the food you eat and the chair you set in. What 's the use of scanting yourself and laying up a little somethin', and seeing other folks spend it! Some ain't got no feelin's for the old, but for my part I like to make 'em feel of consequence."

"Poor old Mis' Towner!" said a pleasant-faced woman. "It keeps coming over me about her; somehow it seems to me as if she had been dreadful hesolate, livin' all alone so. She would do it; many 's the time we 've asked her to our house to stop through a cold spell or a storm, but she never seemed inclined. I thought when I see her coming in to-day she 'd better be to home; but she always was a great hand to go to funerals when she could, and then bein' a connection, too. Mis' Ash and Mis' Thompson said they 'd hurry home and be to her place by the time they got her there."

"I s'pose likely she had a little something laid up?" asked Betsey Morris.

"Enough to bury her, it 's likely. I know of her having thirty-eight dollars she got for some wood a spell ago. You know she owned a little wood-lot over in the Kimball tract. She picked up a little now and then sellin' eggs, but I guess she ain't earnt anything tailoring this good while, her eyes have been failin' her so."

The will had not been mentioned since Andrew had come in and seated himself on the settle, which had been pushed back from its usual place. It had grown dark, and people had said it was no use to hunt any longer, and he had not the courage to go

on with the search; beside, he could only look in the same places over again. He could not help feeling worried; he was impatient for the morrow to come. It seemed to him that all this suffering and loss was felt by himself alone. It was like a tornado that had blown through his life, but everybody else appeared to be on the whole enjoying it, and to have a great deal to talk about. He thought, as he listened to the busy, gossiping women, how cheerless and friendless an old age must be when there was no money in a man's pocket, and for the first time in his life he felt poor, and fearful of the future, which had always seemed secure until then. He remembered how often his uncle had said, "It 's a cold world when you 've nothing to give it;" and somehow there was a great difference in his own mind between his sitting there, uncertain and almost unnoticed, and his receiving the people earlier in the afternoon, as the chief mourner and his uncle's heir. He was the master of the house for the time being; to be sure, the will was missing then, but now it had disappeared almost before his face and eyes. This sudden change in his fortune seemed very strange and sad to him, and he wished Susan had not gone home. Their love for each other was left, at any rate, and he was rich again in the thought that she was his; and then a

dreadful doubt came, — what if she had an eye to the windward? But he crushed this serpent of a thought instantly.

Later Mr. Dunning came in; he had gone home with some old acquaintances who lived not far away, and had spent part of the evening. The snow had already begun to sift down as if there were a long storm coming; the people had all gone away, and Andrew and Betsey Morris and their guest were left to themselves.

"Now tell me what this trouble is about the will," said Mr. Dunning; and Andrew went over the story briefly.

"It looks dark for you," said Mr. Dunning, "but it does n't seem as if anybody in their senses would burn such a thing without knowing what it was; however, she may not have been in her senses. It is a pity you did not take it yourself before you left the house." Betsey thought so too, and could have mentioned that everybody said it was just like him. "It seems to me that she might have put it back in the Bible again, thinking it was a family record, or something of that kind."

"I thought of that, and I looked there, but I could not find it," said Andrew; but he went into the best room and brought out the Bible, and looked through it carefully, leaf by leaf.

"Who is the heir at law?" asked Mr. Dunning; and he was told that it was a cousin of Mr. Dennett's, old Lysander Dennett, who lived seventeen or eighteen miles away. It would have been a great sorrow to the old gentleman if he had thought of his property going in that direction.

"He would have given what he had to the State sooner than have such a thing happen!" said Betsey, excitedly. "I believe he 'd turn over in his grave. You know he was a very set man, but he did have excellent judgment."

"I wish I had come a little sooner; I should like to have seen Stephen again," said Mr. Dunning; and they were all silent for a time.

"Why don't you put your uncle's death in the Bible, now you 've got it right here, Andrer?" asked Betsey, and she brought the little stone bottle of ink, and Andrew carefully wrote the name and date. "He was the last of them," said Betsey mournfully, "and they was always respectable folks. I suppose you remember the old people well as I do, Mr. Dunning?" —

Mr. Dunning was not used to feeling sleepy at half-past nine, though that hour was unusually late for his entertainers, and finding that he seemed disposed to linger, Andrew put more wood on the fire,

and drew some cider, and brought some apples from the cellar, and the guest seemed very comfortable. It was like old times, he said. He asked Andrew a great many questions about the old dwellers in the town, — what had become of the boys and girls he used to know; and at last he asked the young man some questions about himself, and suddenly said, with a directness that was startling, "In case of the will's not turning up, what do you mean to do?"

"I have hardly had time to think," said Andrew, flushing; and then, being sure of sympathy, he opened his heart to the gray-headed man, who seemed to him to be finishing his life while he was just beginning. "I believe I have n't a very good reputation, Mr. Dunning, but I feel sure I could make something of myself if I had the chance. I never have had anything to do that I liked to do. I never took to farming; my uncle never wanted to give up the reins, and I did n't want him to. He could n't bear the thought of my going away and leaving him, and you know there is n't much business in a farming town like this for a young man. I don't know which way to turn," said poor Andrew, a sense of the misery of the situation coming over him as it never had before. "I don't want to blame the best friend I ever had, but I wish now he had put me to some business or other."

"Yes, yes," answered Mr. Dunning absently. "It would have made it easier for you, perhaps; but if you did n't start of your own accord, he probably did n't want to push you; he was glad to have you here. My boys are all scattered;" and then he said no more for a while. Andrew felt half rebuked, and half convinced that it had been right to stay at home. He suspected that his guest was thinking of his own affairs, and wished he had not told so long a story.

All night long Andrew turned and tossed in his bed, and thought about his troubles, until his head ached, and it was a relief when it was time to get up in the early dark morning and go out to feed the cattle. As soon as it was light and breakfast was over, they all hunted again for the will, high and low, up-stairs and down, but it was no use; and later they went decorously to meeting. The neighbors came in, and Mr. Dunning was the hero of the hour, and was treated with great ceremony and honor. He was a well-known man, and his coming was taken as a great favor. Mr. Dennett's fame had been only provincial, and Andrew's perplexities would wait to be considered later. It was a very exciting time, and the people met together in the farm-house kitchens and had a great deal to say to one another. One

day had been much like another for a great while before that week, and life had been like reading one page of a book over and over again.

Early Monday morning Mr. Dunning went away. Andrew drove him over to the village to take the stage. He used to dream in his boyhood that he would come back some day a rich man; the dream had come true; but there was after all a dreary pathos in it. Everybody had made a king of him, and had seemed proud if he remembered them, and yet, — he did not care as he used to think he should. He said he meant to come back in the summer, and he told Andrew that he hoped to find him master of the place; and Andrew made a desperate effort to smile. "If I can do anything for you, you must let me know, my boy," said he. "I thought a great deal of your uncle; he did me some good turns when we were young together."

"I have often heard him say that he wished he could see you again," said the young man. "He would have been so pleased to have this visit. He used to speak of your sitting together always at school, and he used to be so proud when he read your name in the papers."

Mr. Dunning coughed a little and looked away, and asked the name of one of the hills which he had

forgotten. "Yes, I wish I could have seen him once more," he said after a few minutes; and then he was forced to think of his own schemes and plans, for he was on his way back to his every-day world again.

It was only two or three days before Betsey Morris heard the sound of bells, and looked out of the window to see Mr. Lysander Dennett coming in from the road, driving a lame white horse in an old high-backed sleigh. Andrew had gone to see Susan Mathes, so she was all alone. She told herself that Mr. Dennett might have waited a full week before he came spying round, and she would not go to the door to welcome him; so he was a long time putting his horse under a shed and covering him with the buffalo robe, which was worn until it looked fit for only a blacksmith's apron. He stamped the snow off his boots and flapped his arms to get the stiffness out, for it was very cold; the sky looked as if there were another storm coming. He dallied as long as possible, hoping that somebody would come out; but at last he summoned courage, and crossed the yard to the house and knocked at the door. Betsey had been slyly watching him through the window with a grim chuckle, but she kept him waiting a few minutes longer, and then met him with affected surprise.

She was apparently hospitable, but she placed a chair for him almost into the fire itself, and entreated him to lay off his coat and stop, it was so long since he had been over, — a cruel thrust at him for not having been at the funeral. "He never did come 'less it was after money, mean-spirited old toad!" thought she.

Cousin Lysander was slow of speech; he unwound a long, dingy, yarn comforter from his throat, and then he bent forward and rubbed his hands together before the fire. He had a curious, narrow face, with a nose like a beak, and thin straggling hair and whiskers, with two great ears that stood out as if they were a schooner's sails wing-and-wing. Betsey drew her chair to the other side of the fire-place, and began to knit angrily.

"We was dreadful concerned to hear o' cousin Stephen's death," said the poor man. "He went very sudden, did n't he? Gre't loss he is."

"Yes," said Betsey, "he was very much looked up to;" and it was some time before the heir plucked up courage to speak again.

"Wife and me was lotting on getting over to the funeral; but it 's a gre't ways for her to ride, and it was a perishin' day that day. She 's be'n troubled more than common with her phthisic since cold

weather come. I was all crippled up with the rheumatism; we wa'n't neither of us fit to be out" (plaintively). "'T was all I could do to get out to the barn to feed the stock while Jonas and Tim was gone. My boys was over, I s'pose ye know? I don' know 's they come to speak with ye; they 're backward with strangers, but they 're good stiddy fellows."

"Them was the louts that was hanging round the barn, I guess," said Betsey to herself.

"They 're the main-stay now; they 're ahead of poor me a'ready. Jonas, he 's got risin' a hundred dollars laid up, and I believe Tim 's got something too, — he 's younger, ye know?"

But Betsey gave her chair an angry hitch at this mixture of humility and brag, and then was a little ashamed of herself, for the memory of old Mr. Dennett's kindness and patience rebuked her. "I 've always heard they was good boys," she said. "Mr. Dennett was speakin' of 'em only last week; he thought Jonas must be about out of his time."

"Next June," said Lysander, taking heart.

("I come just as near saying that he spoke of leavin' them something," said Betsey afterward, "but I did n't. I thought he might as well tell right out what he come for.")

"Andrer 's away, I take it?"

And Betsey answered yes, but that he would be back early. "He went off before dinner; he 's got to be home to see some folks that 's coming. You 'd better stop, now you 're over," she said, and her tone was milder. She was a tender-hearted soul, and she had made him uncomfortable until she was miserable herself.

"I tell you I dread to see Andrer," said the old man sincerely, in almost a whisper. "I thought I might as well come and have it over with, but I tell you when I got into the yard I wished I was home again. Sometimes I don't feel as if I had a mite o' right to what Stephen meant to give to somebody else; but Andrer ain't got his proofs, and my boys has had a hard chance. Somehow or 'nother, it 's always been up-hill work to our place, and I feel 's if the law gives it to me, it 's the will o' Providence, and I ain't got no right to set my will ag'inst it. But I want to make things pleasant with Andrer; I thought if I come right over, and we talked it over pleasant together, we could fix it someway for the best. I mean well, Betsey, I tell ye honest I do; and if we find out what Stephen calc'lated to do for you, you shall have every cent, if it has to come out o' my part."

"I ain't thought no great about that," said Betsey, who was already considering what there was in the house to make a hearty supper for him, he looked so starved and timid, like an old white rabbit. "But I do feel for Andrer, — you know how he has been brought up. There he is now, I declare, and he 's fetched Susan with him," and she bustled out to greet them, leaving the visitor more unhappy and at a loss than ever. He had thought that everything was getting on comfortably, and he meant to lay his case before Betsey Morris, and then steal away lest he might encounter Andrew, and the idea of meeting Susan was particularly unpleasant. But he reflected that it would all have to be gone through with some time or other, and he sat up as straight as he could in his chair, prepared to hold his own.

Betsey shut the kitchen door after her, and went out a few steps to speak to them before they drove on into the shed. "Lysander 's come," — and for the life of her she could not help a smile. "I *was* mad at first, but when I come to see how meachin' he was I turned to and pitied him, just as your uncle used to. He 'd scold dreadfully when he see him a-coming, but he always loaded up his old wagon for him when he went home. I guess you can have things pretty much as you want 'em."

Andrew frowned. He had to go through the same process of mind as Betsey, but he achieved it in about the same length of time; and though he was very angry at first, after he had put up his own horse he gave the lame white beast a big measure of corn and a pitchforkful of hay, and put her in the warmest stall. He still felt as if he would like to ill-treat her master as he went into the house. Old Lysander looked more meaching than ever, as Betsey had expressed herself, and Susan sat near the fire, looking cross and cold. She was a pretty girl, but not a very good-tempered one, and it had been a serious annoyance to her to find that there was some danger of her having to come down from the high perch she had taken as mistress in prospect of the Dennett farm. Andrew had been laughed at for his old-fashioned, sober ways, and for his mind's habit of wool-gathering. Some blunders he had made were kept alive as great jokes, and he had suffered from contrast with a smart young fellow who had come from the nearest large town, and was clerk at the country store and post-office. He had a "way" with him, and Andrew had not, and Susan's heart had been pulled in both directions.

Andrew shook hands cordially with the old man; he looked a little like Mr. Dennett, and it seemed as

if some thin and weather-beaten likeness of him were sitting there, forlorn, before his own fire, or as if he had come back unsuccessful from his adventure into the next world. "You 'll stop all night, of course," said the young man. "It 's rough traveling, and it 's getting dark now. You won't think of going home. I put up your horse. I suppose you want to have a little talk about business, too." It was hard work to say this, and Susan's eyes snapped and grew very black. "I wonder he don't ask him right off if he can't stop here himself," she muttered, and Betsey thought he was too free-spoken altogether. Lysander was evidently touched by this great civility. He had expected to be treated dreadfully, and to tell the truth, though his wife had started him off early in the morning, he had lingered all day at one place and another along the road.

It grew dark very soon, and Andrew went out to bring in the wood for the night and to do his usual work; and after a while he came in, looking pleasanter than before, which made Susan crosser. She was an honest and just girl according to her lights, and she would not have wished her lover to keep what was not his, but it was her way to make everybody feel that it was injustice, and that Andrew was making somebody else an out-and-out present for his

conscience' sake. She was treating poor Lysander's attempts at conversation with lofty disdain, and he grew more and more humble, and consequently disagreeable. He felt that he was creeping into this good luck by a very crooked way, and it did not behoove him to put on airs and march in upon his possessions with his banners flying; and though he said to himself over and over that the law makes the best will after all; that he was certainly Stephen's next of kin and always had had a hard time, and that Andrew had been given many favors by somebody who was no blood relation, yet he was very sorry for the young fellow, and showed his sympathy as well as he knew how.

"I come over a purpose to say to ye that I mean to do what 's right about this," he said at last, at the end of a long and awkward pause. "I 've asked advice, and I find the property comes to me by the law. But I know Stephen had it in his mind to give you the best part of what he had, and I want to do what 's fair and right, and so does my woman and the boys. We 'll leave it out to anybody you name, or you may have your say, or we 'll share even. I don't want to have no trouble. The first thing I says when I got wind of it was I never 'd touch a cent by claim; but when I come to think it over, it 's

come bv law, and our folks have n't laid up nothin' to speak of; it 's been so we could n't. My sons are smart, stiddy fellows, and I 'd like to let the youngest one have some schooling; he always took to his book. I don't want to be a drag on 'em, when it gets so I can't work. I want ye to think well about it, and let me know. I won't hurry ye, and we 'll make out the papers all square whenever you say."

"Whining old thing!" said Susan to herself; and Betsey left her chair and hurried to the closet, impatiently, for nothing whatever, and gave the door a little slam when she shut it again.

Andrew moved a little in his chair. "No, Mr. Dennett," said he, bravely. "I could n't touch a cent unless the will was found. If I had ever seen it, and knew for certain what was in it, perhaps I should act different; but as it is I should feel as if I was living on you, and I should n't like that. The law gives you the property, as you say, and I hope you and your folks will be comfortable here. I want to speak about one thing: my uncle told me he had left Betsey five hundred dollars; he spoke to me about it several times, and I promised I would see to it when anything happened to him. He said he wanted to feel she would be comfortable when she got to be old. I 'm much obliged to you for what you say, and for coming right over and talking fair and kind."

Betsey told herself then that he talked like a fool, but she always insisted afterwards that he did speak up like a man. Susan thought her lover was better looking than he used to be: she really admired him at that moment, but her heart sank within her. "He is dreadful high-flown," she said to herself, with an uneasy sense of what might be required of her as to noble ideas in years to come, if he went on in this way. It was hard, when she had been thinking they would be the two richest young people in town, to find that Andrew had decided to make them almost the poorest. She wished him to go to law: she thought she was fond of him, but people had always known he had no turn for business, and she had trusted to her own wits to make the farm pay well. Andrew had talked to her in a way that touched her heart only that afternoon, as they drove over, and had told her that he meant to be somebody for her sake, and make her proud of him yet: and she had smiled and kissed him with great affection, but it had been almost too cold for love-making, and she was a sadly disappointed girl.

They spent a solemn evening. Old Lysander talked a great deal about the weather and the likelihood of there being more snow before morning, and then he fell asleep and snored; and later Andrew

walked over with Susan to her aunt's, where she was going to spend a day or two, as often happened. She was dreading to meet her relatives, but Andrew was on provokingly good terms with himself. He told Susan that she was everything to him, and he did n't care about losing the farm so long as he had her; and she said that she was n't half good enough for him, and resolved that she would n't break his heart now, for he was a well-meaning fellow, but before spring there would be some way she could get out of it.

The short winter days that followed were dreary enough to the hero of this story. His comfortable life had always seemed a certainty to him, and now new cares and perplexities had fallen heavily upon him. He could not help noticing that there was a change in the manner of his neighbors, and Betsey often mentioned that she could not imagine how her sister got on without her, and was evidently in a hurry to settle herself in her new home. The Dennetts had asked them both to stay until spring at the farm, when they meant to make a change, and it seemed the best thing to do; but Andrew kept himself busier than ever before in his life, lest he might be accused of idling and eating another man's bread.

He undertook to keep the district school near by, and succeeded tolerably well, and it was a great satisfaction to be earning something. He hunted far and near for some employment, until he was discouraged. He knew that Susan would despise his hiring out on a farm for the summer, and there seemed to be nothing else, if there were even that. He felt very forlorn, and sometimes there was a chill in Susan's sunshine, which was the saddest thing of all.

One day late in January he made up his mind to write to Mr. Dunning and ask him to find some work for him in Boston, though it was awful to think of going so far away. Susan brightened when he spoke of it, and when a letter was received telling him to come as soon as possible he said good-by to her and went, and some one else finished the town school. He often smiled in after-years to think of the misgivings with which he left his home, and the tremendous distance which seemed to lie between it and the city; it was almost like going off into space. The change to city life was a very great one, and at first he felt as a small boy might who had fastened his sled behind a railway train. However, he proved equal to the place for which Mr. Dunning had recommended him; his steady, painstaking ways found

favor with his employers, while he lost some of his natural slowness from being with people who were always in a hurry. He wrote long and edifying letters to Susan, and confided to her his aims and hopes, and his certainty that she would like the city as much as he did. She replied from time to time, but she had by no means the pen of a ready writer; and when, one day, he had been thinking a great deal about her, and wondering gratefully why she had fallen in love with him, a letter came to say that she had decided that they must part. Her father and mother would not consent to her settling so far away, and she hoped they would always be friends; she never had been good enough for him, — which was not honest, since she thought herself much too good. It was a heavy blow, and Andrew was miserable for some time. The loss of the will had involved this loss also, and life seemed very dismal.

But he did not mourn all his days, as at first he thought he should. His business grew very interesting, and he set his heart upon making a fortune, since other people had done it without any more hard work than he was willing to do; and after a while the news reached his old neighbors that his employers thought highly of him and would soon send him out to China, — they being in the tea business. Then

even Mrs. Beedle said she always knew there was a good deal to Andrew Phillips, and now folks that had laughed at him were going to see. And sure enough, he did make his way steadily upward, as many a country boy has done before and since. He changed little in reality: he dressed well, and behaved himself in the approved fashion, and gained a good knowledge of the world, and his manner, which had been thought awkward, came to be considered good enough. While in his boyhood he had been called stupid and slow-moulded, among his business friends he passed for a reserved and discreet and cautious man. He never was very attractive; his associates found no fault with him, for his life was honorable and just, but he did not make many personal friends, though he was so much respected. You might have a strong feeling of attachment for him after you had known him long, but that was all; he was not a person whom one could be enthusiastic about. His was not the character which rouses enthusiasm, but after his own fashion he made a success of life, and that cannot always be said of men who are more popular with their fellows and more gifted by nature than he.

He married, after a while, an orphan niece of one of the firm, of which in time he rose to be a partner himself, and everybody thought it was a good match

for both of them. The fair Susan was never thought of with a sigh; it is oftener in love stories than in real life that such wounds of the heart take long to heal. The world seems to come to an end, and then is begun anew; after people marry, their earlier lovers are seldom thought of with regret, however dear they were in their day. Andrew's wife was a far better wife for him than Susan ever would or could have been, and he always said so to himself when he thought of the matter at all. They had a pleasant house and a pleasant position in society, and our hero often smiled to think of his misery when he found that his uncle's estates were not to be his, after all. It was a good while before it flashed through his mind, one day, that it had been a blessing in disguise. There had been eight thousand dollars beside the farm; there never had been a fortune equal to it in that neighborhood; but his own possessions already covered it over and over again, and it made him fairly wretched to think how small and narrow his life would have been if he had stayed at home on the farm, how much he should have missed, and how much less he could have done for himself and for other people. He said more than once that it had been the making of him, and that the hand of God had plainly shaped his course.

After a good many years he went back to his native place; he had been meaning to do it for a long time, and he was somehow often reminded of Mr. Dunning's visit. It was a pleasant week in late summer, and the old town was little changed; only there seemed to be very few old people and a great many younger ones. He went to see every one whom he knew, and his holidays were after all very pleasant. He called upon Susan, and found her old and homely and complaining, though she had married the smart young man at the store, and had been as fond of him as it was her nature to be of any one. It was odd that he was awkward and lank and slow-moulded now, while Andrew was in her eyes a most distinguished and elegant looking man, and she could not imagine how she ever had the courage to dismiss him. "You know I always set a great deal by you, Mr. Phillips," she said, with a look that made her a little like the Susan of old. He seemed a part of her triumphant youth, and it brought back all her old pride and ambition. She had meant to be somebody and had failed, and perhaps she never exactly understood where her mistake had been until then. It is likely that from that time forward she occasionally said that she might have been riding in her carriage.

Andrew stayed at the Dennett farm; nothing had

ever told him so plainly how different a man he was from what he might have been, or how different a life he led, like coming back to the old house. It seemed very strange to wake up in the morning in his old room, which with unwonted sentiment he had asked if he might occupy. Lysander Dennett had not lived long to enjoy his good fortune, but it had been a great blessing to his sons, who were farmers by nature; and now one lived in the old house, and the other in a new one near by, and they worked the farm together, while they were, by reason of their wealth, two of the foremost citizens, and one of them had even been sent to the legislature. The old place was not altered much. Andrew was reminded of his uncle and of his own boyhood at every step, and he offered to buy one or two old pieces of furniture, which were gladly given to him when he was found to be attached to them; and, since they were brass-mounted and claw-footed, his wife welcomed them with joy, and thought his pilgrimage to his native place had not been in vain. There was a son of Jonas Dennett's at the farm who reminded him of himself in his youth, and he made friends in a grave way with the boy, and said to himself that in a year or two he would give him a start in the world.

It happened the day before he ended his visit was

a rainy day, and he was shut up in the house, though between two showers in the morning he had gone over to pay a last call on Mrs. Beedle, who was still living, grown shorter and stouter than ever, until her little head and broad round shoulders made her look like a June bug. She took great pride in Mr. Phillips, who, indeed, had been kind to her in many ways, as well as to Betsey Morris, who had died not long before.

After he had come back he was at his wits' end what to do. Jonas Dennett was away and the women were busy, and at last he asked if there were not an old family Bible somewhere in the house, and was directed to the best room, — stiff and dismal as ever, — where it was taken down from the chimney cupboard, as the Bible belonging to the Lysander Dennett branch was occupying the post of honor on the little table in the corner. Andrew caught sight of some other ancient-looking volumes, and he mounted the chair himself, reaching in at arm's-length and taking out one old brown book after another. There was nothing very interesting; they were mostly like Law's Serious Call and the Rise and Progress, and some volumes of old sermons by New England divines. The last book was a great volume of Townsend's Arrangement of the Old Testament. It was almost

as large as the Bible itself, and as he took it out it slipped from his hand and fell to the floor. One of the Dennett children, who stood by, stooped to pick it up, and as Andrew came down from the chair, dusty and disappointed in his search, she gave it to him. There was a paper half out between the leaves, which the fall had dislodged, and he pulled it out to replace it more carefully, thinking of something else all the time; but a strange feeling rushed over him at the sight of it, and he sat down, still holding the big book and the paper, and, to the little girl's surprise, he grew very red in the face.

It was strange that after so many years he should have been the one to find the missing will. It was carefully written in his uncle's stiff, precise hand, and the farm and all the money, with the exception of Betsey Morris's legacy, and one to the young Dennetts, and some smaller ones to the church and the old minister, were left to his adopted son.

And now Andrew was the rightful heir when he did not wish to be, and he was anything but happy. He remembered the book, and that he looked in it himself; it used to be on a table in that same room, and poor old Mrs. Towner had carefully replaced the paper in the Bible, as she thought, for this book was not unlike it to her half-blind eyes. Soon after the

funeral Betsey had put the room severely to rights, and had stored the books away in the chimney cupboard, where they had been ever since. He could not imagine how he and the other people who had searched had overlooked this paper; it must have been fastened between two leaves and hidden somehow. Indeed, it had always been a puzzle to him why the will should have been in the Bible at all; it was not like his uncle to put it there; but after all it is only people in real life who do uncharacteristic things. Andrew went out to the barn and sat there alone for a while, listening to the rain on the shingles overhead and wondering what he should do. He had a great affection for the old place, and he would have liked to think it was his, as his uncle wished it to be. It cost a good deal of effort to give it up; but he knew that his wife would find it very dull for even a little while in the summer, and it was too far from the city for him to think of spending much time there. It would give him a great deal of trouble, too. And Jonas and Tim Dennett would be thrown out of their homes; they were worth five or six thousand dollars apiece and their farm now, but they would have to begin life all over again, — they and their wives and children. He was a rich man himself and only a little past middle age, and he came to the conclusion that

he would not claim the property that his uncle had given him.

And when he went into the house he stood for a minute in the kitchen warming his hands a little over the stove, which to his sorrow had taken the place of the old fire-place; while nobody was looking he tucked a folded paper in at the draught, and saw it light quickly and burn, and the old wafer spluttered a little, while he felt very solemn, and seemed to his hostess all day to have something on his mind. He had a feeling of regret about it from time to time, and he thought sometimes that it would have been just as well to let them know how generous he had been. But he always told himself, whenever he thought of the will afterward, that it was the best thing for him to do.

So he lost his fortune when he wanted it, and found it was his when he would not take it; but he thought of the old place more and more as he grew older, and Jonas Dennett's boy came to the city that next spring.

AN OCTOBER RIDE.

IT was a fine afternoon, just warm enough and just cool enough, and I started off alone on horseback, though I do not know why I should say alone when I find my horse such good company. She is called Sheila, and she not only gratifies one's sense of beauty, but is very interesting in her character, while her usefulness in this world is beyond question. I grow more fond of her every week; we have had so many capital good times together, and I am certain that she is as much pleased as I when we start out for a run.

I do not say to every one that I always pronounce her name in German fashion because she occasionally shies, but that is the truth. I do not mind her shying, or a certain mysterious and apparently unprovoked jump, with which she sometimes indulges herself, and no one else rides her, so I think she does

no harm, but I do not like the principle of allowing her to be wicked, unrebuked and unhindered, and some day I shall give my mind to admonishing this four-footed Princess of Thule, who seems at present to consider herself at the top of royalty in this kingdom or any other. I believe I should not like her half so well if she were tamer and entirely and stupidly reliable; I glory in her good spirits and I think she has a right to be proud and willful if she chooses. I am proud myself of her quick eye and ear, her sure foot, and her slender, handsome chestnut head. I look at her points of high breeding with admiration, and I thank her heartily for all the pleasure she has given me, and for what I am sure is a steadfast friendship between us, — and a mutual understanding that rarely knows a disappointment or a mistake. She is careful when I come home late through the shadowy, twilighted woods, and I can hardly see my way ; she forgets then all her little tricks and capers, and is as steady as a clock with her tramp, tramp, over the rough, dark country roads. I feel as if I had suddenly grown a pair of wings when she fairly flies over the ground and the wind whistles in my ears. There never was a time when she could not go a little faster, but she is willing to go step by step through the close woods, pushing her way through

the branches, and stopping considerately when a bough that will not bend tries to pull me off the saddle. And she never goes away and leaves me when I dismount to get some flowers or a drink of spring water, though sometimes she thinks what fun it would be. I cannot speak of all her virtues for I have not learned them yet. We are still new friends, for I have only ridden her two years and I feel all the fascination of the first meeting every time I go out with her, she is so unexpected in her ways; so amusing, so sensible, so brave, and in every way so delightful a horse.

It was in October, and it was a fine day to look at, though some of the great clouds that sailed through the sky were a little too heavy-looking to promise good weather on the morrow, and over in the west (where the wind was coming from) they were packed close together and looked gray and wet. It might be cold and cloudy later, but that would not hinder my ride; it is a capital way to keep warm, to come along a smooth bit of road on the run, and I should have time at any rate to go the way I wished, so Sheila trotted quickly through the gate and out of the village. There was a flicker of color left on the oaks and maples, and though it was not Indian-summer weather it was first cousin to it. I took off

my cap to let the wind blow through my hair; I had half a mind to go down to the sea, but it was too late for that; there was no moon to light me home. Sheila took the strip of smooth turf just at the side of the road for her own highway, she tossed her head again and again until I had my hand full of her thin, silky mane, and she gave quick pulls at her bit and hurried little jumps ahead as if she expected me already to pull the reins tight and steady her for a hard gallop. I patted her and whistled at her, I was so glad to see her again and to be out riding, and I gave her part of her reward to begin with, because I knew she would earn it, and then we were on better terms than ever. She has such a pretty way of turning her head to take the square lump of sugar, and she never bit my fingers or dropped the sugar in her life.

Down in the lower part of the town on the edge of York, there is a long tract of woodland, covering what is called the Rocky Hills; rough, high land, that stretches along from beyond Agamenticus, near the sea, to the upper part of Eliot, near the Piscataqua River. Standing on Agamenticus, the woods seem to cover nearly the whole of the country as far as one can see, and there is hardly a clearing to break this long reach of forest of which I speak; there

must be twenty miles of it in an almost unbroken line. The roads cross it here and there, and one can sometimes see small and lonely farms hiding away in the heart of it. The trees are for the most part young growth of oak or pine, though I could show you yet many a noble company of great pines that once would have been marked with the king's arrow, and many a royal old oak which has been overlooked in the search for ships' knees and plank for the navy yard, and piles for the always shaky, up-hill and down, pleasant old Portsmouth bridge. The part of these woods which I know best lies on either side the already old new road to York on the Rocky Hills, and here I often ride, or even take perilous rough drives through the cart-paths, the wood roads which are busy thoroughfares in the winter, and are silent and shady, narrowed by green branches and carpeted with slender brakes, and seldom traveled over, except by me, all summer long.

It was a great surprise, or a succession of surprises, one summer, when I found that every one of the old uneven tracks led to or at least led by what had once been a clearing, and in old days must have been the secluded home of some of the earliest adventurous farmers of this region. It must have taken great courage, I think, to strike the first blow of one's axe

here in the woods, and it must have been a brave certainty of one's perseverance that looked forward to the smooth field which was to succeed the unfruitful wilderness. The farms were far enough apart to be very lonely, and I suppose at first the cry of fierce wild creatures in the forest was an every-day sound, and the Indians stole like snakes through the bushes and crept from tree to tree about the houses watching, begging, and plundering, over and over again. There are some of these farms still occupied, where the land seems to have become thoroughly civilized, but most of them were deserted long ago; the people gave up the fight with such a persistent willfulness and wildness of nature and went away to the village, or to find more tractable soil and kindlier neighborhoods.

I do not know why it is these silent, forgotten places are so delightful to me; there is one which I always call my farm, and it was a long time after I knew it well before I could find out to whom it had once belonged. In some strange way the place has become a part of my world and to belong to my thoughts and my life.

I suppose every one can say, "I have a little kingdom where I give laws." Each of us has truly a kingdom in thought, and a certain spiritual possession. There are some gardens of mine where somebody

plants the seeds and pulls the weeds for me every year without my ever taking a bit of trouble. I have trees and fields and woods and seas and houses, I own a great deal of the world to think and plan and dream about. The picture belongs most to the man who loves it best and sees entirely its meaning. We can always have just as much as we can take of things, and we can lay up as much treasure as we please in the higher world of thought that can never be spoiled or hindered by moth or rust, as lower and meaner wealth can be.

As for this farm of mine, I found it one day when I was coming through the woods on horseback trying to strike a shorter way out into the main road. I was pushing through some thick underbrush, and looking ahead I noticed a good deal of clear sky as if there were an open place just beyond, and presently I found myself on the edge of a clearing. There was a straggling orchard of old apple-trees, the grass about them was close and short like the wide door-yard of an old farm-house and into this cleared space the little pines were growing on every side. The old pines stood a little way back watching their children march in upon their inheritance, as if they were ready to interfere and protect and defend, if any

trouble came. I could see that it would not be many years, if they were left alone, before the green grass would be covered, and the old apple-trees would grow mossy and die for lack of room and sunlight in the midst of the young woods. It was a perfect acre of turf, only here and there I could already see a cushion of juniper, or a tuft of sweet fern or bayberry. I walked the horse about slowly, picking a hard little yellow apple here and there from the boughs over my head, and at last I found a cellar all grown over with grass, with not even a bit of a crumbling brick to be seen in the hollow of it. No doubt there were some underground. It was a very large cellar, twice as large as any I had ever found before in any of these deserted places, in the woods or out. And that told me at once that there had been a large house above it, an unusual house for those old days; the family was either a large one, or it had made for itself more than a merely sufficient covering and shelter, with no inch of unnecessary room. I knew I was on very high land, but the trees were so tall and close that I could not see beyond them. The wind blew over pleasantly and it was a curiously protected and hidden place, sheltered and quiet, with its one small crop of cider apples dropping ungathered to the ground, and unharvested there, except by hurrying black ants and sticky, witless little snails.

I suppose my feeling toward this place was like that about a ruin, only this seemed older than a ruin. I could not hear my horse's foot-falls, and an apple startled me when it fell with a soft thud, and I watched it roll a foot or two and then stop, as if it knew it never would have anything more to do in the world. I remembered the Enchanted Palace and the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, and it seemed as if I were on the way to it, and this was a corner of that palace garden. The horse listened and stood still, without a bit of restlessness, and when we heard the far cry of a bird she looked round at me, as if she wished me to notice that we were not alone in the world, after all. It was strange, to be sure, that people had lived there, and had had a home where they were busy, and where the fortunes of life had found them; that they had followed out the law of existence in its succession of growth and flourishing and failure and decay, within that steadily narrowing circle of trees.

The relationship of untamed nature to what is tamed and cultivated is a very curious and subtle thing to me; I do not know if every one feels it so intensely. In the darkness of an early autumn evening I sometimes find myself whistling a queer tune that chimes in with the crickets' piping and the cries

of the little creatures around me in the garden. I have no thought of the rest of the world. I wonder what I am; there is a strange self-consciousness, but I am only a part of one great existence which is called nature. The life in me is a bit of all life, and where I am happiest is where I find that which is next of kin to me, in friends, or trees, or hills, or seas, or beside a flower, when I turn back more than once to look into its face.

The world goes on year after year. We can use its forces, and shape and mould them, and perfect this thing or that, but we cannot make new forces; we only use the tools we find to carve the wood we find. There is nothing new; we discover and combine and use. Here is the wild fruit, — the same fruit at heart as that with which the gardener wins his prize. The world is the same world. You find a diamond, but the diamond was there a thousand years ago; you did not make it by finding it. We grow spiritually, until we grasp some new great truth of God; but it was always true, and waited for us until we came. What is there new and strange in the world except ourselves! Our thoughts are our own; God gives our life to us moment by moment, but He gives it to be our own.

> "Ye on your harps must lean to hear
> A secret chord that mine will bear."

As I looked about me that day I saw the difference that men had made slowly fading out of sight. It was like a dam in a river; when it is once swept away the river goes on the same as before. The old patient, sublime forces were there at work in their appointed way, but perhaps by and by, when the apple-trees are gone and the cellar is only a rough hollow in the woods, some one will again set aside these forces that have worked unhindered, and will bring this corner of the world into a new use and shape. What if we could stop or change forever the working of these powers! But Nature repossesses herself surely of what we boldly claim. The pyramids stand yet, it happens, but where are all those cities that used also to stand in old Egypt, proud and strong, and dating back beyond men's memories or traditions, — turned into sand again and dust that is like all the rest of the desert, and blows about in the wind? Yet there cannot be such a thing as life that is lost. The tree falls and decays, in the dampness of the woods, and is part of the earth under foot, but another tree is growing out of it; perhaps it is part of its own life that is springing again from the part of it that died. God must always be putting again to some use the life that is withdrawn; it must live, because it is Life. There can be no confusion to

God in this wonderful world. the new birth of the immortal, the new forms of the life that is from everlasting to everlasting, or the new way in which it comes. But it is only God who can plan and order it all, — who is a father to his children, and cares for the least of us. I thought of his unbroken promises; the people who lived and died in that lonely place knew Him, and the chain of events was fitted to their thoughts and lives, for their development and education. The world was made for them, and God keeps them yet; somewhere in his kingdom they are in their places, — they are not lost; while the trees they left grow older, and the young trees spring up, and the fields they cleared are being covered over and turned into wild land again.

I had visited this farm of mine many times since that first day, but since the last time I had been there I had found out, luckily, something about its last tenant. An old lady whom I knew in the village had told me that when she was a child she remembered another very old woman, who used to live here all alone, far from any neighbors, and that one afternoon she had come with her mother to see her. She remembered the house very well; it was larger and better than most houses in the region. Its owner

was the last of her family; but why she lived alone, or what became of her at last, or of her money or her goods, or who were her relatives in the town, my friend did not know. She was a thrifty, well-to-do old soul, a famous weaver and spinner, and she used to come to the meeting-house at the Old Fields every Sunday, and sit by herself in a square pew. Since I knew this, the last owner of my farm has become very real to me, and I thought of her that day a great deal, and could almost see her as she sat alone on her doorstep in the twilight of a summer evening, when the thrushes were calling in the woods; or going down the hills to church, dressed in quaint fashion, with a little sadness in her face as she thought of her lost companions and how she did not use to go to church alone. And I pictured her funeral to myself, and watched her carried away at last by the narrow road that wound among the trees; and there was nobody left in the house after the neighbors from the nearest farms had put it to rights, and had looked over her treasures to their hearts' content. She must have been a fearless woman, and one could not stay in such a place as this, year in and year out, through the long days of summer and the long nights of winter, unless she found herself good company.

I do not think I could find a worse avenue than that which leads to my farm, I think sometimes there must have been an easier way out which I have yet failed to discover, but it has its advantages, for the trees are beautiful and stand close together, and I do not know such green brakes anywhere as those which grow in the shadiest places. I came into a well-trodden track after a while, which led into a small granite quarry, and then I could go faster, and at last I reached a pasture wall which was quickly left behind and I was only a little way from the main road. There were a few young cattle scattered about in the pasture, and some of them which were lying down got up in a hurry and stared at me suspiciously as I rode along. It was very uneven ground, and I passed some stiff, straight mullein stalks which stood apart together in a hollow as if they wished to be alone. They always remind me of the rigid old Scotch Covenanters, who used to gather themselves together in companies, against the law, to worship God in some secret hollow of the bleak hill-side. Even the smallest and youngest of the mulleins was a Covenanter at heart; they had all put by their yellow flowers, and they will stand there, gray and unbending, through the fall rains and winter snows, to keep their places and praise God in their own fashion, and they take great

credit to themselves for doing it, I have no doubt, and think it is far better to be a stern and respectable mullein than a straying, idle clematis, that clings and wanders, and cannot bear wet weather. I saw members of the congregation scattered through the pasture and felt like telling them to hurry, for the long sermon had already begun! But one ancient worthy, very late on his way to the meeting, happened to stand in our way, and Sheila bit his dry head off, which was a great pity.

After I was once on the high road it was not long before I found myself in another part of the town altogether. It is great fun to ride about the country; one rouses a great deal of interest; there seems to be something exciting in the sight of a girl on horseback, and people who pass you in wagons turn to look after you, though they never would take the trouble if you were only walking. The country horses shy if you go by them fast, and sometimes you stop to apologize. The boys will leave anything to come and throw a stone at your horse. I think Sheila would like to bite a boy, though sometimes she goes through her best paces when she hears them hooting, as if she thought they were admiring her, which I never allow myself to doubt. It is considered a much greater compliment if you make a call

on horseback than if you came afoot, but carriage people are nothing in the country to what they are in the city.

I was on a good road and Sheila was trotting steadily, and I did not look at the western sky behind me until I suddenly noticed that the air had grown colder and the sun had been for a long time behind a cloud; then I found there was going to be a shower, in a very little while, too. I was in a thinly settled part of the town, and at first I could not think of any shelter, until I remembered that not very far distant there was an old house, with a long, sloping roof, which had formerly been the parsonage of the north parish; there had once been a church near by, to which most of the people came who lived in this upper part of the town. It had been for many years the house of an old minister, of wide-spread fame in his day; I had always heard of him from the elderly people, and I had often thought I should like to go into his house, and had looked at it with great interest, but until within a year or two there had been people living there. I had even listened with pleasure to a story of its being haunted, and this was a capital chance to take a look at the old place, so I hurried toward it.

As I went in at the broken gate it seemed to me

as if the house might have been shut up and left to itself fifty years before, when the minister died, so soon the grass grows up after men's footsteps have worn it down, and the traces are lost of the daily touch and care of their hands. The home lot was evidently part of a pasture, and the sheep had nibbled close to the door-step, while tags of their long, spring wool, washed clean by summer rains, were caught in the rose-bushes near by.

It had been a very good house in its day, and had a dignity of its own, holding its gray head high, as if it knew itself to be not merely a farm-house, but a Parsonage. The roof looked as if the next winter's weight of snow might break it in, and the window panes had been loosened so much in their shaking frames that many of them had fallen out on the north side of the house, and were lying on the long grass underneath, blurred and thin but still unbroken. That was the last letter of the house's death warrant, for now the rain could get in, and the crumbling timbers must loose their hold of each other quickly. I had found a dry corner of the old shed for the horse and left her there, looking most ruefully over her shoulder after me as I hurried away, for the rain had already begun to spatter down in earnest. I was not sorry when I found that somebody had

broken a pane of glass in the sidelight of the front door, near the latch, and I was very pleased when I found that by reaching through I could unfasten a great bolt and let myself in, as perhaps some tramp in search of shelter had done before me. However, I gave the blackened brass knocker a ceremonious rap or two, and I could have told by the sound of it, if in no other way, that there was nobody at home. I looked up to see a robin's nest on the cornice overhead, and I had to push away the lilacs and a withered hop vine which were both trying to cover up the door.

It gives one a strange feeling, I think, to go into an empty house so old as this. It was so still there that the noise my footsteps made startled me, and the floor creaked and cracked as if some one followed me about. There was hardly a straw left or a bit of string or paper, but the rooms were much worn, the bricks in the fire-places were burnt out, rough and crumbling, and the doors were all worn smooth and round at the edges. The best rooms were wainscoted, but up-stairs there was a long, unfinished room with a little square window at each end, under the sloping roof, and as I listened there to the rain I remembered that I had once heard an old man say wistfully, that he had slept in just such a "linter"

chamber as this when he was a boy, and that he never could sleep anywhere now so well as he used there while the rain fell on the roof just over his bed.

Down-stairs I found a room which I knew must have been the study. It was handsomely wainscoted, and the finish of it was even better than that of the parlor. It must have been a most comfortable place, and I fear the old parson was luxurious in his tastes and less ascetic, perhaps, than the more puritanical members of his congregation approved. There was a great fire-place with a broad hearth-stone, where I think he may have made a mug of flip sometimes, and there were several curious, narrow, little cupboards built into the wall at either side, and over the fire-place itself two doors opened and there were shelves inside, broader at the top as the chimney sloped back. I saw some writing on one of these doors and went nearer to read it. There was a date at the top, some time in 1802, and his reverence had had a good quill pen and ink which bravely stood the test of time; he must have been a tall man to have written so high. I thought it might be some record of a great storm or other notable event in his house or parish, but I was amused to find that he had written there on the unpainted wood some valu-

able recipes for the medical treatment of horses. "It is Useful for a Sprain — and For a Cough, Take of Elecampane" — and so on. I hope he was not a hunting parson, but one could hardly expect to find any reference to the early fathers or federal headship in Adam on the cupboard door. I thought of the stories I had heard of the old minister and felt very well acquainted with him, though his books had been taken down and his fire was out, and he himself had gone away. I was glad to think what a good, faithful man he was, who spoke comfortable words to his people and lived pleasantly with them in this quiet country place so many years. There are old people living who have told me that nobody preaches nowadays as he used to preach, and that he used to lift his hat to everybody; that he liked a good dinner, and always was kind to the poor.

I thought as I stood in the study, how many times he must have looked out of the small-paned western windows across the fields, and how in his later days he must have had a treasure of memories of the people who had gone out of that room the better for his advice and consolation, the people whom he had helped and taught and ruled. I could not imagine that he ever angrily took his parishioners to task for their errors of doctrine; indeed, it was not of his ac-

tive youth and middle age that I thought at all, but of the last of his life, when he sat here in the sunshine of a winter afternoon, and the fire flickered and snapped on the hearth, and he sat before it in his arm-chair with a brown old book which he laid on his knee while he thought and dozed, and roused himself presently to greet somebody who came in, a little awed at first, to talk with him. It was a great thing to be a country minister in those old days, and to be such a minister as he was; truly the priest and ruler of his people. The times have changed, and the temporal power certainly is taken away. The divine right of ministers is almost as little believed in as that of kings, by many people; it is not possible for the influence to be so great, the office and the man are both looked at with less reverence. It is a pity that it should be so, but the conservative people who like old-fashioned ways cannot tell where to place all the blame. And it is very odd to think that these iconoclastic and unpleasant new times of ours will, a little later, be called old times, and that the children, when they are elderly people, will sigh to have them back again.

I was very glad to see the old house, and I told myself a great many stories there, as one cannot help doing in such a place. There must have been

so many things happen in so many long lives which were lived there; people have come into the world and gone out of it again from those square rooms with their little windows, and I believe if there are ghosts who walk about in daylight I was only half deaf to their voices, and heard much of what they tried to tell me that day. The rooms which had looked empty at first were filled again with the old clergymen, who met together with important looks and complacent dignity, and eager talk about some minor point in theology that is yet unsettled; the awkward, smiling couples, who came to be married; the mistress of the house, who must have been a stately person in her day; the little children who, under all their shyness, remembered the sugar-plums in the old parson's pockets, — all these, and even the tall cane that must have stood in the entry, were visible to my mind's eye. And I even heard a sermon from the old preacher who died so long ago, on the beauty of a life well spent.

The rain fell steadily and there was no prospect of its stopping, though I could see that the clouds were thinner and that it was only a shower. In the kitchen I found an old chair which I pulled into the study, which seemed more cheerful than the rest of the house, and then I remembered that there were

some bits of board in the kitchen also, and the thought struck me that it would be good fun to make a fire in the old fire-place. Everything seemed right about the chimney. I even went up into the garret to look at it there, for I had no wish to set the parsonage on fire, and I brought down a pile of old corn husks for kindlings which I found on the garret floor. I built my fire carefully, with two bricks for andirons, and when I lit it it blazed up gayly, I poked it and it crackled, and though I was very well contented there alone I wished for some friend to keep me company, it was selfish to have so much pleasure with no one to share it. The rain came faster than ever against the windows, and the room would have been dark if it had not been for my fire, which threw out a magnificent yellow light over the old brown wood-work. I leaned back and watched the dry sticks fall apart in red coals and thought I might have to spend the night there, for if it were a storm and not a shower I was several miles from home, and a late October rain is not like a warm one in June to fall upon one's shoulders. I could hear the house leaking when it rained less heavily, and the soot dropped down the chimney and great drops of water came down, too, and spluttered in the fire. I thought what a merry thing it would be if a party of

young people ever had to take refuge there, and I could almost see their faces and hear them laugh, though until that minute they had been strangers to me.

But the shower was over at last, and my fire was out, and the last pale shining of the sun came into the windows, and I looked out to see the distant fields and woods all clear again in the late afternoon light. I must hurry to get home before dark, so I raked up the ashes and left my chair beside the fire-place, and shut and fastened the front door after me, and went out to see what had become of my horse, shaking the dust and cobwebs off my dress as I crossed the wet grass to the shed. The rain had come through the broken roof and poor Sheila looked anxious and hungry as if she thought I might have meant to leave her there till morning in that dismal place. I offered her my apologies, but she made even a shorter turn than usual when I had mounted, and we scurried off down the road, spattering ourselves as we went. I hope the ghosts who live in the parsonage watched me with friendly eyes, and I looked back myself, to see a thin blue whiff of smoke still coming up from the great chimney. I wondered who it was that had made the first fire there, — but I think I shall have made the last.

FROM A MOURNFUL VILLAGER.

LATELY I have been thinking, with much sorrow, of the approaching extinction of front yards, and of the type of New England village character and civilization with which they are associated. Formerly, because I lived in an old-fashioned New England village, it would have been hard for me to imagine that there were parts of the country where the Front yard, as I knew it, was not in fashion, and that Grounds (however small) had taken its place. No matter how large a piece of land lay in front of a house in old times, it was still a front yard, in spite of noble dimension and the skill of practiced gardeners.

There are still a good many examples of the old manner of out-of-door life and customs, as well as a good deal of the old-fashioned provincial society, left in the eastern parts of the New England States; but

put side by side with the society that is American rather than provincial, one discovers it to be in a small minority. The representative United States citizen will be, or already is, a Westerner, and his instincts and ways of looking at things have certain characteristics of their own which are steadily growing more noticeable.

For many years New England was simply a bit of Old England transplanted. We all can remember elderly people whose ideas were wholly under the influence of their English ancestry. It is hardly more than a hundred years since we were English colonies, and not independent United States, and the customs and ideas of the mother country were followed from force of habit. Now one begins to see a difference; the old traditions have had time to almost die out even in the most conservative and least changed towns, and a new element has come in. The true characteristics of American society, as I have said, are showing themselves more and more distinctly to the westward of New England, and come back to it in a tide that steadily sweeps away the old traditions. It rises over the heads of the prim and stately idols before which our grandfathers and grandmothers bowed down and worshiped, and which we ourselves were at least taught to walk softly by as they toppled on their thrones.

One cannot help wondering what a lady of the old school will be like a hundred years from now! But at any rate she will not be in heart and thought and fashion of good breeding as truly an Englishwoman as if she had never stepped out of Great Britain. If one of our own elderly ladies were suddenly dropped into the midst of provincial English society, she would be quite at home; but west of her own Hudson River she is lucky if she does not find herself behind the times, and almost a stranger and a foreigner.

And yet from the first there was a little difference, and the colonies were New England and not Old. In some ways more radical, yet in some ways more conservative, than the people across the water, they showed a new sort of flower when they came into bloom in this new climate and soil. In the old days there had not been time for the family ties to be broken and forgotten. Instead of the unknown English men and women who are our sixth and seventh cousins now, they had first and second cousins then; but there was little communication between one country and the other, and the mutual interest in every-day affairs had to fade out quickly. A traveler was a curiosity, and here, even between the villages themselves, there was far less intercourse than we

can believe possible. People stayed on their own ground; their horizons were of small circumference, and their whole interest and thought were spent upon their own land, their own neighbors, their own affairs, while they not only were contented with this state of things but encouraged it. One has only to look at the high-walled pews of the old churches, at the high fences of the town gardens, and at even the strong fortifications around some family lots in the burying-grounds, to be sure of this. The interviewer was not besought and encouraged in those days, — he was defied. In that quarter, at least, they had the advantage of us. Their interest was as real and heartfelt in each other's affairs as ours, let us hope; but they never allowed idle curiosity to show itself in the world's market-place, shameless and unblushing.

There is so much to be said in favor of our own day, and the men and women of our own time, that a plea for a recognition of the quaintness and pleasantness of village life in the old days cannot seem unwelcome, or without deference to all that has come with the later years of ease and comfort, or of discovery in the realms of mind or matter. We are beginning to cling to the elderly people who are so different from ourselves, and for this reason: we are paying

them instinctively the honor that is due from us to our elders and betters; they have that grand prestige and dignity that only comes with age; they are like old wines, perhaps no better than many others when they were young, but now after many years they have come to be worth nobody knows how many dollars a dozen, and the connoisseurs make treasures of the few bottles of that vintage which are left.

It was a restricted and narrowly limited life in the old days. Religion, or rather sectarianism, was apt to be simply a matter of inheritance, and there was far more bigotry in every cause and question, — a fiercer partisanship; and because there were fewer channels of activity, and those undivided into specialties, there was a whole-souled concentration of energy that was as efficient as it was sometimes narrow and short-sighted. People were more contented in the sphere of life to which it had pleased God to call them, and they do not seem to have been so often sorely tempted by the devil with a sight of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. We are more likely to busy ourselves with finding things to do than in doing with our might the work that is in our hands already. The disappearance of many of the village front yards may come to be typical of the altered position of woman, and mark a stronghold on

her way from the much talked-of slavery and subjection to a coveted equality. She used to be shut off from the wide acres of the farm, and had no voice in the world's politics; she must stay in the house, or only hold sway out of doors in this prim corner of land where she was queen. No wonder that women clung to their rights in their flower-gardens then, and no wonder that they have grown a little careless of them now, and that lawn mowers find so ready a sale. The whole world is their front yard nowadays!

There might be written a history of front yards in New England which would be very interesting to read. It would end in a treatise upon landscape gardening and its possibilities, and wild flights of imagination about the culture of plants under glass, the application of artificial heat in forcing, and the curious mingling and development of plant life, but it would begin in the simple time of the early colonists. It must have been hard when, after being familiar with the gardens and parks of England and Holland, they found themselves restricted to front yards by way of pleasure grounds. Perhaps they thought such things were wrong, and that having a pleasant place to walk about in out of doors would encourage idle

and lawless ways in the young; at any rate, for several years it was more necessary to raise corn and potatoes to keep themselves from starving than to lay out alleys and plant flowers and box borders among the rocks and stumps. There is a great pathos in the fact that in so stern and hard a life there was time or place for any gardens at all. I can picture to myself the little slips and cuttings that had been brought over in the ship, and more carefully guarded than any of the household goods; I can see the women look at them tearfully when they came into bloom, because nothing else could be a better reminder of their old home. What fears there must have been lest the first winter's cold might kill them, and with what love and care they must have been tended! I know a rose-bush, and a little while ago I knew an apple-tree, that were brought over by the first settlers; the rose still blooms, and until it was cut down the old tree bore apples. It is strange to think that civilized New England is no older than the little red roses that bloom in June on that slope above the river in Kittery. Those earliest gardens were very pathetic in the contrast of their extent and their power of suggestion and association. Every seed that came up was thanked for its kindness, and every flower that bloomed was the child of a beloved ancestry.

It would be interesting to watch the growth of the gardens as life became easier and more comfortable in the colonies. As the settlements grew into villages and towns, and the Indians were less dreadful, and the houses were better and more home-like, the busy people began to find a little time now and then when they could enjoy themselves soberly. Beside the fruits of the earth they could have some flowers and a sprig of sage and southernwood and tansy, or lavender that had come from Surrey and could be dried to be put among the linen as it used to be strewn through the chests and cupboards in the old country.

I like to think of the changes as they came slowly; that after a while tender plants could be kept through the winter, because the houses were better built and warmer, and were no longer rough shelters which were only meant to serve until there could be something better. Perhaps the parlor, or best room, and a special separate garden for the flowers were two luxuries of the same date, and they made a noticeable change in the manner of living, — the best room being a formal recognition of the claims of society, and the front yard an appeal for the existence of something that gave pleasure, — beside the merely useful and wholly necessary things of life. When it was thought worth while to put a fence around the

flower-garden the respectability of art itself was established and made secure. Whether the house was a fine one, and its inclosure spacious, or whether it was a small house with only a narrow bit of ground in front, this yard was kept with care, and it was different from the rest of the land altogether. The children were not often allowed to play there, and the family did not use the front door except upon occasions of more or less ceremony. I think that many of the old front yards could tell stories of the lovers who found it hard to part under the stars, and lingered over the gate; and who does not remember the solemn group of men who gather there at funerals, and stand with their heads uncovered as the mourners go out and come in, two by two. I have always felt rich in the possession of an ancient York tradition of an old fellow who demanded, as he lay dying, that the grass in his front yard should be cut at once; it was no use to have it trodden down and spoilt by the folks at the funeral. I always hoped it was good hay weather; but he must have been certain of that when he spoke. Let us hope he did not confuse this world with the next, being so close upon the borders of it! It was not man-like to think of the front yard, since it was the special domain of the women, — the men of the family respected but ig-

nored it, — they had to be teased in the spring to dig the flower beds, but it was the busiest time of the year; one should remember that.

I think many people are sorry, without knowing why, to see the fences pulled down; and the disappearance of plain white palings causes almost as deep regret as that of the handsome ornamental fences and their high posts with urns or great white balls on top. A stone coping does not make up for the loss of them; it always looks a good deal like a lot in a cemetery, for one thing; and then in a small town the grass is not smooth, and looks uneven where the flower-beds were not properly smoothed down. The stray cows trample about where they never went before; the bushes and little trees that were once protected grow ragged and scraggly and out at elbows, and a few forlorn flowers come up of themselves and try hard to grow and to bloom. The ungainly red tubs that are perched on little posts have plants in them, but the poor posies look as if they would rather be in the ground, and as if they are held too near the fire of the sun. If everything must be neglected and forlorn so much the more reason there should be a fence, if but to hide it. Americans are too fond of being stared at; they apparently feel as if it were one's duty to one's neighbor. Even if there

is nothing really worth looking at about a house it is still exposed to the gaze of the passers-by. Foreigners are far more sensible than we, and the out-of-door home life among them is something we might well try to copy; they often have their meals served out of doors, and one can enjoy an afternoon nap in a hammock, or can take one's work out into the shady garden with great satisfaction, unwatched; and even a little piece of ground can be made, if shut in and kept for the use and pleasure of the family alone, a most charming unroofed and trellised summer anteroom to the house. In a large, crowded town it would be selfish to conceal the rare bits of garden, where the sight of anything green is a godsend; but where there is the whole wide country of fields and woods within easy reach I think there should be high walls around our gardens, and that we lose a great deal in not making them entirely separate from the highway; as much as we should lose in making the walls of our parlors and dining-rooms of glass, and building the house as close to the street as possible.

But to go back to the little front yards: we are sorry to miss them and their tangle or orderliness of roses and larkspur and honeysuckle, Canterbury bells and London pride, lilacs and peonies. These may all bloom better than ever in the new beds that

are cut in the turf; but with the side fences that used to come from the corners of the house to the front fence, other barriers, as I have said here over and over, have been taken away, and the old-fashioned village life is becoming extinct. People do not know what they lose when they make way with the reserve, the separateness, the sanctity of the front yard of their grandmothers. It is like writing down the family secrets for any one to read; it is like having everybody call you by your first name and sitting in any pew in church, and like having your house in the middle of a road, to take away the fence which, slight as it may be, is a fortification round your home. More things than one may come in without being asked; we Americans had better build more fences than take any away from our lives. There should be gates for charity to go out and in, and kindness and sympathy, too; but his life and his house are together each man's stronghold and castle, to be kept and defended.

I was much amused once at thinking that the fine old solid paneled doors were being unhinged faster than ever nowadays, since so many front gates have disappeared, and the click of the latch can no longer give notice of the approach of a guest. Now the knocker sounds or the bell rings without note or

warning, and the village housekeeper cannot see who is coming in until they have already reached the door. Once the guests could be seen on their way up the walk. It must be a satisfaction to look through the clear spots of the figured ground-glass in the new doors, and I believe if there is a covering inside few doors will be found unprovided with a peep-hole. It was better to hear the gate open and shut, and if it caught and dragged as front gates are very apt to do you could have time always for a good look out of the window at the approaching friend.

There are few of us who cannot remember a front-yard garden which seemed to us a very paradise in childhood. It was like a miracle when the yellow and white daffies came into bloom in the spring, and there was a time when tiger-lilies and the taller rose-bushes were taller than we were, and we could not look over their heads as we do now. There were always a good many lady's-delights that grew under the bushes, and came up anywhere in the chinks of the walk or the door-step, and there was a little green sprig called ambrosia that was a famous stray-away. Outside the fence one was not unlikely to see a company of French pinks, which were forbidden standing-room inside as if they were tiresome poor relations of the other flowers. I always felt a sympathy for French

pinks, — they have a fresh, sweet look, as if they resigned themselves to their lot in life and made the best of it, and remembered that they had the sunshine and rain, and could see what was going on in the world, if they were outlaws.

I like to remember being sent on errands, and being asked to wait while the mistress of the house picked some flowers to send back to my mother. They were almost always prim, flat bouquets in those days; the larger flowers were picked first and stood at the back and looked over the heads of those that were shorter of stem and stature, and the givers always sent a message that they had not stopped to arrange them. I remember that I had even then a great dislike to lemon verbena, and that I would have waited patiently outside a gate all the afternoon if I knew that some one would kindly give me a sprig of lavender in the evening. And lilies did not seem to me overdressed, but it was easy for me to believe that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like a great yellow marigold, or even the dear little single ones that were yellow and brown, and bloomed until the snow came.

I wish that I had lived for a little while in those days when lilacs were a new fashion, and it was a great distinction to have some growing in a front

yard. It always seems as if lilacs and poplars belonged to the same generation with a certain kind of New English gentlemen and ladies, who were ascetic and severe in some of their fashions, while in others they were more given to pleasuring and mild revelry than either their ancestors or the people who have lived in their houses since. Fifty years ago there seems to have been a last tidal wave of Puritanism which swept over the country, and drowned for a time the sober feasting and dancing which before had been considered no impropriety in the larger villages. Whist-playing was clung to only by the most worldly citizens, and, as for dancing, it was made a sin in itself and a reproach, as if every step was taken willfully in seven-leagued boots toward a place which is to be the final destination of all the wicked.

A single poplar may have a severe and uncharitable look, but a row of them suggests the antique and pleasing pomp and ceremony of their early days, before the sideboard cupboards were only used to keep the boxes of strings and nails and the duster; and the best decanters were put on a high shelf, while the plain ones were used for vinegar in the kitchen closet. There is far less social visiting from house to house than there used to be. People in the smaller towns have more acquaintances who live at a distance

than was the case before the days of railroads, and there are more guests who come from a distance, which has something to do with making tea-parties and the entertainment of one's neighbors less frequent than in former times. But most of the New England towns have changed their characters in the last twenty years, since the manufactories have come in and brought together large numbers either of foreigners or of a different class of people from those who used to make the most of the population. A certain class of families is rapidly becoming extinct. There will be found in the older villages very few persons left who belong to this class, which was once far more important and powerful; the oldest churches are apt to be most thinly attended simply because a different sort of ideas, even of heavenly things, attract the newer residents. I suppose that elderly people have said, ever since the time of Shem, Ham, and Japhet's wives in the ark, that society is nothing to what it used to be, and we may expect to be always told what unworthy successors we are of our grandmothers. But the fact remains that a certain element of American society is fast dying out, giving place to the new; and with all our glory and pride in modern progress and success we cling to the old associations regretfully. There is nothing to take the

place of the pleasure we have in going to see our old friends in the parlors which have changed little since our childhood. No matter how advanced in years we seem to ourselves we are children still to the gracious hostess. Thank Heaven for the friends who have always known us! They may think us unreliable and young still; they may not understand that we have become busy and more or less important people to ourselves and to the world, — we are pretty sure to be without honor in our own country, but they will never forget us, and we belong to each other and always shall.

I have received many kindnesses at my friends' hands, but I do not know that I have ever felt myself to be a more fortunate or honored guest than I used years ago, when I sometimes went to call upon an elderly friend of my mother who lived in most pleasant and stately fashion. I used to put on my very best manner, and I have no doubt that my thoughts were well ordered, and my conversation as proper as I knew how to make it. I can remember that I used to sit on a tall ottoman, with nothing to lean against, and my feet were off soundings, I was so high above the floor. We used to discuss the weather, and I said that I went to school (sometimes), or that it was then vacation, as the case might be, and we

tried to make ourselves agreeable to each other. Presently my lady would take her keys out of her pocket, and sometimes a maid would come to serve me, or else she herself would bring me a silver tray with some pound-cakes baked in hearts and rounds, and a small glass of wine, and I proudly felt that I was a guest, though I was such a little thing an attention was being paid me, and a thrill of satisfaction used to go over me for my consequence and importance. A handful of sugar-plums would have seemed nothing beside this entertainment. I used to be careful not to crumble the cake, and I used to eat it with my gloves on, and a pleasant fragrance would cling for some time afterward to the ends of the short Lisle-thread fingers. I have no doubt that my manners as I took leave were almost as distinguished as those of my hostess, though I might have been wild and shy all the rest of the week. It was not many years ago that I went to my old friend's funeral — and saw them carry her down the long, wide walk, between the tall box borders which were her pride; and all the air was heavy and sweet with the perfume of the early summer blossoms; the white lilacs and the flowering currants were still in bloom, and the rows of her dear Dutch tulips stood dismayed in their flaunting colors and watched her go away.

My sketch of the already out-of-date or fast vanishing village fashions perhaps should be ended here, but I cannot resist a wish to add another bit of autobiography of which I have been again and again reminded in writing these pages. The front yard I knew best belonged to my grandfather's house. My grandmother was a proud and solemn woman, and she hated my mischief, and rightly thought my elder sister a much better child than I. I used to be afraid of her when I was in the house, but I shook off even her authority and forgot I was under anybody's rule when I was out of doors. I was first cousin to a caterpillar if they called me to come in, and I was own sister to a giddy-minded bobolink when I ran away across the fields, as I used to do very often. But when I was a very little child indeed my world was bounded by the fences that were around my home; there were wide green yards and tall elm-trees to shade them; there was a long line of barns and sheds, and one of these had a large room in its upper story, with an old ship's foresail spread over the floor, and made a capital play-room in wet weather. Here fruit was spread in the fall, and there were some old chests and pieces of furniture that had been discarded; it was like the garret, only much pleasanter. The children in the village now cannot possibly be so happy

as I was then. I used to mount the fence next the street and watch the people go in and out of the quaint-roofed village shops that stood in a row on the other side, and looked as if they belonged to a Dutch or old English town. They were burnt down long ago, but they were charmingly picturesque; the upper stories sometimes projected over the lower, and the chimneys were sometimes clustered together and built of bright red bricks.

And I was too happy when I could smuggle myself into the front yard, with its four lilac bushes and its white fences to shut it in from the rest of the world, beside other railings that went from the porch down each side of the brick walk, which was laid in a pattern, and had H. C., 1818, cut deeply into one of the bricks near the door-step. The H. C. was for Henry Currier, the mason, who had signed this choice bit of work as if it were a picture, and he had been dead so many years that I used to think of his initials as if the corner brick were a little grave-stone for him. The knocker used to be so bright that it shone at you, and caught your eye bewilderingly, as you came in from the street on a sunshiny day. There were very few flowers, for my grandmother was old and feeble when I knew her, and could not take care of them; but I remember that there were blush

roses, and white roses, and cinnamon roses all in a tangle in one corner, and I used to pick the crumpled petals of those to make myself a delicious coddle with ground cinnamon and damp brown sugar. In the spring I used to find the first green grass there, for it was warm and sunny, and I used to pick the little French pinks when they dared show their heads in the cracks of the flag-stones that were laid around the house. There were small shoots of lilac, too, and their leaves were brown and had a faint, sweet fragrance, and a little later the dandelions came into bloom; the largest ones I knew grew there, and they have always been to this day my favorite flowers.

I had my trials and sorrows in this paradise, however; I lost a cent there one day which I never have found yet! And one morning, there suddenly appeared in one corner a beautiful, dark-blue *fleur-de-lis*, and I joyfully broke its neck and carried it into the house, but everybody had seen it, and wondered that I could not have left it alone. Besides this, it befell me later to sin more gravely still; my grandmother had kept some plants through the winter on a three-cornered stand built like a flight of steps, and when the warm spring weather came this was put out of doors. She had a cherished tea-rose bush, and what should I find but a bud on it; it was opened just

enough to give a hint of its color. I was very pleased; I snapped it off at once, for I had heard so many times that it was hard to make roses bloom; and I ran in through the hall and up the stairs, where I met my grandmother on the square landing. She sat down in the window-seat, and I showed her proudly what was crumpled in my warm little fist. I can see it now! — it had no stem at all, and for many days afterward I was bowed down with a sense of my guilt and shame, for I was made to understand it was an awful thing to have blighted and broken a treasured flower like that.

It must have been the very next winter that my grandmother died. She had a long illness which I do not remember much about; but the night she died might have been yesterday night, it is all so fresh and clear in my mind. I did not live with her in the old house then, but in a new house close by, across the yard. All the family were at the great house, and I could see that lights were carried hurriedly from one room to another. A servant came to fetch me, but I would not go with her; my grandmother was dying, whatever that might be, and she was taking leave of every one — she was ceremonious even then. I did not dare to go with the rest; I had an intense curiosity to see what dying might be like, but I was afraid

to be there with her, and I was also afraid to stay at home alone. I was only five years old. It was in December, and the sky seemed to grow darker and darker, and I went out at last to sit on a door-step and cry softly to myself, and while I was there some one came to another door next the street, and rang the bell loudly again and again. I suppose I was afraid to answer the summons — indeed, I do not know that I thought of it; all the world had been still before, and the bell sounded loud and awful through the empty house. It seemed as if the messenger from an unknown world had come to the wrong house to call my poor grandmother away; and that loud ringing is curiously linked in my mind with the knocking at the gate in "Macbeth." I never can think of one without the other, though there was no fierce Lady Macbeth to bid me not be lost so poorly in my thoughts; for when they all came back awed and tearful, and found me waiting in the cold, alone, and afraid more of this world than the next, they were very good to me. But as for the funeral, it gave me vast entertainment; it was the first grand public occasion in which I had taken any share.

AN AUTUMN HOLIDAY.

I HAD started early in the afternoon for a long walk; it was just the weather for walking, and I went across the fields with a delighted heart. The wind came straight in from the sea, and the sky was bright blue; there was a little tinge of red still lingering on the maples, and my dress brushed over the late golden-rods, while my old dog, who seemed to have taken a new lease of youth, jumped about wildly and raced after the little birds that flew up out of the long brown grass — the constant little chickadees, that would soon sing before the coming of snow. But this day brought no thought of winter; it was one of the October days when to breathe the air is like drinking wine, and every touch of the wind against one's face is a caress: like a quick, sweet kiss, that wind is. You have a sense of companionship; it is a day that loves you.

I went strolling along, with this dear idle day for company; it was a pleasure to be alive, and to go through the dry grass, and to spring over the stone walls and the shaky pasture fences. I stopped by each of the stray apple-trees that came in my way, to make friends with it, or to ask after its health, if it were an old friend. These old apple-trees make very charming bits of the world in October; the leaves cling to them later than to the other trees, and the turf keeps short and green underneath; and in this grass, which was frosty in the morning, and has not quite dried yet, you can find some cold little cider apples, with one side knurly, and one shiny bright red or yellow cheek. They are wet with dew, these little apples, and a black ant runs anxiously over them when you turn them round and round to see where the best place is to bite. There will almost always be a bird's nest in the tree, and it is most likely to be a robin's nest. The prehistoric robins must have been cave dwellers, for they still make their nests as much like cellars as they can, though they follow the new fashion and build them aloft. One always has a thought of spring at the sight of a robin's nest. It is so little while ago that it was spring, and we were so glad to have the birds come back, and the life of the new year was just showing itself; we were look-

ing forward to so much growth and to the realization and perfection of so many things. I think the sadness of autumn, or the pathos of it, is like that of elderly people. We have seen how the flowers looked when they bloomed and have eaten the fruit when it was ripe; the questions have had their answer, the days we waited for have come and gone. Everything has stopped growing. And so the children have grown to be men and women, their lives have been lived, the autumn has come. We have seen what our lives would be like when we were older; success or disappointment, it is all over at any rate. Yet it only makes one sad to think it is autumn with the flowers or with one's own life, when one forgets that always and always there will be the spring again.

I am very fond of walking between the roads. One grows so familiar with the highways themselves. But once leap the fence and there are a hundred roads that you can take, each with its own scenery and entertainment. Every walk of this kind proves itself a tour of exploration and discovery, and the fields of my own town, which I think I know so well, are always new fields. I find new ways to go, new sights to see, new friends among the things that grow, and new treasures and pleasures every summer; and later, when the frosts have come and the swamps have frozen, I can go everywhere I like all over my world.

That afternoon I found something I had never seen before — a little grave alone in a wide pasture which had once been a field. The nearest house was at least two miles away, but by hunting for it I found a very old cellar, where the child's home used to be, not very far off, along the slope. It must have been a great many years ago that the house had stood there; and the small slate head-stone was worn away by the rain and wind, so there was nothing to be read, if indeed there had ever been any letters on it. It had looked many a storm in the face, and many a red sunset. I suppose the woods near by had grown and been cut, and grown again, since it was put there. There was an old sweet-brier bush growing on the short little grave, and in the grass underneath I found a ground-sparrow's nest. It was like a little neighborhood, and I have felt ever since as if I belonged to it; and I wondered then if one of the young ground-sparrows was not always sent to take the nest when the old ones were done with it, so they came back in the spring year after year to live there, and there were always the stone and the sweet-brier bush and the birds to remember the child. It was such a lonely place in that wide field under the great sky, and yet it was so comfortable too; but the sight of the little grave at first touched me strangely, and I

tried to picture to myself the procession that came out from the house the day of the funeral, and I thought of the mother in the evening after all the people had gone home, and how she missed the baby, and kept seeing the new grave out here in the twilight as she went about her work. I suppose the family moved away, and so all the rest were buried elsewhere.

I often think of this place, and I link it in my thoughts with something I saw once in the water when I was out at sea: a little boat that some child had lost, that had drifted down the river and out to sea; too long a voyage, for it was a sad little wreck, with even its white sail of a hand-breadth half under water, and its twine rigging trailing astern. It was a silly little boat, and no loss, except to its owner, to whom it had seemed as brave and proud a thing as any ship of the line to you and me. It was a shipwreck of his small hopes, I suppose, and I can see it now, the toy of the great winds and waves, as it floated on its way, while I sailed on mine, out of sight of land.

The little grave is forgotten by everybody but me, I think: the mother must have found the child again in heaven a very long time ago: but in the winter I shall wonder if the snow has covered it well, and

next year I shall go to see the sweet-brier bush when it is in bloom. God knows what use that life was, the grave is such a short one, and nobody knows whose little child it was; but perhaps a thousand people in the world to-day are better because it brought a little love into the world that was not there before.

I sat so long here in the sun that the dog, after running after all the birds, and even chasing crickets, and going through a great piece of affectation in barking before an empty woodchuck's hole to kill time, came to sit patiently in front of me, as if he wished to ask when I would go on. I had never been in this part of the pasture before. It was at one side of the way I usually took, so presently I went on to find a favorite track of mine, half a mile to the right, along the bank of a brook. There had been heavy rains the week before, and I found more water than usual running, and the brook was apparently in a great hurry. It was very quiet along the shore of it; the frogs had long ago gone into winter-quarters, and there was not one to splash into the water when he saw me coming. I did not see a musk-rat either, though I knew where their holes were by the piles of fresh-water mussel shells that they had untidily thrown out at their front door. I thought it might be well to hunt for mussels myself, and crack them in search of pearls, but it was

too serene and beautiful a day. I was not willing to disturb the comfort of even a shell-fish. It was one of the days when one does not think of being tired: the scent of the dry everlasting flowers, and the freshness of the wind, and the cawing of the crows, all come to me as I think of it, and I remember that I went a long way before I began to think of going home again. I knew I could not be far from a cross-road, and when I climbed a low hill I saw a house which I was glad to make the end of my walk—for a time, at any rate. It was some time since I had seen the old woman who lived there, and I liked her dearly, and was sure of a welcome. I went down through the pasture lane, and just then I saw my father drive away up the road, just too far for me to make him hear when I called. That seemed too bad at first, until I remembered that he would come back again over the same road after a while, and in the mean time I could make my call. The house was low and long and unpainted, with a great many frost-bitten flowers about it. Some hollyhocks were bowed down despairingly, and the morning-glory vines were more miserable still. Some of the smaller plants had been covered to keep them from freezing, and were braving out a few more days, but no shelter would avail them much longer. And already nobody minded

whether the gate was shut or not, and part of the great flock of hens were marching proudly about among the wilted posies, which they had stretched their necks wistfully through the fence for all summer. I heard the noise of spinning in the house, and my dog scurried off after the cat as I went in the door. I saw Miss Polly Marsh and her sister, Mrs. Snow, stepping back and forward together spinning yarn at a pair of big wheels. The wheels made such a noise with their whir and creak, and my friends were talking so fast as they twisted and turned the yarn, that they did not hear my footstep, and I stood in the doorway watching them, it was such a quaint and pretty sight. They went together like a pair of horses, and kept step with each other to and fro. They were about the same size, and were cheerful old bodies, looking a good deal alike, with their checked handkerchiefs over their smooth gray hair, their dark gowns made short in the skirts, and their broad little feet in gray stockings and low leather shoes without heels. They stood straight, and though they were quick at their work they moved stiffly; they were talking busily about some one.

"I could tell by the way the doctor looked that he did n't think there was much of anything the matter with her," said Miss Polly Marsh. "'You need n't

tell me,' says I, the other day, when I see him at Miss Martin's. 'She 'd be up and about this minute if she only had a mite o' resolution;' and says he, 'Aunt Polly, you 're as near right as usual;'" and the old lady stopped to laugh a little. "I told him that wa'n't saying much," said she, with an evident consciousness of the underlying compliment and the doctor's good opinion. "I never knew one of that tribe that had n't a queer streak and was n't shif'less; but they 're tougher than ellum roots;" and she gave the wheel an emphatic turn, while Mrs. Snow reached for more rolls of wool, and happened to see me.

"Wherever did you come from?" said they, in great surprise. "Why, you was n't anywhere in sight when I was out speaking to the doctor," said Mrs. Snow. "Oh, come over horseback, I suppose. Well, now, we 're pleased to see ye."

"No," said I, "I walked across the fields. It was too pleasant to stay in the house, and I have n't had a long walk for some time before." I begged them not to stop spinning, but they insisted that they should not have turned the wheels a half-dozen times more, even if I had not come, and they pushed them back to the wall before they came to sit down to talk with me over their knitting — for neither of them

were ever known to be idle. Mrs. Snow was only there for a visit; she was a widow, and lived during most of the year with her son; and Aunt Polly was at home but seldom herself, as she was a famous nurse, and was often in demand all through that part of the country. I had known her all my days. Everybody was fond of the good soul, and she had been one of the most useful women in the world. One of my pleasantest memories is of a long but not very painful illness one winter, when she came to take care of me. There was no end either to her stories or her kindness. I was delighted to find her at home that afternoon, and Mrs. Snow also.

Aunt Polly brought me some of her gingerbread, which she knew I liked, and a stout little pitcher of milk, and we sat there together for a while, gossiping and enjoying ourselves. I told all the village news that I could think of, and I was just tired enough to know it, and to be contented to sit still for a while in the comfortable three-cornered chair by the little front window. The October sunshine lay along the clean kitchen floor, and Aunt Polly darted from her chair occasionally to catch stray little wisps of wool which the breeze through the door blew along from the wheels. There was a gay string of red peppers hanging over the very high mantel-

shelf, and the wood-work in the room had never been painted, and had grown dark brown with age and smoke and scouring. The clock ticked solemnly, as if it were a judge giving the laws of time, and felt itself to be the only thing that did not waste it. There was a bouquet of asparagus and some late sprigs of larkspur and white petunias on the table underneath, and a Leavitt's Almanac lay on the county paper, which was itself lying on the big Bible, of which Aunt Polly made a point of reading two chapters every day in course. I remember her saying, despairingly, one night, half to herself, "I don' know but I may skip the Chronicles next time," but I have never to this day believed that she did. They asked me at once to come into the best room, but I liked the old kitchen best. "Who was it that you were talking about as I came in?" said I. "You said you did n't believe there was much the matter with her." And Aunt Polly clicked her knitting-needles faster, and told me that it was Mary Susan Ash, over by Little Creek.

"They 're dreadful nervous, all them Ashes," said Mrs. Snow. "You know young Joe Adams's wife, over our way, is a sister to her, and she 's forever a-doctorin'. Poor fellow! *he 's* got a drag. I 'm real sorry for Joe; but, land sakes alive! he might 'a

known better. They said she had an old green band-box with a gingham cover, that was stowed full o' vials, that she moved with the rest of her things when she was married, besides some she car'd in her hands. I guess she ain't in no more hurry to go than any of the rest of us. I 've lost every mite of patience with her. I was over there last week one day, and she 'd had a call from the new supply — you know Adams's folks is Methodists — and he was took in by her. She made out she 'd got the consumption, and she told how many complaints she had, and what a sight o' medicine she took, and she groaned and sighed, and her voice was so weak you could n't more than just hear it. I stepped right into the bedroom after he 'd been prayin' with her, and was taking leave. You 'd thought, by what he said, she was going right off then. She was coughing dreadful hard, and I knew she had n't no more cough than I had. So says I, 'What 's the matter, Adaline? I 'll get ye a drink of water. Something in your throat, I s'pose. I hope you won't go and get cold, and have a cough.' She looked as if she could 'a bit me, but I was just as pleasant 's could be. Land! to see her laying there, I suppose the poor young fellow thought she was all gone. He meant well. I wish he had seen her eating apple-

dumplings for dinner. She felt better 'long in the first o' the afternoon before he come. I says to her, right before him, that I guessed them dumplings did her good, but she never made no answer. She will have these dyin' spells. I don't know 's she can help it, but she need n't act as if it was a credit to anybody to be sick and laid up. Poor Joe, he come over for me last week another day, and said she 'd been havin' spasms, and asked me if there wa'n't something I could think of. 'Yes,' says I; 'you just take a pail o' stone-cold water, and throw it square into her face; that 'll bring her out of it;' and he looked at me a minute, and then he burst out a-laughing — he could n't help it. He 's too good to her; that 's the trouble."

"You never said that to her about the dumplings?" said Aunt Polly, admiringly. "Well, *I* should n't ha' dared;" and she rocked and knitted away faster than ever, while we all laughed. "Now with Mary Susan it 's different. I suppose she does have the neurology, and she 's a poor broken-down creature. I do feel for her more than I do for Adaline. She was always a willing girl, and she worked herself to death, and she can't help these notions, nor being an Ash neither."

"I 'm the last one to be hard on anybody that 's sick, and in trouble," said Mrs. Snow.

"Bless you, she set up with Ad'line herself three nights in one week, to my knowledge. It 's more 'n I would do," said Aunt Polly, as if there were danger that I should think Mrs. Snow's kind heart to be made of flint.

"It ain't what I call watching," said she, apologetically. "We both doze off, and then when the folks come in in the morning she 'll tell what a sufferin' night she 's had. She likes to have it said she has to have watchers."

"It 's strange what a queer streak there is running through the whole of 'em," said Aunt Polly, presently. "It always was so, far back 's you can follow 'em. Did you ever hear about that great-uncle of theirs that lived over to the other side o' Denby, over to what they call the Denby Meadows? We had a cousin o' my father's that kept house for him (he was a single man), and I spent most of a summer and fall with her once when I was growing up. She seemed to want company: it was a lonesome sort of a place."

"There! I don't know when I have thought o' that," said Mrs. Snow, looking much amused. "What stories you did use to tell, after you come home, about the way he used to act! Dear sakes! she used to keep us laughing till we was tired. Do tell her about him, Polly; she 'll like to hear."

"Well, I 've forgot a good deal about it: you see it was much as fifty years ago. I was n't more than seventeen or eighteen years old. He was a very respectable man, old Mr. Dan'el Gunn was, and a cap'n in the militia in his day. Cap'n Gunn, they always called him. He was well off, but he got sun-struck, and never was just right in his mind afterward. When he was getting over his sickness after the stroke he was very wandering, and at last he seemed to get it into his head that he was his own sister Patience that died some five or six years before: she was single too, and she always lived with him. They said when he got so 's to sit up in his arm-chair of an afternoon, when he was getting better, he fought 'em dreadfully because they fetched him his own clothes to put on; he said they was brother Dan'el's clothes. So, sure enough, they got out an old double gown, and let him put it on, and he was as peaceable as could be. The doctor told 'em to humor him, but they thought it was a fancy he took, and he would forget it; but the next day he made 'em get the double gown again, and a cap too, and there he used to set up alongside of his bed as prim as a dish. When he got round again so he could set up all day, they thought he wanted the dress; but no; he seemed to be himself, and had on his own clothes just as usual

in the morning; but when he took his nap after dinner and waked up again, he was in a dreadful frame o' mind, and had the trousers and coat off in no time, and said he was Patience. He used to fuss with some knitting-work he got hold of somehow; he was good-natured as could be, and sometimes he would make 'em fetch him the cat, because Patience used to have a cat that set in her lap while she knit. I was n't there then, you know, but they used to tell me about it. Folks used to call him Miss Dan'el Gunn.

"He 'd been that way some time when I went over. I 'd heard about his notions, and I was scared of him at first, but I found out there was n't no need. Don't you know I was sort o' 'fraid to go, 'Lizabeth, when Cousin Statiry sent for me after she went home from that visit she made here? She 'd told us about him, but sometimes, 'long at the first of it, he used to be cross. He never was after I went there. He was a clever, kind-hearted man, if ever there was one," said Aunt Polly, with decision. "He used to go down to the corner to the store sometimes in the morning, and he would see to business. And before he got feeble sometimes he would work out on the farm all the morning, stiddy as any of the men; but after he come in to dinner he would take off his coat,

if he had it on, and fall asleep in his arm-chair, or on a l'unge there was in his bedroom, and when he waked up he would be sort of bewildered for a while, and then he 'd step round quick 's he could, and get his dress out o' the clothes-press, and the cap, and put 'em on right over the rest of his clothes. He was always small-featured and smooth-shaved, and I don' know as, to come in sudden, you would have thought he was a man, except his hair stood up short and straight all on the top of his head, as men-folks had a fashion o' combing their hair then, and I must say he did make a dreadful ordinary-looking woman. The neighbors got used to his ways, and, land! I never thought nothing of it after the first week or two.

"His sister's clothes that he wore first was too small for him, and so my cousin Statiry, that kep' his house, she made him a linsey-woolsey dress with a considerable short skirt, and he was dreadful pleased with it, she said, because the other one never would button over good, and showed his wais'coat, and she and I used to make him caps; he used to wear the kind all the old women did then, with a big crown, and close round the face. I 've got some laid away up-stairs now that was my mother's — she wore caps very young, mother did. His nephew that lived

with him carried on the farm, and managed the business, but he always treated the cap'n as if he was head of everything there. Everybody pitied the cap'n; folks respected him; but you could n't help laughing, to save ye. We used to try to keep him in, afternoons, but we could n't always."

"Tell her about that day he went to meeting," said Mrs. Snow.

"Why, one of us always used to stay to home with him; we took turns; and somehow or 'nother he never offered to go, though by spells he would be constant to meeting in the morning. Why, bless you, you never 'd think anything ailed him a good deal of the time, if you saw him before noon, though sometimes he would be freaky, and hide himself in the barn, or go over in the woods, but we always kept an eye on him. But this Sunday there was going to be a great occasion. Old Parson Croden was going to preach; he was thought more of than anybody in this region: you 've heard tell of him a good many times, I s'pose. He was getting to be old, and did n't preach much. He had a colleague, they set so much by him in his parish, and I did n't know 's I 'd ever get another chance to hear him, so I did n't want to stay to home, and neither did Cousin Statiry; and Jacob Gunn, old Mr. Gunn's nephew, he

said it might be the last time ever he 'd hear Parson Croden, and he set in the seats anyway; so we talked it all over, and we got a young boy to come and set 'long of the cap'n till we got back. He had n't offered to go anywhere of an afternoon for a long time. I s'pose he thought women ought to be stayers at home according to Scripture.

"Parson Ridley — his wife was a niece to old Dr. Croden — and the old doctor they was up in the pulpit, and the choir was singing the first hymn — it was a fuguing tune, and they was doing their best: seems to me it was 'Canterbury New.' Yes, it was; I remember I thought how splendid it sounded, and Jacob Gunn he was a-leading off; and I happened to look down the aisle, and who should I see but the poor old cap'n in his cap and gown parading right into meeting before all the folks! There! I wanted to go through the floor. Everybody 'most had seen him at home, but, my goodness! to have him come into meeting!"

"What did you do?" said I.

"Why, nothing," said Miss Polly; "there was nothing *to* do. I thought I should faint away; but I called Cousin Statiry's 'tention, and she looked dreadful put to it for a minute; and then says she, 'Open the door for him; I guess he won't make no

trouble,' and, poor soul, he did n't. But to see him come up the aisle! He 'd fixed himself nice as he could, poor creatur; he 'd raked out Miss Patience's old Navarino bonnet with green ribbons and a willow feather, and set it on right over his cap, and he had her bead bag on his arm, and her turkey-tail fan that he 'd got out of the best room; and he come with little short steps up to the pew: and I s'posed he 'd set by the door; but no, he made to go by us, up into the corner where she used to set, and took her place, and spread his dress out nice, and got his handkerchief out o' his bag, just 's he 'd seen her do. He took off his bonnet all of a sudden, as if he 'd forgot it, and put it under the seat, like he did his hat — that was the only thing he did that any woman would n't have done — and the crown of his cap was bent some. I thought die I should. The pew was one of them up aside the pulpit, a square one, you know, right at the end of the right-hand aisle, so I could see the length of it and out of the door, and there stood that poor boy we 'd left to keep the cap'n company, looking as pale as ashes. We found he 'd tried every way to keep the old gentleman at home, but he said he got f'erce as could be, so he did n't dare to say no more, and Cap'n Gunn drove him back twice to the house, and that 's why he got in so

late. I did n't know but it was the boy that had set him on to go to meeting when I see him walk in, and I could 'a wrung his neck; but I guess I misjudged him; he was called a stiddy boy. He married a daughter of Ichabod Pinkham's over to Oak Plains, and I saw a son of his when I was taking care of Miss West last spring through that lung fever — looked like his father. I wish I 'd thought to tell him about that Sunday. I heard he was waiting on that pretty Becket girl, the orphan one that lives with Nathan Becket. Her father and mother was both lost at sea, but she 's got property."

"What did they say in church when the captain came in, Aunt Polly?" said I.

"Well, a good many of them laughed — they could n't help it, to save them; but the cap'n he was some hard o' hearin', so he never noticed it, and he set there in the corner and fanned him, as pleased and satisfied as could be. The singers they had the worst time, but they had just come to the end of a verse, and they played on the instruments a good while in between, but I could see 'em shake, and I s'pose the tune did stray a little, though they went through it well. And after the first fun of it was over, most of the folks felt bad. You see, the cap'n had been very much looked up to, and it was his mis-

fortune, and he set there quiet, listening to the preaching. I see some tears in some o' the old folks' eyes: they hated to see him so broke in his mind, you know. There was more than usual of 'em out that day; they knew how bad he 'd feel if he realized it. A good Christian man he was, and dreadful precise, I 've heard 'em say."

"Did he ever go again?" said I.

"I seem to forget," said Aunt Polly. "I dare say. I was n't there but from the last of June into November, and when I went over again it was n't for three years, and the cap'n had been dead some time. His mind failed him more and more along at the last. But I 'll tell you what he did do, and it was the week after that very Sunday, too. He heard it given out from the pulpit that the Female Missionary Society would meet with Mis' William Sands the Thursday night o' that week — the sewing society, you know; and he looked round to us real knowing; and Cousin Statiry, says she to me, under her bonnet, 'You don't s'pose he 'll want to go?' and I like to have laughed right out. But sure enough he did, and what do you suppose but he made us fix over a handsome black watered silk for him to wear, that had been his sister's best dress. He said he 'd outgrown it dreadful quick. Cousin Statiry

she wished to heaven she 'd thought to put it away, for Jacob had given it to her, and she was meaning to make it over for herself; but it did n't do to cross the cap'n and Jacob Gunn gave Statiry another one — the best he could get, but it was n't near so good a piece, she thought. He set everything by Statiry, and so did the cap'n, and well they might.

"We hoped he 'd forget all about it the next day; but he did n't; and I always thought well of those ladies, they treated him so handsome, and tried to make him enjoy himself. He did eat a great supper; they kep' a-piling up his plate with everything. I could n't help wondering if some of 'em would have put themselves out much if it had been some poor flighty old woman. The cap'n he was as polite as could be, and when Jacob come to walk home with him he kissed 'em all round and asked 'em to meet at his house. But the greatest was — land! I don't know when I 've thought so much about those times — one afternoon he was setting at home in the keeping-room, and Statiry was there, and Deacon Abel Pinkham stopped in to see Jacob Gunn about building some fence, and he found he 'd gone to mill, so he waited a while, talking friendly, as they expected Jacob might be home; and the cap'n was as pleased as could be, and he urged the deacon

to stop to tea. And when he went away, says he to Statiry, in a dreadful knowing way, 'Which of us do you consider the deacon come to see?' You see, the deacon was a widower. Bless you! when I first come home I used to set everybody laughing, but I forget most of the things now. There was one day, though" —

"Here comes your father," said Mrs. Snow. "Now we must n't let him go by or you 'll have to walk 'way home." And Aunt Polly hurried out to speak to him, while I took my great bunch of golden-rod, which already drooped a little, and followed her, with Mrs. Snow, who confided to me that the captain's nephew Jacob had offered to Polly that summer she was over there, and she never could see why she did n't have him: only love goes where it is sent, and Polly was n't one to marry for what she could get if she did n't like the man. There was plenty that would have said yes, and thank you too, sir, to Jacob Gunn.

That was a pleasant afternoon. I reached home when it was growing dark and chilly, and the early autumn sunset had almost faded in the west. It was a much longer way home around by the road than by the way I had come across the fields.

A WINTER DRIVE.

IT is very hard to find one's way in winter over a road where one has only driven once in summer. The landmarks change their appearance so much when the leaves are gone that, unless the road is straight and certain, and you have a good sense of locality, you will be puzzled over and over again. In summer a few small trees and a thicket of bushes at the side of the road will look like a bit of forest, but in winter you look through them and over them, and they disappear almost altogether, they are such thin gray twigs, and take up so much less room in the world, though you may notice a well-thatched bird's-nest or some red berries, or a few fluttering leaves which the wind has failed to blow away. There is a bare, thin, comfortless aspect of nature which is chilling to look at either before the snow comes or afterward; you long for the poor earth to be

able to warm herself again by the fire of the summer sun. The white birches' bark looks out of season, as if they were still wearing their summer clothes, and the wretched larches which stand on the edges of the swamps look as if they had been intended for evergreens, but had been somehow unlucky, and were in destitute circumstances. It seems as if the pines and hemlocks ought to show Christian charity to these sad and freezing relations.

The world looks as if it were at the mercy of the wind and cold in winter, and it would be useless to dream that such a time as spring would follow these apparently hopeless days if we had not history and experience to reassure us. What a sorrowful doom the first winter must have seemed to Adam if he ever took a journey to the northward after he was sent from Paradise! It must have been to him a most solemn death and ending of all vegetable life, yet he might have taken a grim satisfaction in the thought that no more apples could ever get ripe to tempt him or anybody else, and that the mischief-making fruits of the earth were cursed as well as he.

In winter there is, to my mind, a greater beauty in a leafless tree than in the same tree covered with its weight and glory of summer leaves. Then it is one great mass of light and shadow against the land-

scape or the sky, but in winter the tracery of the bare branches against a white cloud or a clear yellow sunset is a most exquisite thing to see. It is the difference between a fine statue and a well painted picture, and seems a higher art, like that, — but it is always a puzzle to me why a dead tree in summer should be a painful thing to look at. One instantly tells the difference between a dead twig and a live one close at hand. Such a leafless tree cannot give the pleasure that it did in winter. Yet it looked almost the same in cold weather when it was alive; is it our unreasoning horror of death, or is it that a bit of winter in the midst of summer is like a skeleton at the feast?

A drive in a town in winter should be taken for three reasons: for the convenience of getting from place to place, for the pleasure of motion in the fresh air, or for the satisfaction of driving a horse, but for the real delight of the thing it is necessary to go far out from even the villages across the country. You can see the mountains like great stacks of clear ice all along the horizon, and the smaller hills covered with trees and snow together, nearer at hand, and the great expanse of snow lies north and south, east and west all across the fields. In my own part of the country, which is heavily wooded, the pine for-

ests give the world a black and white look that is very dismal when the sun is not shining; the farmers' houses look lonely, and it seems as if they had crept nearer together since the leaves fell, and they are no longer hidden from each other. The hills look larger, and you can see deeper into the woods as you drive along. Nature brings out so many treasures for us to look at in summer, and adorns the world with such lavishness, that after the frost comes it is like an empty house, in which one misses all the pictures and drapery and the familiar voices.

This was a drive that I liked. It was a sunshiny midwinter day, with a wind that one was glad to fall in with and not try to fight against, and the great white horse ran before it like a boat, the crooked country roads had been just enough smoothed and trodden by the wood teams to make good sleighing. I met now and then a farmer on his way to market with a load of fire-wood piled high and square on his sled, and the oxen were frosted, and pushed at the yoke and bumped together awkwardly, as if they could not walk evenly with their crooked knees. There was a bundle of corn-stalks on top the load, and usually the driver's blue mittens were on the sled stakes, with the thumbs out at right angles, as if some spirit of the woodlands were using them to

show the protesting hands he lifted at the irreverence of men. It was many years before I ever felt very sorry when woods were cut down. There were some acute griefs at the loss of a few familiar trees, but now I have a heart-ache at the sight of a fresh clearing, and I follow as sadly along the road behind a great pine log as if I were its next of kin and chief mourner at its funeral. There is a great difference between being a live tree that holds its head so high in the air that it can watch the country for miles around, — that has sheltered a thousand birds and families of squirrels and little wild creatures, — that has beaten all the storms it ever fought with; such a difference between all this and being a pile of boards!

I believe that there are few persons who cannot remember some trees which are as much connected with their own lives as people are. When they stand beside them there is at once a feeling of very great affection. It seems as if the tree remembered what we remember; it is something more than the fact of its having been associated with our past. Almost everybody is very fond of at least one tree. Morris's appeal to the woodman struck a responsive chord in many an otherwise unsentimental heart, — but happy is the man who has a large acquaintance, and who makes

friends with a new tree now and then as he goes on through the world. There was an old doctrine called Hylozoism, which appeals to my far from Pagan sympathies, the theory of the soul of the world, of a life residing in nature, and that all matter lives; the doctrine that life and matter are inseparable. Trees are to most people as inanimate and unconscious as rocks, but it seems to me that there is a good deal to say about the strongly marked individual characters, not only of the conspicuous trees that have been civilized and are identified with a home, or a familiar bit of landscape or an event in history, but of those that are crowded together in forests. There is a strange likeness to the characteristics of human beings among these, there is the same proportion of ignorant rabble of poor creatures who are struggling for life in more ways than one, and of self-respecting, well-to-do, dignified citizens. It is not wholly a question of soil and of location any more than it is with us. Some trees have a natural vitality and bravery which makes them push their roots into the ground and their branches toward the sky, and although they started to grow on a rock or on the sand, where we should be sure that a tree would have a hard struggle to keep alive, and would be stunted and dwarfed at any rate, yet they grow tall and strong, and in their

wealth of usefulness they are like some of the world's great men who rose from poverty to kingliness. How easy it is to carry out the likeness. The great tree is a protection to a thousand lesser interests, a central force which keeps in motion and urges on a thousand activities.

It is common to praise a man more who has risen from obscurity to greatness than one who had money and friends at the start, but there is after all little difference in the amount of personal exertion that must be brought to bear. If a man or a tree has it in him to grow, who can say what will hinder him. Many a tree looks starved and thin, and is good for nothing, that was planted in good soil, and the grandest pines may have struggled among the rocks until they find soil enough to feed them, and when they are fully grown the ledges that were in the way of their roots only serve to hold them fast and strengthen them against any chance of overthrow. There is something in the constitution of character ; it is vigorous and will conquer, or it is weak and anything will defeat it. I believe that it is more than a likeness between the physical natures, there is something deeper than that. We are hardly willing yet to say that the higher animals are morally responsible, but it is impossible for one who has been a great deal among

trees to resist the instinctive certainty that they have thought and purpose, that they deliberately anticipate the future, or that they show traits of character which one is forced to call good and evil. How low down in the scale of existence we may find the first glimmer of self-consciousness nobody can tell, but it is as easy to be certain of it in the higher orders of vegetable life as in the lower orders of animals. Man was the latest comer into this world, and he is just beginning to get acquainted with his neighbors, that is the truth of it. It is curious to read the old stories of the hamadryads and see the ways in which the life of trees has been dimly recognized. They mean more than has been supposed, but the trees' own individuality was ignored, and an imaginary race of creatures invented, and supposed to live in them — these spirits of the trees accounted for things that could not otherwise be explained, but they were too much like people, the true nature and life of a tree could never be exactly personified.

Most trees like most people are collected into great neighborhoods, and one only knows them in companies, as one looks at a strange town when on a journey and thinks of it only as a town without remembering that it is made up of old and young lives, each with its own interests and influence. Perhaps,

as you go by, you notice a few faces in the street or at the railway station, and so, when a country road is at the edge of some woods you notice the woods, and perhaps say to yourself that there is a fine walnut-tree or an oak, but there are no two trees that look alike or are alike, any more than there are two persons exactly similar in shape or nature. It is a curious thing to see the difference of race so strongly marked — an oak among white pines is like an Englishman among the Japanese, and wholly a foreigner in such society. There is a nobility among trees as well as among men, not fancied by poets but real and unaffected. One likes to see such a grand family of oaks as that at Waverley, and is delighted at the thought of their long companionship; and what is more imposing than a row of elms standing shoulder to shoulder before a fine old house? They have watched the people come out for the first time, and for the last time, they have known the family they have sheltered. There seems to be often a curious linking of the two lives, which makes a tree fade and die when the man or woman dies with whom it has been associated; such stories are common in every village, — there is a superstition that the withering of a tree near a house is the sign of impending disaster — many persons believe that there is something more

than coincidence and chance about it, and it may be at least that these signs, and others that come true, will be proved some day to be veritable warnings, to break the force of a blow that otherwise would be too sudden and severe.

Five or six miles from the village I left the road that leads down to the sea and turned off toward the hill called Agamenticus. From some high land which has to be crossed first there is a fine view of the northern country with the procession of mountains, of which Mt. Washington is captain, ranged in marching order on the horizon. Saddleback and its comrades in Deerfield and Strafford brought up the rear, and they were all pale blue in the afternoon light. The nearer hills looked wind-swept and forlorn and the lowlands desolate, and the world was like a great garden that was spoiled and blackened by frost. The snow glistened and the wind blew it off the edges of the great drifts as if it were the spray of those frozen waves. The smoke was coming out of the kitchen chimneys of the farm-houses, and I saw faces quickly appear at the windows as I went by. All the women hurry when they hear sleigh-bells or the sound of a passer-by in those lonely neighborhoods, and it is difficult to tell whether you give most pleasure by being

a friend who will tell the news or do an errand along the road, or by being a stranger who drives an unknown horse. Then you are made the subject of reflection and inquiry, and for perhaps a day or two you are like an exciting chapter that ends abruptly in a serial novel.

Once over the hills there came in sight a long narrow pond which lies at the foot of Agamenticus; and as I passed the saw-mill at the lower end by the bridge I saw a well-worn sled track on the ice, and I had too strong a temptation to follow it to be resisted. The pond seemed like a river, the distance was not great across from shore to shore, and the banks were high and irregular and covered in most places with pines. I had heard that there was a good deal of logging going on in the region, and it was the best possible chance to get into a swampy tract of country which is inaccessible in summer, and which I have always wished to explore. For perhaps three quarters of a mile I went up the pond, often between the rows of logs which were lying on the ice waiting for the time when they would melt their way into the water and float down to be sawed. I found a cross track which led in the direction I wished to take, and once in the woods there was no wind, and the air was still and clear and sweet with the cold and resinous

odor of the trees. The wood-road was not very smooth and the horse chose his own way slowly while I looked around to see what could be seen. The woods were almost still, only the blue jays cried once or twice, and sometimes a lump of snow would fall from the bough of a tall pine down through the branches of the lower trees. There were a great many rabbit tracks, those odd clover-leaf marks, deep in the light snow which had fallen the night before, and there were partridge tracks around some bushes to which a few dried berries were still clinging, but the creatures themselves were nowhere to be seen. It must be a dreadful thing to be lost in the woods in winter! The cold itself soon puts an end to one, luckily; but to be hungry in such a place, and cold too, is most miserable. It makes one shudder, the thought of a lost man hurrying through the forest at night-fall, the shadows startling him and chasing him, the trees standing in his way and looking always the same as if he were walking in a treadmill, the hemlocks holding out handfuls of snow at the end of their branches as if they offered it mockingly for food.

The people who live in the region of the Agamenticus woods have a good deal of superstition about them; they say it is easy to get lost there, but they are very vague in what they say of the dangers

that are to be feared. It may be like an unreasoning fear of the dark, but sometimes there is a suggestion that the bears may not all be dead, and almost every year there is a story told of a wild-cat that has been seen, of uncommon size; and as for a supernatural population, I think that passes for an unquestioned fact. I have often heard people say that there are parts of the woods where they would not dare to go alone, and where nobody has ever been, but I could never succeed in locating them. The swamps at the foot of the mountain are traversed in winter pretty thoroughly and the first and second, and sometimes even the third, growth of pines have been cut off from all that district, so the land has all been walked over at one time and another — since there are few trees of the older generation left in all that part of the town. I dare say there is a little fear of the hill itself; perhaps a relic of the old belief that the gods had their abodes in mountains. So high a hill as Agamenticus could not fail to be respected in this (for the most part) low-lying country, and in spite of its barely seven hundred feet of height it is as prominent a landmark for fifteen or twenty miles inland as it is for sailors who are coming toward the coast, or for the fishermen who go in and out daily from the neighboring shores. I have often been asked

about the legend of an uncertain St. Aspenquid, — whose funeral ceremonies on this mountain are represented as having been most imposing, but I never could trace this legend beyond a story in one of the county newspapers, and I have never heard any tradition among the people that bears the least likeness to it.

I caught now and then a glimpse of the top of Agamenticus as I drove through the woods that bright winter day, and I wished it were possible for any one, not a practiced mountain climber, to scramble up through the drifts and over the icy ledges. I should like to see the winter landscape, the wide-spread country, the New Hampshire mountains, and the sea; for one can follow the coast line from Gloucester on Cape Ann to Portland with one's unaided eyesight; so well planted is this hill which might be called the watch-tower on the western gates of Maine.

In the woods there was the usual number of stray-away trees to be seen, and they appealed to my sympathy as much as ever. It is not pleasant to see an elm warped and twisted with its efforts to get to the light, and to hold its head above the white pines that are growing in a herd around it and seem to grudge it its rights and its living. If you cannot be just like us, they seem to say, more 's the pity for you! You

should grow as we do and be like us. If your nature is not the same as ours you ought to make it so. These trees make one think of people who have had to grow in loneliness; who have been hindered and crowded and mistaken and suspected by their neighbors, and have suffered terribly for the sin of being themselves and following their own natures. Yet I have often seen trees who seem to be hermits and recluses of their own accord — not forced absentees from their families. Apple-trees, in spite of their association with the conventional life of orchards and the neighborhood of buildings, do not seem unhappy at the sunshiny edge of a piece of woods, especially if they are near a road. Perhaps they like living alone, as many people do — they are glad to be freed from the restraints of society, and are very well off where they are; though a lonely domesticated tree would seem, naturally, to be most forlorn, an elm among pines or an oak among hemlocks seems to draw attention to its sufferings far more eagerly. An apple-tree seems willing to make itself at home anywhere, but it is sure to get amusingly untidy and lawless, as if it needed to be preached to as well as pruned. There are many trees, however, that always gravitate into each other's society and live in peace and harmony with each other — well ordered neigh-

borhoods where there is a good chance for everybody to get his living.

I have remembered a great many times an old lilac tree that I once saw in bloom by a deserted farm-house. It was in so secluded a place on a disused road that it could not be sure it was not the last of its race. The earth was washed away from its roots, and it was growing discouraged; it was like a sick man's face at a window. I do not believe that it will bloom many more springs. But there is another solitary tree which is a great delight to me, and I go to pay it an afternoon visit every now and then, far away from the road across some fields and pastures. It is an ancient pitch-pine, and it grows beside a spring, and has acres of room to lord it over. It thinks everything of itself, and although it is an untidy housekeeper, and flings its dry twigs and sticky cones all around the short grass underneath, I have a great affection for it. I like pitch-pines better than any trees in the world at any rate, and this is the dearest of its race. I sit down in the shade of it and the brook makes a good deal of noise as it starts out from the spring under the bank, and there always is a wind blowing overhead among the stiff green branches. The old tree is very wise, it sees that much of the world's business is great foolishness,

and yet when I have been a fool myself and wander away out of doors to think it over, I always find a more cheerful atmosphere, and a more sensible aspect to my folly, under the shadow of this friend of mine. I think it is likely to live until the new houses of the town creep over to it, past Butler's Hill, and the march of improvement reaches it and dooms it to be cut down because somebody thinks it would not look well in his yard, or because a street would have to deviate two or three feet from a straight line. However, there is no need to grow angry yet, and the tree is not likely to die a natural death for at least a hundred years to come, unless the lightning strikes it, — that fierce enemy of the great elms and pines that stand in high places.

There is something very sad about a dying tree. I think in the progress of civilization there will, by and by, arise a need for the profession of tree doctors, who will be quick at a diagnosis in cases of yellow branches and apt surgeons at setting broken limbs, and particularly successful in making the declining years of old trees as comfortable as possible. These physicians will not only wage war against the apple-tree borers and the plums' black knots, but a farmer will be taught to go through his woods now and then to see that nothing is the matter, just as he

inspects his cattle, and he will call the doctor for the elms that have not leaved out as they ought, and the oaks that are dying at the top, and the maples that warp and split their bark, and the orchard trees that fail to ripen any fruit. He will be told to drain this bit of ground and turn the channel of a brook through another, — time fails me to tell the resources of a profession yet in its infancy! It is a very short-sighted person who looks at the wholesale slaughter of the American forests without dismay, especially in the Eastern States. The fast drying springs and brooks in the farming districts of certain parts of New England show that mischief has already been done, and the clearing of woodlands is going to be regulated by law, I believe, at some not far distant period. There ought to be tree laws as well as game laws.

I thought of this as I drove on, deeper and deeper into the woods, and could hear more and more plainly the noise of the lumberman at work; first the ringing hack, hack, of the axes against the live, hard wood; and then I caught the sound of voices as the teamsters shouted to each other and to their oxen. There seemed to be a great deal going on, as if there were a crowd of men and a great excitement, but when I could see the open space between the trees there proved to be in all five or six placid-looking

farmers with one team drawn by two oxen and a shaggy, unwilling old white horse for leader. This was just ready to start, being loaded with logs to be carried out to the pond, and it was lucky that we had not met it, for the snow was deep and soft outside the narrow track.

The snow was trampled and covered with brush-wood and fallen boughs, the woods looked torn to pieces as if there had been a battle. "This is the way it used to look down in Virginia in war times," said John, the Captain of Horse, who was driving me: "I tell you, you had to dodge when a big shell burst among the pine-trees; there would be a crashing and a cracking among the old fellows!" We stopped and spoke to the teamster, and one or two of the choppers who were near by came to the side of the sleigh, and we asked and told the news. I spoke of a fire that had been in the village the night before, but they had already found out all about it. It is unaccountable how fast a bit of news will travel in the country, it is a proof of the frequency of communication between farming people, — you need only let it get a few minutes' start of you in the morning and it will beat you by many miles on a day's drive. It is not that a man starts out ahead of you with a faster horse and tells everybody he sees along the road, but

this invisible telegraph has side-lines, and people who live at the end of long lanes and on lonely cross roads are as well posted as those on the main thoroughfares.

It would be too slow work following the team, so we were directed back to the pond by another succession of paths. I noticed the bits of bright color against the dull green of the woods and the whiteness of the snow. The choppers wore red shirts and sometimes blue overalls, and there was a much-worn brown fur cap, with long ear-pieces that flapped a good deal as the energetic wearer nodded his head in explaining our way to us, and disputing the length of different cart-paths with one of his companions. I watched a man creep carefully, like a great insect, along the trunk of a fallen tree, and begin to lop off its branches. It seemed to me that the noise of the lumbermen in the woods must be very annoying to the trees and wake them from their quiet winter sleep, like a racket in a house at night. The scattered trees that were left standing had a shocked and fearful look, as if some fatal epidemic had slain their neighbors. Just at the edge of the clearing we crossed a little brook, busy under the ice and snow, and coming out to scurry and splash around a lichened rock with great unconcern, as if it were a child playing with its toys in the next room to a funeral.

There were a great many pines notched with an axe to show that they were to be cut; about a hundred and fifty pines in all, the owner told us he was going to get out that season, and they had so far been able to fell them without doing much damage to those they meant to leave standing. Some of the stumps were unusually broad ones. They last many years, and so the tree leaves its own monument when it dies. The inscription on many of the older stumps in those woods might be *Lost at sea*, as it is on the stones of a sea-port burying-ground, for great quantities of ship timber have gone from the Agamenticus woods to the ship-yards at Portsmouth, and the navy yard across the river.

On my way back to the pond and the road I found a place I remembered crossing in my childhood, a marshy bit of ground and a small pond in the heart of the woods. It looked exactly as it had that early winter day so long ago, and I remembered that I had seen witch-hazel in bloom there for the first time, and had been filled with astonishment at the sight of flowers in the snow. There used to be a farm-house, now destroyed, at the side of the mountain to which this was a short road in winter when the ground was frozen. I looked around for the witch-hazel, but I was too late for it, it was out of bloom and, alas,

many flowers beside! else I might have thought it was only yesterday I was there before, that bit of the world had been so unforgotten and unchanged by time. I had wondered for years where that little pond could be. I had begun to think I needed a crooked twig of the uncanny witch-hazel itself to lead me back to it.

The wind seemed to be making a louder noise than usual when I came out from the stillness of the woods to the open country. The horse was glad to be on a better road and struck out at a brave trot, and, indeed, it was time to hurry, for it was on the edge of the winter twilight and that had been the last load of logs to be sent that day from the clearing. I looked up again and again at the mountain, and I noticed a white place among the trees where there were cleared fields, and remembered a story that always interested me, that there was once a small farm there where an old Scotchman lived alone, many years ago. No one knew from whence he came, and there was no clew to his family or friends, so after his death the property that he left fell to the State. There is something very strange about such hidden-away lives, and one cannot help thinking that there are always people who have watched sadly for such stray-aways to come home, even if they are fugitives from justice, or banished with good cause.

On the main road, again, I met a dismal-looking little clam-man driving back to the sea. He and his horse both looked as if they would freeze to death on the way. I heard some clams slide and clash together in the box on his sled as we turned out for each other, but it was nearly empty and I had seen it full in the morning, so I suppose he was contented. We said good-day, and he went on again. He was a little bit of a man, and his eyes looked like a fish's eyes from under the edge of a great, rough fur cap. "He 's very well off," said John. "I know where he lives at the Gunket." So, after all, I pitied the horse the most, for he never would have been so shaggy if he lived in a barn that the wind off the sea did not blow through every day, from one end to the other.

The last sight I had of the mountain the top of it was bright where the last flicker of the clear, yellow sunset touched it, but in the low-lands where I was the light was out, and the wind had gone down with the sun, and the air was still and sharp. The long, cold winter night had begun. The lamps were lit and the fires were blazing in all the houses as I hurried home.

GOOD LUCK: A GIRL'S STORY.

IT seems very odd now to remember that we talked over going to Windy-walls for so many weeks before we could make up our minds to it. We thought of all imaginable reasons why we had better not go, and we all felt a good deal like martyrs when we were forced to decide at last that we had better spend the summer there. It was nine miles from a railroad and four from a post-office, and the house might be uncomfortable; beside, if my mother were to be ill nobody knew anything about the doctors. The truth was we wished to spend the summer at the sea-shore. We had spent the greater part of the last four or five summers in town, but in the old days when we were prosperous we lived in a house by the sea which we always had missed sadly, and now, when we found we must leave the city, the thought of three or four months at the shore was

most alluring. But my elder brother, who is the most sensible member of the family, was the one who decided it, for he convinced us that it would be much better for my mother to be inland. At first it had been a question of boarding somewhere in the country, but one day my brother Park came home with the news that the people who had been living in an old house of ours in New Hampshire were going to leave it, and that it would be vacant the first of June. It had belonged to a grand-uncle of my father and we had known very little about it; the tenants were elderly people and had been there so long that it seemed to belong to them more than to us. My younger brother Tom and I were dismayed at first, but we took more kindly to the new plan when my mother proposed that we should go together to put the house in order, a few days before the general flitting from town.

There are four of us, my mother, my two brothers, — Parkhurst, who was then in the medical school, and Tom, who was to enter college the next year, — and myself. I do not know anything more unhappy than not having an elder and a younger brother. It is a favorite joke of mine that standing between them one pulls me up and the other pulls me down, and so my character develops symmetrically, and I ought not to

be wanting in sympathy or experience. When we were all younger we had lived entirely at our ease, but of late years we have had reverses of fortune, and the Boston fire served us as it did many of our friends. It has been very close sailing, with the three of us to send to school and to college, and the frightful taxes on real estate to be paid. My mother insisted that we should not part with our dear old home if we could possibly help it, and, indeed, property had decreased so much in value that it could have been sold only at a great sacrifice, although it was so comfortable and stood in such a pleasant part of the town. I have no doubt it was thought extravagant by some people that we should stay there, though we managed to live on without getting in debt, but now that Tom was to enter college we knew we must rent the old house and so increase our income. Park had had money enough of his own to pay the expenses of his education, and he hoped to go over to Europe the next winter; then my mother and I were to board somewhere and Tom would be in Cambridge. We hated to think of breaking up, it seemed very hard to us, and we knew that we might never again be together in the dear old fashion, even though my mother could ever take the house again, which was, to say the least, doubtful. She was often in ill health and

the change would be very sad. My brothers and I would have given anything if in any way we could have made it possible for her to stay; if we could have made sure she might always have everything she needed. I do not think we should have minded being poor half as much if it had not been for her.

I can see now what a blessing these years were to us; we know the worth of money a thousand times better, and we are richer now in a great many ways because we were once poor, my brothers and I; while we have friends whose love for us nothing can make us doubt. I am willing to say that we often used to grumble, but I find there are just as many things I want that I cannot buy now, even though I have more money. One does not naturally go into such personalities as these, but for the sake of my story I wished you to know something of its characters to begin with.

We grew more and more resigned to the thought of taking Uncle Kinlock's house. Tom was seen looking over his fishing-tackle in the hope of finding trout-brooks, and I began to think more kindly of the summer in the country, and to make little plans of my own. Tom and I thought it the best fun in the world to go to Hilton a week before the rest to put the house in order; indeed, I think it was the pleas-

antest week of the whole summer. I should like to tell you the whole story of it, but I remember that we reached the village late one evening, and in the morning Tom came to the door of the country hotel with a weather-beaten old horse, and after we had collected some provision from the shops, and had loaded part of our luggage into the back of the wagon, we started off for the five miles' drive, feeling ourselves master and mistress of the house already. It was a perfect day; I had seen almost nothing of the country all the spring, and I think I had never felt more pleasure at being alive than I did that morning; the wind that blew about among the hills was so fresh and sweet, and it was one of the June days which make you feel as one does in October weather. The clover and daisies were all in bloom; I never saw so many birds together in all my life. I began to long for my mother to come, and I said over and over again how glad I was that she was going to spend the summer there. I remembered delightedly, what I had often forgotten before, that she was so fond of the country. Tom and I sang a good deal at the top of our voices, there being no audience, and we were sorry we had no farther to go, though the horse was slow and the road was rough, and up hill and down all the way. We watched the great white

clouds blow over, and caught sight of one mountain or great hill after another, far and near — and sometimes we stopped a little while to let the horse rest where it was so pleasant that we really could not go on. Tom saw some woods which gave fair promises of game, and brooks which he said were just the places for whole congregations of trout, and he thought it was the most delightful bit of country he ever had seen in his life. Some children whom we met on their way to school looked at us with great curiosity and interest, and even the least of the shy sun-bonnets knew that we were strangers and foreigners, and they all stood still to look after us when we had passed.

We were in a great hurry to see the house, and the last mile or two seemed long. We had been told that it was on a hill, and we looked for it in vain for some time and thought it must have burned down, until we had come through some thick woods and the road had turned, and then it was in full view half a mile beyond. It certainly was not charming at first sight. It looked gray as if it had never been painted, and there were a few tall, sharp spruces in a row at one side. It was a square, blindless house with two great chimneys, and it stood nearly at the top of a hill which would have looked higher anywhere else than there at the outskirts of the mountains. The road wound

along at the side of the hill, and down below us we could hear the noise of a small river at the bottom of the valley. The house looked squarer and grayer as we came nearer, and we agreed it was exactly like Uncle Kinlock himself, whom neither of us had ever seen within our recollection. There were two or three other houses in sight within a third of a mile, and it was like coming into a village at last, for the last three miles had been almost entirely through the woods. The fields were very green, and the slopes were most beautiful in the sunshine, and all the wild roses were in bloom. It was certainly a very pleasant country; one could not find fault with anything out of doors, and there must be room enough at any rate in the old square-roofed house, and that was a good thing. I had almost been sure of a room under the roof too low for me to stand straight in.

We had to go to the nearest neighbor's for the key, and had a hearty welcome from the mistress of the farm-house, who seemed as glad to see us and as kind as if we had belonged to her. She begged us to come back to dinner and to supper, and even wished us to sleep at her house until ours was fairly in order; but since our chief pleasure in coming first had been the prospect of keeping house ourselves, we thanked her and said No. There could not be any

trouble about our staying in the house from dampness or anything like that, for the people had not been long gone and it had been dry weather, and Mrs. Birney told us she had kept the windows open a good deal since she had known we were coming.

We hurried back and unlocked the door, and Tom said quickly, with a little whistle, "It is n't bad, Polly;" but I confess that the first impression I had was of its being very dismal. There was a narrow hall, with an awful blue-gray paper covered with fountains which looked as if they had frozen the winter before and had never thawed out. There was a prim mahogany table and some straight-backed chairs along the wall, and as for the parlor it was so dark that I rushed to open the shutters. The furniture was not bad of its kind, but it was not old enough to be picturesque or quaint; it was an entirely dull and commonplace country house of the better class. We went about from one room to another; everything was gray and brown and black, so I longed for the bright rugs we meant to bring, and to put flowers in the rooms, and for some of our own possessions to make it look a little home-like. It was a place to be homesick in, if one ever was homesick anywhere, so there was great need for us to do everything we could think of to brighten it up. It was

with great wisdom that Tom said how many people would go out of town that summer and spend no end of money in far less comfortable places. I do not know whether my brave-hearted young brother was trying to make the best of things at that moment, or whether he really liked the place from the very first, as he always insists now that he did.

There were four rooms on each floor: two large ones and two somewhat smaller, beside the kitchen; and there was a garden which was beginning to show a royal crop of weeds though the flowers were blooming too; all the early-summer company of old-fashioned flowers. Indeed, one might grow strongly attached to this old place in time, as I certainly did, but I am willing to confess that I was dreadfully disappointed in it at first. Some friends of mine, Kate Lancaster and Nelly Denis, had once spent a delightful summer at a fine old house by the sea and I had been with them for a week or two, so I had foolishly framed my expectations on the memory of that. However, there was no use in being dismal, and our house might have been worse. We named it Windywalls before we finished our lunch, which was the first thing to be thought of after we had opened the shutters everywhere and Tom had unharnessed the horse and unloaded the wagon. Tom thought it was

a very good name; I had seen it in a novel once. We had lunch very early; there really was not a great deal to do until a load of goods could be brought up from the village; however, we were busy enough, and the old place soon cheered up a little, as if it had been a lonely old person who had felt the need of young company.

We found that there were fire-places in almost every room, but they were either closed up or had air-tight stoves before them, and I told my brother that we must get those out of the way before my mother came and have the fire-places open, it would be so much pleasanter; so we went to work at once in the room we had chosen for hers; and if ever there were two forlorn-looking creatures they were Tom and I when we had finished, for there was an amazing quantity of soot and ashes, and we decided we would not try to do all in one day. In the sitting-room there was a great Franklin stove which we wisely left, as it had a gallant array of brass ornaments, and we brought in a quantity of dry wood and made fires everywhere. In the parlor we had great trouble because the chimney seemed so choked, and you cannot imagine our sorrow and dismay when a clumsy, half-fledged chimney-swallow tumbled down — luckily into the cold ashes at one side the fire, and

lay there, giving miserable chirps now and then. We put out that fire quickly enough! and when we found that the poor bird was badly hurt by its fall Tom killed it and we took a little vacation in order to attend its funeral under a currant bush in the garden.

"But we ought to have some andirons," said I, as we went back to the house, "there must be some, somewhere; everybody used to have andirons." And Tom said perhaps there were some in the garret, so to the garret we went; and here was a great satisfaction, for the oldest furniture, as was not long since the fashion, had been stored under the rafters, and we found some fine old chairs which only needed a little brushing to be made again the chief pride and ornament of the house. There were andirons enough, both iron and brass; but the latter had become various shades of green and black, and our first question to Mrs. Birney, our neighbor, who just then came up the creaking stairs, was who could we get to rub them bright again. She seemed much amused at our enthusiasm over our discoveries, for one could make up a history of the household customs of the last seventy-five years in that garret. I did not know the use of half the things until Mrs. Birney told me; there were spinning wheels for wool and flax, and foot-stoves, and all the apparatus for cooking before an

open fire; and there were flax combs and wool cards and candle molds, and various reels and trays, and all the lanterns that had lighted the footsteps of successive generations. We carried down the best of the chairs, but we should have liked to stay in the garret and rummage in the chests until dark, if there had not been our own rooms to put in order. Mrs. Birney had taken such good care of the house since its tenants, an old uncle and aunt of her own, had gone away that we found little to do, and we were very much obliged to her because she asked us to drink tea at her house where we had a very good time. I made friends at once with her niece, who was a pale-faced, dark-haired girl, who was just home from a seminary where she was fitting herself to be a teacher. She seemed all tired out, and I was so sorry for her. I felt as if she were really a great deal older than I, though there was not much difference in our ages. for she seemed to have lost every bit of her girlhood. I think one advantage of city life is that there is much more to entertain and amuse people than in the country. I never before had had the chance to know country girls intimately, as I did that summer; but the more thoughtful ones among them seem to me to be much more thrown in upon themselves and to be more given to narrow routine and a certain formality

of life than city girls are. I found this new friend of mine knew a great deal more than I about school-books; I only wish I were half so good a scholar; but the more I thought about her and talked with her the more I wished she would read novels all her summer vacation; good-tempered, well-bred English society novels, and no matter if some of them were naughty, for she could only see how much better it is to be good. I wished her to know another sort of people beside the teachers and scholars she was always with, and I wished to make her world a little larger, I liked her so very much. Tom had found a crony in Mrs. Birney's son, who seemed a very good fellow and a sportsman by nature, and I heard them already planning a long tramp in search of trout; for, though one could find some in almost any of the brooks, there was capital fishing in more remote streams among the hills, and I could see Tom's eyes flash as he talked in half whispers, and I was no longer afraid of his growing tired of Windywalls and its surrounding country.

We were very hungry at supper time, as Mrs. Birney had evidently expected us to be; we were very merry, and afterward Annie Birney, the niece, and I talked a while. I found she was an orphan, and I wondered if she did not mind coming back there from

her school, for it was such a bare house, so orderly and clean, and in a way so comfortable; but there was only a great yellow county map on the wall of the sititng-room where they lived, and the few books I saw were not at all in the line of her really fine scholarship. I wondered if she did not find life uncomfortable; her education had led her away from her family, yet what she had got from her books was a dry and useless sort of learning, unless for the sake of its being imparted to possible scholars by and by. She was certainly no happier, and her life did not reach out to other people's lives any more because of it. It did not seem to me that she was meant for a teacher, but I suppose she would not have been contented with any other employment. It seems to me that nature designs very few people to be scholars, but when so many make a failure of life we are greatly surprised. But we are apt to say that they had a good education, when in reality it was the worst education in the world for them, since they were not fitted to do their work. The result of education should be to elevate one's uses, but sometimes a student reminds one of the cheap wooden box in which his books are packed. We certainly have different capacities for assimilation of mental food, and I think that to be gifted with a tenacious memory and a brain

that is not constructive, and a little heart that will always be poor and have nothing to give, is a most melancholy state of affairs. There is a certain kind of character, which, if it tries to be a scholar, is a miser with its wealth, because it does not know how to spend and make use of it.

I think Annie Birney wanted to get out of the rut she was in, and that being with young people who took great pleasure in life was the best thing that could happen to her. I found she had a great capacity for enjoyment, and she added a great deal to our pleasure at Windywalls.

I knew that my brother wished to go fishing that very next day, but he was very good and said nothing about it, and we were busy until night putting things to rights, for early in the morning our possessions came over from the village. The few days we were alone went by very fast, and at last I was waiting impatiently for my mother, whom Tom had gone to bring over from the train. It was nearly tea-time when they reached the house, and I was delighted when I saw how pleased my mother was. I had flowers in a dozen places, and some wild sweet-brier roses, for which she had a great liking, in her own room. We had found the curtains that belonged on the high-posted beds, and Mrs. Birney and I had

put them up, and I had unpacked the books and placed them always with the bright red and blue ones on top. The weather had luckily given sufficient excuse for a little fire on the hearth in the dining-room, which was the most picturesque part of the house, with its tall clock and slender-legged side-board, and there was some pretty willow-pattern crockery to put on the table, and you may be sure we had found somebody to rub the andirons, and had filled a gingerpot with daisies. I think I never was so tired in my life as I was that night, but it was all forgotten and I was more than paid for it. Nancy, an old servant who had always lived with us and who came up with my mother, praised Tom and me to the skies and said she should think we had been at housekeeping for a year, though I am afraid when she inspected her own realm she did not have so much respect for us as at first. I am afraid there were distinct traces of the means by which we had reached the results she had admired, and we did not know how to keep order in our kitchen. We had bought some wild strawberries for tea from a little girl who came knocking at the door, and kind Mrs. Birney had brought us a pitcher of cream and another neighbor farther down the road had sent us some fresh eggs, and we felt already as if we be-

longed to the neighborhood. It was pleasant weather day after day, and we felt at first, until the weather changed, as if Windywalls had been an ill-deserved name for the bleak old house from which even the trees stood back. In-doors it grew more and more home-like, and we sent for some striped awnings which we had had in the city and put them over the southern windows to keep out the glare of the sun, and they made the house look as if it were a grave old lady in a young girl's gay trappings. I grew very fond of the hills, and we were continually discovering new drives and walks. There was one mountain which I always saw first when I waked in the morning and which at last seemed like a friend to me. I think we all tried to live as entirely a country life as we could, and not to be city people who had come to the country for a little while, meaning to keep apart from its ways as much as possible. Of course there were inconveniences, and I confess that I was lonely sometimes, but does not that feeling come to one anywhere in this world, after all? People came to visit us now and then, and I sincerely wish I could spend a part of every summer at Windywalls, in spite of its having seemed very forlorn and a real trouble when I first knew that I must go there. I had time to do so many things which were always

crowded out in Boston, and I do like housekeeping, and I must confess to being very fond of doing the every-day things which most girls in these days think very stupid.

So we settled ourselves down in peace and quietness for the long summer among the hills; and now it must be told that, before my mother came, while Tom and I were busy getting the house ready and Mrs. Birney was helping us, our curiosity was intensely excited by what she said of Uncle Kinlock. We were surprised and delighted to find that he had been considered a most singular man, and it seemed that the people in the country round about were a good deal in awe of him, as he was unfortunately subject to violent fits of bad temper and had very strange ways. It was believed that he was enormously rich, though we poor Leslies who were his heirs had had no very good evidence of that, and we heard it was believed that he had hidden most of his money before he died. He had lived alone with an old servant, whose death had quickly followed his own, but she had told a great many curious stories about him; that sometimes he would disappear for hours together when she knew he had not gone out of the house; that he would go up-stairs and she could not find him though she had often taken pains to search, and after

a time he would come down the staircase just as usual, and would laugh if he were good-natured or swear if he were not when she asked him where he had been. She insisted that somewhere in the house he had a secret room, and you may imagine the delight with which Tom and I listened to such a bit of gossip as this. I think this old relative of ours must have been a little crazy, for we heard that sometimes he would not speak to any one for days together.

One chilly evening we were all together in the sitting-room, reading or talking before the fire; it had been raining all day, and my mother said with a smile, what a pleasant day it had been in the house, and, after all, this was just the weather we had dreaded so much when we talked about coming to Hilton, and she added by way of warning to her eager and easily provoked children, that it was almost always so in life; that most of our misery comes from our fearing and disliking things that never happen at all. My brother Park looked up from a medical book of ostentatious size, and repeated philosophically the old French proverb, "Nothing is certain to happen but the unforeseen." I was reading a little and watching Tom make some new trout-flies as he sat by me at the table where the lights were.

"O Mary," said he, suddenly, "did you ever tell

mother that Mrs. Birney says Uncle Kinlock had a secret room somewhere up-stairs, and that he hid a great deal of money there and nobody ever found it?"

My mother laughed heartily: "O Tom, how foolish! — he never had a great deal of money to hide, and where could there have been a secret room in this square plain house? I wish there had been more good closets; I don't wonder that people's garrets used to be so filled in old times, for they never had any other place to put things. But I really do remember your father's having heard this story and laughing about it, too."

"Mrs. Birney said that Uncle Kinlock used to go up-stairs and disappear, and the old woman who lived with him used to hunt for him everywhere, and after a while he would come down and she never knew where he went. Some people said he must be in league with the devil," said Tom solemnly, "and an old fellow who hangs round the blacksmith's shop over in the village asked me yesterday if we ever found the secret chamber. He said there really was one; his elder brother who used to work here told him so; and he said, too, that Uncle Kinlock had been paid for some woodland he had sold a few days before he died, and he had not sent the money to the bank and nobody could find it in the house."

"There were several people here during his illness," said my mother. "Your father found everything in confusion when he came; I am afraid the money may have been too strong a temptation."

"But where could there possibly be another room?" said I, trying again to puzzle it out, though Tom and I had made a careful survey together, days before. "There are the four rooms on each floor, and the halls, and the garrets, and the closets." And Park said: "I dare say the old fellow's time hung heavily in rainy weather and he played hide and seek with the housekeeper. I don't doubt he was under that great four-poster in the room overhead, and came chuckling out after she went away, with feathers all over his coat."

"Oh, my dear!" said mamma, with an amused little laugh, "if you had ever seen him! the crossest, stiffest old man in the world!"

But the next day Tom and I were off on a long walk together, and as we were toiling up a hill he said: "Don't you wish that story would come true about Uncle Kinlock's money? It would be such a lark if we found it and we could stay on at the house in town and Park could go abroad with all sails set, and we would have a pair of saddle-horses."

"I should like to find the room, at any rate," said

I; "it makes me think of the regicide judges, and I lie awake at night thinking about it and wondering where it could be. But we have looked everywhere, unless it is in one of the chimneys."

"There is that little garret-room over the outer kitchen, where the little four-paned window is," said Tom. "I put a ladder up the other day and looked in, but there was nothing there."

"So did I," I said. "It is no use, Tom; but I wish we could find out how the story started. I wish we did have more money. I am sorriest when I think of mamma's having to give up the house. I know she dreads it. I almost wish we could go over to Paris with Park in the fall. I think she would like to go abroad again, and it would n't seem half so bad as breaking up and having to board in town. We could have a little apartment for the winter, you know, and it would be pleasant for Park to live with us," but poor Tom's face lengthened so at the prospect of being left alone, that I said nothing more of my plan. I think he was much fonder of home than either Park or I, though that was saying a great deal.

"I am going to grow rich as fast as I can," said he, presently. "I wish I were ten years older, and you and mamma should do just exactly as you like. When I think she misses anything she used to have

I am awfully sorry, and it keeps costing her more and more for me, so I know that other things have to be given up."

"Never mind, Tom," said I, "everybody knows it is money well spent. I only wish there were twice as much for you."

And Tom, who was tender-hearted but very reluctant to let it be noticed, said, abruptly: "I wish we had brought a lunch; I did n't have half enough breakfast I was in such a hurry; it was like dropping a biscuit down a well."

"There is one thing we must do, Tom," said I, after a while, "before Aunt Alice comes; you know, we have never opened the fire-place in that room, and she is apt to be chilly. I think she would like a little blaze on the hearth. Suppose we get it ready after dinner while the others are out driving. I think there is only a fire-board to be taken away and we could have it all in order before they come back. I 'll rub one andiron if you will the other."

"There are n't any more brass ones," said Tom, "but we can give her the funny iron dogs; yes, of course we will do it; are you sure it is n't bricked up?"

Park was going to drive my mother to the village, and they started after an early dinner and Tom and

I were just beginning our work, when an old clergyman who lived some distance away came to call upon mamma, and of course we wished to fill her place as well as possible in giving him hospitality, but we were dreadfully afraid he would stay all the afternoon, though we were really so glad to see him. When he had gone, promising to come back to drink tea with us after making some other calls, we hurried up-stairs and were soon busy again, and Tom pulled away the fire-board which had always rattled when there was a breeze, and found the fire-place was open, so there would be only the pile of soot and ashes to carry down-stairs. But it was a miserably shallow fire-place, not half so deep as those in the other rooms. Tom was on his knees before it, when suddenly he stopped and seemed to be lost in thought. "What is it?" said I, with a good deal of curiosity, but he did not answer, as he rose and opened the closet door which was on that side of the room. There was nothing inside but some blankets; it was a shallow closet with two shelves at the top and some pegs underneath, and Tom said, eagerly, "Come round here, Polly," and I followed him out into the hall and into the other corner-room at the back of the chimney, where he opened the opposite closet door; looked in at Park's coats, and gave a shout, and

caught me by the shoulders and behaved as if he had gone crazy. "I wish I knew how to get in; it 's Uncle Kinlock's den, don't you see?" said he. "There must be a place at the side of the chimney between the closets, they don't take up half the room; don't you see the chimney goes way through and the back of this closet is n't the back of the other? Hi yi!" and my brother went hopping about on one foot by way of expressing his joy at such a discovery. I could not understand what he meant at first, but I thought of Kate Lancaster at once. There was no knowing what we might find, and there had not been a sign of a secret closet in the house at Deephaven. Tom began at once to take down the coats from their pegs; Park was very orderly, but we threw them all about the room. We looked carefully, but there was no sign of any way to get through, and at last we gave up and went back to the front-room closet, and searched there for some sign of a door or sliding panel. It was very exciting, and Tom at last mounted a chair and looked along the shelves as if he thought the way in was like the entrance to a dove-cote, but at last I saw him reach over and pull at something; and he threw a bit of wood on the floor and then another and pulled out the shelf a little way, and kicked the back of the

closet which seemed to be loosened, and I helped him push it along toward the chimney and saw a dark place behind it.

We could not get the door far back enough for any light to go in, and it was close quarters at any rate, to push through. "You may fall, Tom," said I fearfully, my courage failing me all of a sudden.

"Down into the china closet!" said my brother with a very scornful air, as if he thought I ought to know the architecture of the house better than that. "Let 's have a light, though; there 's a candle over on the dressing-table," and I hurried across the room to get it.

That was a miserable moment, for I looked out of the window to see mamma and Parkhurst driving slowly toward home with the old clergyman following them, blissfully unconscious of their being most unwelcome.

Tom groaned when I told him: "We must be quick and shut it up," said he, and I was only too willing, for we wanted all the glory for ourselves.

"There are all Park's clothes scattered over his floor," said Tom, as he pushed and tugged at the panel, and I flew to put them in their places as well as I could and had just succeeded when I heard mamma come into the lower hall. Tom had gone to the gar-

ret for the iron dogs, and was just coming back with them, serenely, when he met her on her way to her room. She laughed to see the plight we were in, for we were gray with ashes, and thanked us for opening the fire-place; it would be so much pleasanter for Aunt Alice. "You are very thoughtful children," said she in her tender way, which always went straight to our hearts, and she put one of her arms round each of us as we stood before her and kissed us. Tom's eyes filled with tears in a minute; he was greatly excited. I did not know what he would do, but he kissed her again in his rough, boyish fashion of two or three years ago, when he had not prided himself on being undemonstrative, and rushed off down-stairs two or three steps at a time.

"What has come over the boy?" said my mother, as I followed her into her own room. "Here are some letters for you, and your Aunt Alice will be here day after to-morrow. I had a letter from Mrs. Phillips, who is in Baltimore, and she tells me that Mrs. Anderson, your grandmother's old friend, is very ill and will probably live only a few days. I wish I could have seen her again, dear old lady," said mamma sadly. "I was so sorry to refuse, this spring, when she wished me to come to her, but it could not be helped."

I knew why she had not gone; I had something of Tom's certainty that we should find a fortune in the secret closet into which we had almost looked, and I hoped that mamma might never have to give up anything again. I remembered that I had gone away for a visit just after she had quietly declined this invitation.

"She was always very fond of me, I think," said my mother. "She always treated me as if I were still a child; I suppose she could not realize the flight of time. I have felt so old most of the time these last ten years that it was pleasant to have somebody think I was young, and it always carried me back to my girlhood to go to see her."

"I wish you could have seen her again," said I, and mamma looked up at me as if she had been unconscious for a minute of my presence; I could see she was much saddened; she always clung closely to her old friends.

"The letter has been remailed two or three times, I ought to have had it days ago," said she, and then I left her to go to dress, and afterward hurried to find Tom, whom I found entertaining our guest with mamma for aid. He was quite himself again, and gave me a careless and triumphant nod. He whispered to me that we must go in that night after the

others were asleep, and I was willing; but Mr. Ashurst was soon after persuaded to stay the night with us and occupy that room, to Tom's and my great discomfiture, though perhaps it was just as well, for Park would certainly have heard us rattling in his wall, and mamma was always a light sleeper. It was misery to be obliged to wait until next day.

Next morning I tried to make Tom ready to meet his disappointment, for I did not believe we should find a fortune, but at any rate we were both a good deal excited, and were so persistent in sending my mother and Park to the village for the letters and to do some trumped-up errands of ours, that they at once suspected a plot. We were given to little surprises, as a family, and mamma accepted the situation; and though it was a hot morning she went away with my brother, while Tom and I could hardly wait until they were out of the yard.

"Don't be too sure, old fellow!" said I, for we had flown up-stairs, and I lit two candles while he was unfastening the panel. He pushed his way in and I quickly followed him. It was a close little place, and at first, coming from bright daylight into flickering candle-light, I could not see. It was like a large closet, and part of the space was in the side of the chimney like an arch in a cellar, dark as a

pocket, and as we became accustomed to the light we could see an old three-cornered chair before a small, upright desk; there was a queer old lamp fastened to the wall with a candle stuck in it, and some books and newspapers were scattered about, much gnawed by mice. It was very stuffy, and it might have been a safe refuge for a regicide judge, but I could not imagine anybody's wishing to stay there for any other reason than to escape pursuit, which might, after all, have been Uncle Kinlock's motive, for we had already heard that his housekeeper sought for him diligently.

"Hold both the candles, will you?" said Tom, "I'm going to look in the desk," and finding it was locked he wrenched it open to find some pigeon-holes full of old letters and business papers and a great number of cuttings from newspapers, but there was also a worn leather wallet, which we opened in a hurry, to find some money after all; a large roll of old-fashioned bank-bills, and a little silver. "Do you suppose the bills are good for anything?" said I, unkindly; "were not people given a certain time in which to redeem them?" And then we opened a little drawer which was also locked, and found some gold pieces; there were two or three hundred dollars, and most of the coins looked quaint and old, so this was real treasure.

"It is not a very great fortune after all," said I.

"Who ever thought it would be?" said Tom, in his every-day tone. "What do you suppose they will say when they come home? This must be the money that was paid for the land; is n't it silly that no one ever found it before in all these years!" And really I do not think he was half so disappointed as I was. Tom is very clever at adapting himself to circumstances.

There were some old books which would be a delight to my elder brother, who had a great fancy for such things, and we began to wish for his return. We read many of the letters and found very few that were interesting, except one or two from my grandfather, but there were some that my father had written Uncle Kinlock, when he was a boy, which we were very glad to see.

At last we heard the wagon coming back and went in triumph to tell of our discovery. "We have found Uncle Kinlock's secret chamber," said Tom, as if it were of no consequence to him whatever, "and it is a sort of closet in the chimney, a horrid little place, and we found some gold pieces and a lot of bank-bills in an old wallet, but I don't believe those are good for anything. Come up, and we will show it to you."

But I noticed that mamma looked very pale, as if something had happened, and Park seemed excited, and neither of them had a word to say, so I begged them to tell me what was the matter. Mamma came toward Tom and me and held us fast again as she had done the day before. "O my dear girl and boy!" said she, "you will not be poor any more; dear old Mrs. Anderson is dead, and she has left half her money to me for my mother's sake. You have been so kind to me, and you have made me so rich always with your love, and I never knew until now how much I have wished to do for you."

Tom and I were dazed for a minute and we all went into the house; it was a great surprise to us all, and we could not take it in. Tom looked out of the window and whistled a little, and drummed on the sill. "I found two four-leaved clovers this morning," said he, presently, "there they are on the table; I say, Park, will you come up to see the den?"

I do not remember that we changed our fashion of living, after that day, though earlier in the season we had been apt to find fault with it, and to wish for something that we did not have. We had thought, too, that we were staying at Windywalls because we must, but we did not leave there until late in the autumn, and with deep regret even then, which shows the idleness, at least, of quarreling with necessity.

MISS BECKY'S PILGRIMAGE.

I.

BEFORE her brother, the Rev. Mr. Parsons, died, Miss Becky and he had often talked about going back to Maine, to visit their old friends; but somehow the right time had never come, and now, when she thought of going all by herself, she felt as if it were her duty to carry out this cherished wish.

To be sure, it would be sad to go alone. They had often said that there would be many changes, and they should find few persons who remembered them; and so it would not have been altogether cheerful, at any rate. The minister and his sister had had few relatives, and most of those were dead, except a cousin in Brookfield, whom they had heard from now and then, but, though they reminded each other of the changes that had taken place, they still

instinctively thought of their native town as if it were very nearly the same as it used to be when they had last seen it, thirty or forty years before. Their father and mother had died when they were very young, and Miss Becky had lived with an old aunt. Her brother had early shown unmistakable proofs of his calling to the ministry, and had used most of his share of their small fortune for his education; and he had been settled in his first parish only two or three years when Miss Becky went to live with him, her aunt having suddenly died and Mr. Parsons being in distress for a housekeeper. It proved a most judicious arrangement, for neither of them ever married, and they were capitally suited to each other, having that difference of disposition and similarity of tastes which make it possible for two people to live together without being too often reminded of the fact that we are in this world for the sake of discipline, and not enjoyment. It was always said that Mr. Parsons had been disappointed in love while he was pursuing his studies at the theological school, and whether he took this for an indication that he would be more useful as a single man I do not know; but, at any rate, in spite of frequent good chances and the way to seize them being made easy for him by members of his parishes, he never fell in

love again and seemed to grow better satisfied with life year by year. He was a handsome man, and Miss Becky was proud of him. He was to her not only the best of preachers and kindest of men, but the most admirable of gentlemen. She had a thoroughly English respect for the cloth, and she had been born in the days when, in her native New England town, the league of Church and State was powerful and prominent, and the believers in the Congregational mode of worship and church government were able to look down upon other sects as dissenters. She had left Brookfield with great regret, though she had not known how dear the old place was to her until she came to leave it. She had never been very happy at her aunt's, for she never had liked her uncle very well, and his wife was a fretful, tiresome sort of woman, who made it so uncomfortable for every one, when she was not pleased, that her household became cowards in never daring to take their own way or to have minds of their own about even their own affairs; and it seemed a bright future to Miss Parsons to have a home of her own, as she knew her brother's house would be, for she was to have all the good fortune of a minister's wife, — the glory and honor and pride of it, with none of the responsibility of suiting herself to the parish, which in a country town is sometimes no light weight to carry.

It was a long journey to take, for Mr. Parsons had been called to a church in Western New York, which seemed to Miss Becky like a foreign country. It was known throughout Brookfield that she was to start one Monday morning, and on Sunday her departure was referred to in the long prayer before the morning sermon, and in the evening meeting both deacons and some other pillars of the church prayed devoutly that she might be kept from danger and peril on her journey, and that she might help to scatter the good seed among the far-away people with whom she was to make her home. It was almost the same thing as if she were going to be a foreign missionary, and she was very solemn about it; but after she reached Alton it seemed as civilized and as home-like as Brookfield itself, and any sacrifice she had gloried in making proved to have been only in her imagination. Twice since then Mr. Parsons had accepted calls to other parishes, farther West, and for the last twenty-seven or twenty-eight years they had been in Devonport, which had started to be a rival to New York city itself. It had been disappointed and left at one side by the railroads, which presently put an end to the usefulness of a canal which had brought some business to the little town, and it had grown very dull and a good deal

less important in its own mind. The minister and his sister had lived on year after year in comfortable fashion. The salary was small, but, fortunately, certain, and Miss Becky had a little income which relieved her from any feeling of dependence or uncomfortable humility toward the parishioners. Her hand had been asked in marriage more than once; but she never had thought it best to change her situation, for in neither case had it appeared likely that she should better herself, and she felt that there could be no reproach attached to single-blessedness while she kept her brother's house, and he was a minister of the gospel. It gave her a position and duty for which one must have a vocation.

But, as I have said, as years went on, Miss Becky's heart and thoughts were oftener and oftener turned toward Brookfield; and the minister himself, from hearing her say so much about it, came to have as great a wish as she to go back to New England. It is always home to all the people who go away from it to the westward. As they grow older they love it better and better, and it is a strong bond between the older settlers if in their youth they had some knowledge of each other's neighborhoods. The hearts of New England travelers are often touched at being asked to visit some old people, because they came

from the Eastern States, and with all the Westerner's pride in his new country his thoughts often turn fondly toward the rising sun. There is in this generation an instinctive homesickness that will probably be outgrown in the next. To any subject of the Queen England is always home, and a Canadian or a New Zealander is first of all and last of all an Englishman.

Miss Becky's brother, for some months before his death, had not seemed so strong as usual. He was several years older than she, and seemed very old in that part of the country where most of the people are young or, at furthest, middle-aged. He had never been in the habit of taking stated vacations (in fact, it had been a matter of pride and principle with him not to do so); but early in the summer he had said he should take a rest of a month when September came, and then they would go to Brookfield. He wished to verify some dates and records, and, though there were few people he cared much to see, there were a good many tombstones, and the old town itself was dearer to him than he ever used to believe. He had been hardly more than a boy when he left it, and it was his long-lost boyhood that he hoped to find again. They would go to the seashore for a little while — he should like to get a whiff of salt air; and

on their way home they would stop in New York, where there was to be a general meeting of the churches that was of great interest to him.

They talked about their plans like two children; but they never carried them out, for, as I have said, the minister died. It was a great shock to Miss Becky, who until the very last was sure that a change of air was all that her brother needed to make him well and strong again; but he only went on a last short journey instead, and all the clergy in that corner of the world assembled to follow him, and they preached about him, and wrote about him in the religious newspapers, and said how sadly he would be missed and what a pillar had fallen. And then the world went on very much the same as ever, except to Miss Becky, who felt as if it had come to an end.

She stayed on in Devonport for a while, until she began to be very unhappy. The parish was hearing candidates with a view to settling a successor to Mr. Parsons, and they seemed so unfit for his place (as, indeed, they were, being mostly young and puffed up with pride) that she listened to them with great impatience and distress, and she made up her mind, by little and little, that as soon as the spring opened she would go to Brookfield and make a long visit. After all, there were a good many people in that place and

its neighboring towns whom she wished to see, and whom she thought would be glad to see her; and, if she did not care to visit, she had it in her power to board for a while, and the more she thought about it the more in a hurry she felt to be on the way. She was by no means a rich woman; but, if she lost nothing, she would have enough to live on comfortably, since she spent but little and had an uncommon faculty of making that little go a long way.

The journey to Boston was bewildering and tiresome to her, for the most part; but when she was fairly started one morning to take the last half-day's car-ride, she was much delighted, and looked out of the window eagerly, and examined the faces in the car, to see if there might not possibly be one that was familiar. The very names of the stations were delightful to her ears, and after a while she felt as if she were traveling in disguise and as if everybody would be overjoyed if she only told them who she was. "I have n't been here for forty years," she told the conductor, after he had answered some question she had put to him; and he looked at her curiously (as if to see whether she was an old acquaintance, she thought), and said that she must find things a good deal changed. She heard a gentleman in front call him Mr. Prescott, and, if he had not hurried on, she would have

asked him if he were not one of the sons of an old schoolmate of hers, who had married a Prescott and gone to live in Portland. She was sure he had a look of Adaline Emery.

It was a great pleasure that at one of the stations a new-comer took a seat beside her, the cars being full. She was a woman of about her own age, and evidently a journey was a matter of great importance to her. So Miss Becky felt a sympathy for her, and ventured to say that she had been in the cars for nearly two days and nights, after her companion had asked the name of one of the stations which she had failed to hear.

"I want to know if you have!" said she, looking at Miss Becky with respect. "Seems to me I could n't stand it, noways; but then it ain't come in my lot to be much of a traveler. Was you ever this way before?"

"I was born and brought up down in Brookfield," answered Miss Becky; "but I have been away pretty near forty years. I wonder if you are acquainted about there any."

"Why, I was raised in Brookfield," said the woman, "and I 've got a brother and sister living there. I 'm just going to Brookfield now, to stop with them. I thought it was a great while since I was there; but

you beat me. I was there nine years ago, and I expect I shall find a good many changes." And our two friends looked at each other searchingly, and in a minute a glimmer of satisfaction overspread Miss Becky's face. "I declare to my heart if you are n't Mahaly Robinson! I thought you looked sort of natural when I see you come into the cars. I s'pose you must have forgot all about Rebecca Parsons by this time." But her friend had not, and they grasped each other's hand and kissed each other at once, and the sudden outburst of affection was most amusing to the neighboring passengers.

"Why, I feel as if I had got home, seeing you," said Miss Becky, thinking how dreadfully old her friend looked, while the friend thought exactly the same thing of her, and each flattered herself that in her case time had left but little trace of its flight. "I forget your married name?" inquired Miss Becky. I did know it at the time. You know you wrote me just after I went out West; but I always think of you as Mahaly Robinson — same 's when we went to school together."

"I married first with a Sands; but I lost him when we had only been married three years," said Mahala, without any appearance of regret, "and then I married Joshua Parker, of Gloucester. I 've been a widow

now these fourteen years. He was a ship-master and used to sail out o' Salem when I first met with him; and after that he was master of the Fleetwing, out o' Boston for a good many years. He was lost at sea. She was never heard from after they left Callao. I wa'n't left very well off; we 'd had considerable sickness, and his father and mother and a foolish sister made it their home with us and was considerable expense. I always set a great deal by Father Parker, though. He was a real good man and he always did what he could. He got frost-bit down to the Banks, one winter, and his hands and feet were crippled. We had hard scratchin' one spell: but my boys and girls got so 's they could work, and then there wa'n't any more trouble. I 've had a good deal to be thankful for; but I 've seen the time I 'd a-laid down and died, I was so discouraged. I live with my youngest daughter now, and she 's got as handsome a little farm as you ever see and a good husband. He 's doing well, too. They are always thinking o' things to please me, both of 'em. I ain't got a child I 've been sorry for, and that 's a good deal to say. There 's a sight of risk in fetchin' up six of 'em. But I want to know how it 's been with you. I see by "The Congregationalist" that your brother had been taken away.

"Yes," said Miss Becky, with a sigh. "He was a dreadful loss to me. We 'd been together so many years, and there never was a man like Joseph, any way. He was known all through that part of the West. We 'd talked about coming on, and it 's real sad to come without him; but I feel 's if it was just what he 'd want me to do, if he knew it. I hoped I should see him stand up and preach in the old meeting-house. Some of his sermons were thought a great deal of. I could n't always understand the deeper thought in 'em," said Miss Becky, proudly. "We set a good many times to come on; and we did get as far as New York once, to the meetings of the American Board, and then somehow there was always some place we thought we must go to first, out West. It ain't that we 've stayed right in the same place all these years," she explained. "My brother used to travel about a good deal. Seems to me, coming back this way, I miss him more than ever. I keep thinking o' things I ought to tell him when I get back to Devonport. It 's been right hard to get reconciled."

"Then you 're not coming back to settle?" asked Mrs. Parker. I thought first that perhaps you was. There, we 're a getting into Portsmouth; but I don't suppose I should know my way round. I lived here 'long of my first husband, and I always liked the place."

"I remember coming, when I was a young girl, to stop with my aunt Dennett for a spell, over on the Kittery shore. We 've got to go across the river, have n't we? I should n't wonder if you could see the house. My sakes alive,! how good and fresh the salt water smells! Don't it? I declare, how it carries me back!" exclaimed Miss Becky.

"The wind must have come round into the east," said Mrs. Parker, wisely. "It was a little north of west when I started this morning, and I thought I should have a good day; but then we 're going right back into the country. Who are you expecting to stop with?"

"I wrote to Cousin Sophy Annis, because I've been in the habit of hearing from her every year, and one of her sons is living West, and has stopped with us several times. I did n't get any answer, for I started off pretty sudden. I found I was going to have company as far as Syracuse. I can go to the tavern, if it don't seem to be convenient for Sophia. I don't know but it would be just as well, any way, for I feel as if I was almost a stranger. I should n't mind the expense," she added, with a good deal of satisfaction.

"I know they won't let you go to no tavern; Brookfield folks will have altered a good deal if they have come to that!" exclaimed Mrs. Parker, in a

way that was gratifying. "You 'll find more that is glad to see you than you 've any idea of. If you don't find anybody a-waiting for you, you come right home with me to Sister Phebe's; and then they 'll take you over to Sophy's, after tea or in the morning, just as you are a mind to. You know it 's right on the way there, and Sophy won't think nothing of your stopping 'long of me, as we fell in with each other in the cars."

But it seemed very lonely to Miss Becky, who was tired with her long journey; and she became uncertain of her reception, and almost wished she had not undertaken the pilgrimage. She began to understand how changed the place must be, and how little it would be like the Brookfield she had left. And when Mrs. Parker remembered that she had spoken of her brother's preaching in the old meeting-house, and explained that it had been torn down, to make place for a new one, the year before, it was really a great sorrow to our friend. She felt that if it were not for visiting the burying-ground it would not have been worth while to go at all.

"I did think it would be so pleasant to set in the old pew again, where I used to set when I was a girl," she said, sadly. "I have thought just how it all looked so many times!" As they neared Brook-

field, the country grew more and more familiar, and Miss Becky looked out of the car-window all the time, and was again in high spirits. She told the names of the hills, and when she saw a farm-house that she remembered, not far from the railway, she was perfectly overjoyed, and hurriedly collected her carpet-bag, and her basket, and her big pasteboard box, that held some treasures which she had been afraid to trust to her trunk. "Do tell me if I look all right, Mahaly," she said, quickly passing her hand, in its loose black-thread glove, over the front of her bonnet and her neat frisette. "I don't s'pose I am fit to look at. I 've always had to keep myself looking nice, on Joseph's account, being a minister, and we were always subject to a good deal o' company," she remarked; but Widow Parker said she looked as if she had only traveled from the next town, and in a few minutes more they were standing on the platform of the Brookfield station.

There were only strangers waiting there, and they were mostly little boys, and Miss Becky felt a strange sense of desolation; but presently some one greeted Mrs. Parker (who was much flustered) with great cordiality, and she walked off, without giving a thought to her fellow-traveler, who stood still, looking anxiously at every face that passed, as if she

hoped to find it familiar. She held the box and the bag and the basket, and suddenly wondered if her trunk had come, and looked down the platform the wrong way, and distressed herself with the thought that it had not been put off the train, since it was not in sight. The little boys strolled away, and the rest of the people began to disappear also, and Miss Becky remembered her companion, and wondered what could have become of Mrs. Parker, who had seemed so friendly; and just then some one came driving up to the platform. It was a young woman, and she jumped out quickly and came toward our friend.

"I wonder if you are Miss Parsons?" asked the girl, pleasantly.

"Why, yes, dear," said poor Miss Becky, who had been almost ready to cry.

"Grandmother said that I had better come round by the depot, but the rest of us were certain you would n't be here until to-morrow. How do you do?" and she kissed the old lady as if she really cared something about her. "We are all so pleased because you are coming. Now let me see to your baggage. We can take the trunk right into the back of the wagon."

"I was just feeling afraid it had n't come," said

Miss Becky; but the station-master asked if that were not the one which he was just going to drag into the depot, and in a few minutes more they were in the wagon, driving away.

"I hope you won't be too tired," said the girl. "We shall have to ride three or four miles; but then it is nice and cool."

"I always liked to ride," said Miss Becky, "and it is so refreshing to get out of the cars. There! you don't know what a difference there is between the air here and out West; but now I want you to tell me who you are?"

"I forgot you did n't know," said the girl, laughing. "We have talked so much about you that I forgot you did n't know me just as well as I do you. I 'm Annie Downs, and my mother was Julia Annis."

"I can't believe Sophy Annis has got a granddaughter as old as you!" exclaimed Miss Becky. "Why, I don't feel any older than ever I did, but she was four or five years older than I."

"I have a brother and sister older than I," said Annie; "but they 're both married. We lived at Freeport; but I suppose you knew that father died some years ago, and grandmother was getting feeble, so she wanted mother and me to break up and come to live with her. I have been keeping the town school

for two years. It 's very near, you know. Mother's brother carries on the farm — Uncle Daniel. He says he remembers you, and your coming to say good-by just before you went West; but grandmother says he was too young."

"I guess he does remember me," said Miss Becky, with a sudden affection for this relative of hers. I know he was a dear little fellow, running round the kitchen. It was in cold weather, I know. I was going to kiss him, and he hid under the table." This was very pleasant and seemed to bring the strange relatives much nearer. "Your mother was the oldest, and was quite a girl then. I remember hearing of your father's being taken away; but I always thought of you all as little bits of children."

"There, I did feel so lonesome to-day!" said Miss Becky to old Mrs. Annis and her daughter, that evening; "but I feel now as if I had got back among my own folks. I like out West; but somehow I never have felt at home there as I do here, and after Joseph's death I saw it was being with him that had kept me from feeling strange. And I don't know why it is, either, for there are a good many people in our place from New England and everybody is free and neighborly."

Nothing could have pleased Miss Becky more than

the welcome she received from the townspeople. She said over and over again that she had no idea she should find so many people who remembered her, and the excitement her visit seemed to make was deeply gratifying. It was exactly the way her brother was treated when he went back to visit one of his old parishes, and she accepted invitations to spend the day or to make a week's visit after haying until she was entirely confused at the thought of her engagements. It was very pleasant; but sometimes, when she was tired, the future suggested itself for her decision, and she wondered what she had better do when the visits were over, for there was all the rest of her life to be lived, and she ought to be making some plans.

II.

It would not be fair to withhold an account of the wretchedness of poor Mrs. Mahala Parker when she remembered, on the evening after her arrival at her sister's, that she had meant to bring with her another guest. Something happened to remind her of their conversation in the cars, and she suddenly looked gray for a minute, while a chill crept over her. "Oh! my good land o' compassion!" she groaned. "What have I been and done? I believe my mind 's

a-failing of me." And her amazed companions asked what could be the matter.

"I met Rebecca Parsons in the cars," said she, "coming on from the West. We happened to sit in the same seat; but I never should have known her if she had n't called me by name and told me who she was. She said she had been gone forty years. I should n't have said it was more than thirty, if it was that; but time does go so fast! She did n't seem certain about anybody's coming to meet her, and I told her I 'd fetch her along with me, and then you 'd send her over to the Annises, where she expected to stop; and I come right off without ever even saying Good-by to her. I don't know what she will think. I never felt so in my life. I don't remember to have seen no other conveyance there, and she must ha' been real put to it to know what to do. I got sort of excited, it 's so long since I went anywhere before. It must have looked just as if I wanted to get rid of her. There was something on my mind all the way here; but I kept thinking it was because I had left something in the cars."

"Well, right after breakfast one of the girls shall take you over to the Annises, Sister Mahaly," said Mrs. Littlefield. "You 'd feel better to see her yourself than to send word. I suppose she will be

there, or she may have stopped up to the tavern, and they ought to know it. And you may as well ask them all to come over and take tea to-morrow and spend a good long afternoon. I sha'n't have another chance for some time, on account of haying. I was calculating to ask our minister, any way; and when I got your letter I thought I would wait until you was here."

"Adaline sent to Boston by one of our neighbors, who is real tasty, and got me a beautiful cap, just before I came away," mentioned Mrs. Parker. "She said I 'd be likely to want it, and those I had were getting a little past; but I told her I wished she had n't. It will be just what I need, though, won't it? Rebecca was dressed real plain; but everything seemed to be of good quality. I dare say she put on what was old and would n't hurt, she had so far to come."

Miss Becky had been a little angry at being deserted; but she took a grim satisfaction in thinking Mrs. Parker's mind was not what it used to be, and when she made her appearance in the morning, entirely penitent and armed with an invitation to tea, she was forgiven in full. The tea-party was a great success, and Miss Becky was the centre of attraction. There were so many questions to be asked and answered, wherever she went; the fates and fortunes

of so many families had to be recounted for her satisfaction; and she made herself very agreeable by giving interesting reminiscences of her own life, and telling of the strange customs of some Westerners and the contrasts she noticed in the fashions of living East and West. She felt herself to be a person of great interest and consequence. You may be sure that she wore her best black silk, and that she succeeded in leaving an impression on the minister's mind of her being well posted on clerical and religious questions. She told the Annis family, complacently, as they drove home together in the two-seated wagon, after the tea-party was over, that she always felt at home with ministers and knew their ways better than she did anybody's.

Cousin Sophia was pleased at being the owner of such an attractive and satisfactory guest. "I don't think I ever saw Mr. Beacham appear to enjoy himself better," she said. "He is n't much of a talker, as a general thing; but you brought him out right off. I tell you, Rebeccy, you ought to set your cap for the parson. He is well off. We give him eight hundred dollars, and he 's got means beside. I think he 's been a widower long enough; but folks here has got tired setting their caps for him, 'less it 's old Cynthy Rush, and she 'pears to think that while there 's life there 's hope."

"He seems to be an excellent Christian man," said Miss Becky, flushing a little; but it was too dark for anybody to notice it.

"I 'm going to have him to our house to tea," said Mrs. Annis, giving her daughter a suggestive poke. "He always likes to come in strawberry time."

Annie Downs had been much amused that evening at the evident interest which Mr. Beacham and Miss Becky took in each other. It was a funny, sedate likeness of a mild flirtation between two young people. They were mindful of the respect due to their own advanced years and the proprieties of a tea-party; but they found each other very attractive. They were both fine-looking. Mr. Beacham would have been fairly imposing in even a gown and bands, but in a surplice he would have been magnificent. One longed to see him in a ruffled shirt and small-clothes, instead of his plain black garments; but his solemn countenance bore on it the stamp of ecclesiastical dignity. "Anybody would know he was a minister," said Miss Becky, decidedly, and she had had vast experience among the Western clergy.

The June days went by quickly, and Miss Parsons enjoyed her visit more and more, and felt less and less inclination to go back to her Devonport life. She had not supposed that people would be so glad

to see her; but, having once welcomed her, they never were made sorry, for our friend was really a good and pleasant person to know. The young people found her full of sympathy and kind-heartedness, and she gave a great deal of pleasure wherever she went. It was easy to see that she did not think only of how her friends greeted her and what they did for her, for she was as anxious to help and to give, in her turn, and she could be as amusing as heart could wish. There was an unfaded girlishness about her yet, in spite of the fallen snows of so many winters. She was very happy in Brookfield, and there was a companionship to be had even in the cypress-grown burying-ground, which was dearer to her than she had dreamed it would be. The people in church on Sundays soon felt as if she were again their neighbor and friend, and Mr. Beacham found himself looking often toward the Annis pew, as he preached; and he selected his best sermon the next Sunday after he met Miss Parsons, and repeated it for her benefit, and was rewarded by her telling him, as he gravely shook hands with her on his way out of church, that it reminded her of one of her dear brother's on the same text, but Mr. Beacham had expanded the subject much more fully. "You know how to make things very clear," Miss Becky said, with a sudden

brightening of her eyes and a simple frankness, that he thought extremely desirable. "It is something to be most grateful for, if a word we speak reaches and helps another struggling soul," he said, and shook hands absently with a parishioner in the next pew.

"Did you see poor Mary Ann Dean at church, to-day?" some one asked, as they drove home after meeting. And Mrs. Annis answered that she doubted if the poor soul ever got out to church again. "I have n't told you about her, have I, R'becky? She was a daughter of Susan Beckett, who used to be at your aunt's a good deal; but it may have been after you went West. She has had about the hardest time of anybody I know. Their house burnt down, and they lost most everything; and four of the family died within sixteen months. Mary Ann was left all alone, with one brother that drank like a fish, and she had to earn what she could and bear the brunt of everything. She was a good deal younger than the rest of the children. She has been failing this good while; but she would n't give up. She 's always reminded me of a flower in the road that every wheel goes over. There ain't a better young woman anywhere in Brookfield. I set everything by Mary Ann."

"I do feel sorry," said Miss Becky. "I had it on

my mind in meeting to ask you if any of Susan's folks were about here; and I noticed that poor, sick-looking girl. I'll go to see her the first of the week, if she don't live too far off, on her mother's account, if nothing else."

"It is only a little way," said Annie Downs. "I'll go with you to-morrow afternoon, if you will come along to the school-house after school, Cousin Becky."

Miss Becky was very kind to this new friend, who soon grew more ill and quite dependent upon the kindness of her neighbors, and our heroine, having no family cares, was with her a good deal for the next fortnight. Haying had begun, and it was lucky that so good a nurse was for the most of the time at leisure, since the other women were all so busy, and, indeed, at any time had their hands full with their own work.

It happened that two or three times Mr. Beacham came to visit his sick parishioner; and it must be confessed that Miss Becky did not show her usual composure in the presence of the clergy, and that she began to feel uncomfortably self-conscious and to insist upon it to herself that she took no interest in the man whatever. She openly said (feeling all the time that she might be sorry for it) that she did not

consider him gifted in prayer; but even this bold treason did not keep her heart from fluttering at the mention of his name. The Brookfield people quickly caught at the first hint, which was given by a suspicious parishioner, and one Sunday noon Miss Becky was joked a little by the people who knew her best, which was very discomposing.

So one day, late in the afternoon, the Annis family were not surprised to see the minister and Miss Becky come walking up the road together. She had been away for two or three days; but had been left at Mary Ann Dean's to spend an hour or two, on her way home, and Mrs. Annis's first thought was that the sick woman had suddenly died, and that they were coming together to consult about making some arrangements. But Annie Downs was quicker witted. "I should n't wonder if Cousin Becky had made up her mind to settle down in Brookfield," said she, with a little laugh.

Mrs. Annis hurried to the door. "Poor Mary Ann ain't gone, I hope?" she asked, anxiously; and Mr. Beacham looked confused, and answered that she seemed as comfortable as usual. "Miss Parsons and I were speaking of some theological points to which her brother gave much attention," he apologized, and everybody felt a little awkward, until

Mrs. Annis bethought herself to take refuge in her duty as hostess. "I want you to stop to tea with us, now you 're here, Mr. Beacham," she said, eagerly. "We 've been thinking of sending for you. I had some thoughts of naming Thursday. You always like our strawberries, you know."

The minister looked very pleased. "I do not know why I cannot accept your hospitality, Mrs. Annis. My housekeeper said she should be absent to-night, though she doubtless made some provision for my supper. And on Thursday I have engaged to be away."

It was nearly tea-time already; at least, there was hardly time enough to make sure that the feast would be appropriate for the guest. Mrs. Annis and Mrs. Downs and Annie all scurried to the kitchen at once, and when Mr. Daniel Annis came in from the field he was told who was there, and went at once to array himself in his Sunday clothes.

"You go in and talk to him, Daniel, and Annie or I will be in pretty quick," said Mrs. Downs. And her brother manfully tried to do his duty; but after his first greeting and report of the crops he did not know what else to say. Miss Parsons had looked much embarrassed as he entered, and soon went out to the dining-room, leaving the host and his guest to

entertain each other; and Daniel wished that some of the women would come back. He thought of the unfailing resource of all farmers, and longed to ask the minister to come out and have a look at the hogs; but, being a minister, he feared it might not be the proper thing.

Happily, Mr. Beacham himself suggested that they should take a walk down to the bee-hives, and presently they fell into easy discourse together on some parish matters. And after a little while Miss Becky reappeared, and mentioned that some one wished to see Daniel at the barn, about pressing the hay; and while he hurried back to the house our friend and the minister strolled along together slowly.

It was a pleasant old garden, and in the middle path there was a long, rickety arbor, covered thick with grape-vines. The sun was getting low; but, for all that, the shade was pleasant, and Mr. Beacham stopped for a minute, but Miss Becky was uneasy and wished he would go on.

"Since I laid away my dear companion, now seven years ago," he said, in a tone that made Miss Becky's heart thump dreadfully, "I have had no desire to fill her place in my home, solitary though it has been; but I find that I am no longer contented with my situation, and that you possess all the qualifications

to make me happy. We are not young; but the Lord may continue our lives for many years yet, and I believe that we should enjoy a united home. You already know the responsibilities and cares of a minister's life, and it seems to me unwise that you should return to the West permanently, though I do not doubt you have formed many associations which are dear to you and which it will be hard to sever. Permit me to say that you have already become very dear to me, and that I can assure you of a most heartfelt and enduring affection. I hope you will take the matter, as I have, into serious and prayerful consideration."

Miss Parsons felt for her handkerchief; but she mistook the way to her pocket, and fumbled at her dress without finding it, while the tears were ready to fall from her eyes, and Mr. Beacham and the grape-leaves and a red hollyhock that had pushed through the trellis were all in a dazzle together. She had somehow expected to have the solemn little speech followed by the benediction; but the minister stood there as if he expected her to say something. So she put out her left hand toward him, and covered her face with the other, and the handkerchief, which was found, at last, just in time. And Annie Downs, who was in the strawberry-bed not a dozen feet away,

hardly daring to breathe lest they should notice her, heard a resounding kiss, and then stole softly away among the pear-trees, and told her mother she need not be worried any more because supper would be so late.

They went on a wedding journey to Devonport, where Miss Becky was so much older than most people in town that her returning to them a bride caused great fun and astonishment; but everybody was very glad. She seemed so happy herself and she did not look a day over fifty-five. She carried back to the East some household goods that were dear to her, and she gave away the rest most generously.

But she felt very sad when she paid a last visit to her brother's grave, and as she came away she noticed some trees he had planted and tended with great care, and she felt as if she were taking a sad farewell of all her happy life with him. She was very contented in Brookfield and was looked up to by the whole parish, and she made Mr. Beacham an excellent wife; but she thought, with all her admiration for him, that, although an uncommon writer, he never could quite equal her brother's great sermon on Faith and Works. Dear Miss Becky! She often thought that her life had been most wonderfully ordered. Everything had happened just right, and

she did not see how it was that all the events of life, other people's affairs, and things that seemed to have no connection with her, all matched her needs and fitted in at just the right time. If she had come to Brookfield the year before she was sure that she should have had no temptation to stay there, though she and Mr. Beacham did seem to have been made for each other. Mr. Beacham would have said that it was the unfailing wisdom of Providence; but she wondered at it none the less and was very grateful. Perhaps her life would seem dull, and not in the least conspicuous or interesting to most people; but for the dullest life how much machinery is put in motion and how much provision is made, while to its possible success the whole world will minister and be laid under tribute.