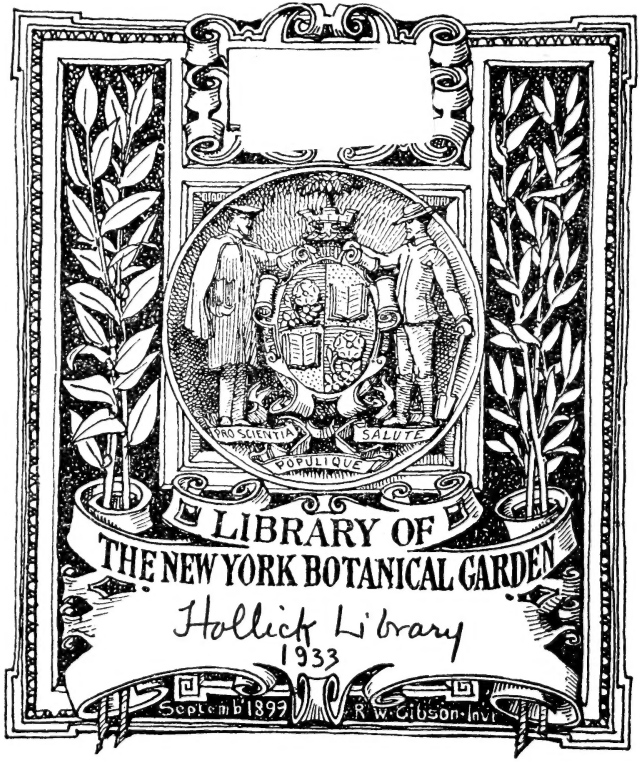
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DAYS AFIELD

ON

STATEN ISLAND

BY

WILLIAM T. DAVIS

PREFACE.

A FEW of the pages that compose this volume appeared in that short lived periodical, *The Staten Island Magazine*, but for the greater part they are records of rambles made during the past several years. Rambles that were made sometimes with Charles W. Leng, when I assisted in that happily never-to-be-ended task of discovering all the kinds of beetles that inhabit the Island, that count in their legions so many hundred species; or with Louis P. Gratacap, when we caused the hours to be memorable to ourselves by our enthusiastic joy in simply wandering afield. If it were possible for any man to give utterance to the simple beauty of a sunny day, the whole world would treasure the production, but like an artist he falls far short of the original, and gives but a faulty representation of matchless nature. We mention a hill, a field and a butterfly, but we cannot make them blend properly. Sometimes I think that he who makes no notes, is the wiser man. There is, however, certainly a fascination in simply collecting and keeping a record of the ways of beasties. One's acquaintance among them widens rapidly, yet beyond there is ever a haze. We never become thoroughly acquainted with a grasshopper or a butterfly, and in that array of plants that

inhabit the Island, individual rareties appear most unexpectedly, and prove themselves additions to that already extensive catalogue compiled by the chief clerks of our local flora.

Thus with some of the members of that collecting and tramping fraternity, of which the Island possesses a goodly number, I went afield, but more often I rambled alone. Nature seems to speak more directly to a lone rambler, and to a number of persons in company she rarely says a word. Two, at most, can tread evenly the same path, can be touched by the same sense, and echo to each other with pleasant minor changes, the influences of the way.

In character these pages are miscellaneous as were the excursions they commemorate, and they might have been much extended, but perhaps a small potion of an untried compound will be preferred by the reader. It is the fashion to condemn, and I do not expect the majority to be at variance with that mood, but perhaps to some loiterer by the hedge-rows, I may speak sincerely, and he will prize the result of my humble effort to write something of nature and old Staten Island.

W. T. D.

New Brighton.

CONTENTS.

FIRST SIGNS.

AS soon as Spring, with its leaves and flowers,
Has made field and wood-land so pleasing,
Warming alike earth's heart and ours,
And the poor little brook that was freezing
As soon as Phoebe has reared her first young
As of years under eaves protecting,
The poplar its pollen and catkins wide flung
And light, trembling leaves, perfecting.

Then we see creeping o'er Nature's bright face
The first signs of Autumn advancing,
It may be a berry ahead in the race,
Itself and its kind enhancing;
It may be a leaf turned yellow at prime,
A late butterfly early appearing,
Or it may be that beat, beat, pulse like rhyme,
A cricket to cricket a-cheering.

AFTER THE SNOW.

THERE is a continuous song in the valley to-day. The warm breath of Spring is borne on the south wind and the snow fades fast on the hillside. Everything is moving. The very road seems to be on the run, glistening in the sunlight, and a bird perching on the alder bushes jars the pollen from the catkins. It is pleasant to hear the constant warble; to get a cedar branch and lie down on it in the warm sunshine and have the little yellow flies come and make their toilet on the twigs. They rub their heads with their forelegs, until the slender necks seem nigh unto breaking. They look so comically wise, so matter-of-fact, so business-like, one is almost inclined to address them. How much does a cold, stormy day or a sunny one signify to them? It is their life or death, it is their chance. The sun hidden for even an hour behind a cloud has a greater potency in nature than we commonly credit. The rise and fall of our health and vigor—our spirits—go up and down like the mercury in a thermometer, and passing clouds, sunshine and cold, have much to do with it. So, with the flies, we must have courage, be satisfied with the hour. They rub their heads and scrape their feet in comfort, and nothing that we can do will bring us any greater advantage than this.

The crows step about circumspectly in the open. The snow-birds sing a quaint little warble. Sometimes, as if by mutual agreement, they fly from the ground where they have been hunting, to the trees, and one sees that they are on the constant watch for enemies. Their flesh-tinted bills show plainly against their slate-colored heads and upper breast, and all the day they may linger about a single patch of woods—under the pines and cedars. Their colors are intensified now; a few, perhaps from ill-health, are not quite so bright as the others. When they come to drink at a pool only six feet away, their attire seems quaintly neat. It is impressive that nature makes a thousand coats that agree in stripe and feather, and also is creative of countless variations of the same general form.

Nearly all of the pine seeds have fallen, but a few remain at the base of the cones, tucked away mid the lamellæ. These the yellow-birds discover, pull them from their hiding, take the seeds from their clasps, and the "wings" come falling down. If a cone is rapped sharply the perfect seeds tumble out, falling at first quite fast, until the rotary motion reaches its maximum, when they go spinning around, looking much like flying insects—day-flies with gauzy wings. A shot, that was perhaps aimed at a robin, falls from the cone with the seeds. It started on its journey with much noise and smoke, and now, six months after, completes its course and drops gently to the ground.

This morning the hill-side was white with the snow, but now there are only patches left, and their edges move like the hands of a clock. We look away and then look back again, after a time, and see that they have moved,

that the little white patch has shrunken, but we cannot see it done, for the "speed is but the heavy plummet's pace." An occasional beetle appears on the snow, running about in much haste, its black body showing plainly. The protective coloring is at fault there, but it resents all interference with a strong-odored, acrid secretion, which taints the fingers long afterward. The wasps fly out from their winter hiding, and seek the open places where the grass is, but they are weak, and when you come near they make several efforts, fall on their sides, and finally, with much labor, fly away.

A pair of bluebirds, looking for a home, find the old hollow tree in the field. They call constantly to each other, and the male seems to think that most any place will do. He pokes his head into a hollow and calls ardently to his mate, and when she comes he flutters about on the branch and utters an almost squeaking cry. But the madam is more particular, and flies away after a moment's examination. What a noble use nature makes of many artificial things! The wild woodbine climbs the fence and the caterpillars spin their cocoons there, or hang in chrysalis from the rails, and when a bluebird calls to its mate from a telegraph wire it bears truly a message of love. His voice is mild, and is in sympathy with the more kindly human messages that are carried unknown to him by the wire beneath his feet. He seems to have been born a gentleman, to be incapable of any meanness, and he has much of "that inbred loyalty unto virtue." You fancy that he is strictly honest, and is not on speaking terms with the wily crow.

An old man comes across the field with a hand-saw and a ladder. He talks about the day—"how sunny it is," and that he is going to cut cedar limbs for the cows; they like something green. While they come up and rub their noses against him, he tells their names: that Lesa was born on Inauguration day; that he "brought her up like a baby, fed her by hand, because her mother was sick," and that on the 4th of March this year she had her third calf. Though Lesa is trustful of him, he is plotting against her offspring, and asks concerning a butcher that might buy it, for "it is now three weeks old." Soon the application of the proper name for one of the three roan cows becomes a question, and we ask for enlightenment. "Don't you see Hannah is bigger than Jane, higher, Jane is two months older, though, and Lesa has the broken horn." The old man goes down the hill to the cedars, the cows go running after, and he every now and then slaps them with the flat of the saw, to keep them at a proper distance, and when the cedar-limb falls off its foliage is devoured with evident satisfaction.

The purple tiger-beetles fly along the wood-paths; the honey-bees congregate where the sap oozes from the stumps of trees cut down in the winter, and the damp piles of cordwood give off a strong, pleasant fragrance—'tis the odor of vegetable blood. A beautiful deep orange, black, and brown moth flies in numbers in the young growth, every now and then resting on a branch-tip, for *Brephos infans* comes on the warm days in March, with the lingering snow.

The male wood-frogs are numerous in the pools, and

their croaking sounds like a number of men calking a ship, striking at variance with one another. Or perhaps we should say that the calking of a ship sounds like the croaking of wood-frogs, for the latter is the more natural sound, and has the advantage of priority. Before Noah made his boat of gopher-wood, and Jason sailed the Ægean sea, the wood-frog sang in the Spring of the year. In the woods, a long way from the pool, a female frog comes hopping, hopping—two long leaps and then a rest. So she makes her way to the general assemblage of her kind. When you stoop to pick her up she crouches closer to the earth, and her colors are brighter now than at any other season. The red-brown is intensified, and the dark stripe on either side of the head is more marked. The majority of the males are dark mottled brown, with broader stripes on the head, but a few are of the same general color as the females. All of the spawn is deposited in a space about a yard square, and in this one pool there are over fifty of the round gelatinous masses adhering to the dead grass-stems and twigs. Soon the assemblages will disperse, and the frogs will sing no more; they will lead solitary lives until another year.

In a swamp a cardinal bird sings from a tree-top, first one and then the other of his songs: *chuck—chuck—chuck*, rendered fast, as if calling the chickens; and *hue*, *hue*, *hue*, repeated about a dozen times, bringing an echo from the opposite hill. The notes have a particular whistling sound, like a switch passed rapidly through the air, which our words cannot render, and for which the cardinal alone knows the alphabet. From the same swamp a peeper-

frog is calling, and we think of the gray December days when we heard him sing, and how all Winter he has lain securely in his cold bed.

All along the hills at sunset the song-sparrows are singing, and the *chew, chew, chew,* of the tufted titmouse sounds from the higher trees. The sparrows are numerous mid the young growth by the fences, and hide behind the close clumps of blackberry stems, or hop so rapidly as to appear to run along the ground. Though they quarrel sometimes most desperately, yet their present twitterings seem to indicate a great store of serenity, and you imagine that if you could always wander by these sunny hedgerows and through the woods, nature would also bestow upon you this same mild tone.

THE BENISON OF SPRING.

THESE Spring days, when we hear the bluebirds carol, and mark the revivifying influence of the season, we are sure to be affected thereby, and my companion smiles to see me dance beneath the pine tree. "You seem happy," he says, and yet I notice the light kindle in his own eyes, for the sunshine, the bluebirds and the robins have not come in vain to him.

What a blessing are the balmy hours of Spring! The warm sun distills a fragrance from the earth, and in the waste pastures, where there is a thick mat of vegetation, this odor is particularly strong. Nature is stirring strawberries and crickets into life. The air is full of little flies, beetles run along the roadway, dogs lay asleep on the grass and the yellow flicker sounds his rattle in the trees. Then does the light within burn brightest, and our hearts seem to beat more joyously than they have all Winter long, and we are happy and at least transiently well under the sun. Old Sol smiles at our ways; we are flies on the sunny side of a pumpkin to him, and to ourselves we know not what we are.

It is a blessing to retain the simple delights of childhood, to be easily pleased, and it is well to be affected by the greening of the earth, even though we cannot exactly mention the charm or tell why we should be glad. It is no wonder that there have been May-poles, no wonder that the shepherds of old danced about the straws in the field at the feasts of Pales, and no wonder again that my companion and I become joyous in the hopeful days of Spring.

The poet straightway goes to his garret and commences writing verses. He must, at least, have his outburst of vernal song—it, too, is one of the signs of the season. The red maples are aglow, the pussy willows invite the bees and those big burly flies, with hairy bodies, that fly with ponderous inaccuracy. The marsh marigolds spread their yellow flowers, and the hermit thrush sits silently on the trees, his shadow cast, mayhap, in some dark, leaf-laden pool.

The skunk-cabbage spathes have long had their heads above the surface, and when I see them I think of Cadmus and the dragon's teeth. They are spotted, are brown, yellow, red and olive-green, and have long twisted apices sometimes, like the ends of the caps in which fairies are occasionally depicted. Withal they have a mysterious appearance, as if the dragon's teeth were sprouting. I see where they have been dug up, for these queer mythical things are in favor on Fifth avenue. The false hellebore is also ever a surprise as it springs from among the brown dead leaves. It has so early a tropical splendor, and the Spring does not seem old enough to have given birth to such luxuriant vegetation.

We meet an old man along the road and he tells us how he's had a cold all Winter. "If I could onlv have gone South," says he, "but what can a poor man do?" But now it is Spring, and he straightens himself up and looks brighter. A dose of Spring cures many a malady. If we wait long enough the Earth transports us from the pole to the equator, and we finally get thawed. We shed our overcoats—our outermost cuticle comes off—and mayhap the moths wear it all Summer. Thus do we greet the warm days, and hope grows with the radishes in the garden.

Alas, our best health, the most robust condition that many of us ever attain, would be considered by some a state needing a doctor's care. Our ills fit us after a while like old clothes. Life hangs by a thread, and even that is seldom a whole one. Several of its strands are commonly broken; we patch them together and put a porous plaster over the weak spot. Thus do we live, being half dead.

But Spring is a blessing; we become more sprightly than usual, and he must be old and miserable, indeed, who does not glow a little when he sees the violets, the anemones, the adders' tongues, and hears the sweet cadence of the field sparrow's song. Why is it that they look up to Heaven when they sing? I suppose it may be explained in some mundane way that will give no credit to spiritual feelings; but certainly it is a pretty form of the chippie's and of this bunting of the pastures.

I must not forget the dandelions that star the grass all over, for they are truly the flowers of our balmy days, and, indeed, they are not happy if the sun does not shine, for

they keep their bright yellow faces from dark and sullen skies. Again, when the Spring is gone, and Summer is gone, and the trees glow with their crimson leaves, or, mayhap, have lost them entirely, how cheering is the bright yellow face of the dandelion, as it nestles on its short stem in some sheltered nook! It hugs the earth then, as if it suspected Winter, and does not grow as fearlessly as the spring-time flower.

But we must hasten back to Spring, for indeed it is in haste itself, and will be too quickly passed. My companion says: "Do not let us have June right away, for then it is July and then Autumn, and then our year is gone." So we hasten back to Spring, to the blood-root blossoms, to the arbutus and the bluets.

The rhubarb comes up quite gaily in the garden and commences to spread its elephant-eared leaves. It is true it has been peeping forth this long time, seeing, perhaps, whether it was safe to come yet; but the early days of April in this clime bid no plant trust in the morrow. So it has been content to wait, and it is only just now that it has decided to push upward its rose-colored stalks. But the old pear-tree has a greater show, and, I believe, if a man could live two hundred years and retain his eyesight, he would stand every Spring to admire the pageant of blossoms. It has looked dull and half-dead all Winter, and you might have cut it down for firewood, but now it seems a sacrilege to break even one of its branches. The warblers come and tarry among its blossoms, and help, with their bright colored bodies, to make a more splendid show.

How gaudy Nature is! Mankind would fain bedizen itself with the most splendid attire, but it only manages to steal a little of her magnificent raiment. With the onrush of spring blossoms come the gaily-decked hats, the bees even mistaking them occasionally for Nature's flowers, such pains have been taken to imitate her; but alas you may sometimes see an Autumn blossom peeping forth from the wealth of cowslips. I know that Cybele and Ceres do now and then get sadly mixed, do bring forth willow-pussies, dandelions, violets and other Spring flowers in December and January, and the old pear-tree occasionally produces a few blossoms in October, so I suppose the human sisters of Flora and her kin are amply excused for jumbling the seasons.

There is a happy languor that accompanies the days of Spring, and people loll in the sun or sit lazily on the piazza, and then stretch themselves like the pussy that has taken her nap before the fire. This pleasant tiredness is called "spring fever," and would that our ailments were all so welcome. It was the only disease known in the garden of Eden during the spring-time of our race, and with our love for the beautiful in nature, is a heritage from that golden age.

The greening of Spring is certainly the nearest we know to an absolute creation, so many things are new about us. The old year and its countless predecessors are back of it all no doubt, yet the new dress covers the old so skillfully that the brown and dead leaves and decaying branches that bestrew the ground do not seem to intrude upon the scene.

My companion has told me in Spring that he has seen the little blue butterflies, has told it as a piece of news, as one of those signs of the season for which we watch and wait. Of all the tokens these little blue butterflies, flitting among the yellow flowered benzoin bushes, touch the sense of our joy in the season most deeply, unless, indeed, it may be those first twitterings of swallows. They are truly divine birds and do make the season glad, and the farmer hails them with pleasure when they return to his barn. They speak, in their ways, a pleasant trustfulness that is flattering to cold-hearted man, of whom so many innocent creatures are so justly afraid. They fly in and out of the open barn-door and about the house, and show by their marvelous flights how easily they could be away, yet they return again to man's protection. I am afraid that the joy the swallows bring, as they come with the genial days, cannot be set down in commonplace words. When I see them fly and hear their twitter, it seems to me that I am not half expressive enough; there is something still to say, and I look in strange bewilderment, realizing an ever-unutterable influence.

SOUTH BEACH.

THERE is but one short stretch of sandy beach on Staten Island, from which the shore rambler may see the line where sky and ocean meet; in all other directions the view is bounded by New Jersey or Long Island, and the waves come more gently to the shore.

It was along this South Beach that in 1676 Jasper Dankers and Peter Sluyter wandered, the place being quite a wilderness then, and their description of the herds of deer, the wild turkeys and geese, cause one to-day to read the account several times over, so interesting is the narrative. They visited the Oude Dorp and the Nieuwe Dorp; made leg-wearying journeys around the creeks that reach far inland, and found great difficulty in climbing the steep tree-covered bank where Fort Wadsworth now stands. No longer, indeed, do the moss-bunkers lie dying by the thousands, as they describe, "food for the eagles and other birds of prey," for though it might seem improbable to those not interested in the matter, yet it is true that not only do the land animals fall year by year before advancing civilization, but the life that ocean would seem to hold so securely, is also being gradually stolen away.

When Thoreau lived on Staten Island in 1843, residing with Mr. William Emerson on the Richmond road, he rambled on this shore, and he tells us about the dogs that used to bark at him as he tramped along. He says: "I used to see packs of half-wild dogs haunting the lonely beach on the south shore of Staten Island, in New York Bay, for the sake of the carrion there cast up; and I remember that once, when for a long time I had heard a furious barking in the tall grass of the marsh, a pack of half a dozen large dogs burst forth on to the beach, pursuing a little one, which ran straight to me for protection, and I afforded it with some stones, though at some risk to myself; but the next day the little one was the first to bark at me."

Mr. Aug. R. Grote, the naturalist, and author of some pleasing poems, says in his "Check-List of North American Moths": "What a range of thought one can run over catching butterflies along the hedgerows. I come back to my first surprise, when, as a boy, I caught Cicindelas on the south beach of Staten Island. I saw that there were numerous questions hanging about unsolved as I was bottling my captures."

Though these tiger-beetles still fly on the South Beach, each July seeing their return, yet the scene has changed considerably. Indeed we cannot ramble along the same shore that Dankers and Sluyter and Thoreau did, for the beach of a hundred, or even of fifty, years ago is now far out under the waves. It has been estimated that each century brings with it about twenty inches depression, and owing to the flat character of the country, many acres of

woodland and field have been washed away. History says the Elm Tree lighthouse received its name from a tree of this kind growing, in 1840, beyond the end of the present dock, which extends about four hundred feet into the water. On an old map, published in 1797, this tree is depicted as one of the landmarks, and before the days of the lighthouse it served to guide vessels into the harbor. On the map is written this inscription beside the figure of the tree: "Large Elm tree Standing by the Shore a Mark for Vessels leaving and going from New York to Amboy, Middletown and Brunswick." Further along the shore we have been shown two cedars in front of which the old men used to play ball when boys, but the trees now stand near the edge of the bank, which is crumbling away a little each year.

It was not long ago that the boulevard was built, a little up from the high-tide mark, and New Creek was bridged, but in many places only a trace of the road now remains. New Creek is very erratic as regards at least a portion of its course, and previous to the winter of 1883–84 emptied a quarter of a mile or more to the southwest of its present mouth. There was a great point formed by its winding course, on which the ribbed Pecten shells occurred in numbers. Each year this point grew longer, until at last the stream flowed so slowly that in the winter mentioned it froze up, and the upland became flooded. When spring came the water broke through straight to the ocean, and now another point is being slowly formed.

In 1797 the creek is portrayed as emptying straight to

the ocean, without any accompanying point, but on the maps of 1850, 1859, and 1872, the point is shown. On the old map already referred to a line of trees is depicted near the mouth of the creek, and probably there was a considerable wood there. Now there remains a clump of cedars, and the dead post oaks are ranged in rows, and branches that belonged to trees of the same kind may be pulled out of the peat, that in places forms little cliffs. This peat was originally formed when the present shore was a part of a salt meadow, and in its way is very interesting, for it offers a secure retreat to many a tender-shelled mollusk and timid crab. Pieces of it are constantly being broken off, and roll with ceaseless roll, until they mimic the most approved forms of the baker's loaves. Cedar trees may also be seen dead or dying, their trunks buried a foot or more in the sand, or the soil washed away from their roots, which sprawl in a ghastly fashion mid dead crabs and the wrecks of things that the ocean has thrown away. What a marvelous hoard of dead creatures the sea casts up to the land! Many poor mussels that seemed securely anchored in the morning, ere night are dying on the shore. It seems useless to throw them back, for the waves, with a roar, bring them again and cast them at your feet.

On Winter tramps I meet the crows looking for cast up treasures, and their success oftentimes is greater than my own; for many a fine "lady crab" or "decorator" have I mourned over—sighed for the lost leg or missing "apron." The gulls, too, rejoice at the death of the crab, and in Winter they frequent in numbers the sandy points,

from which they rise with weird screams. They often sit motionless in rows at low water line, apparently many of them asleep, and when the tide rises they float on the waves in nearly the same place where they were standing before. A few of their cries sound remarkably like some one hoisting a sail with the aid of a creaking pulley, and I have several times been deceived thereby, and have looked about expecting to find a mariner close in shore.

Of all the shells that line the shore, mid "gingle shells," that rattle with a metallic sound, and "boat shells," whose inner coloring is equal to anything in nature's art, there is one of curious shape and delicate marking called the shell of Pandora. Three faint lines radiate from one end of the hinge over the pearly surface, and the valves are generally found together, resisting storm and waves. There is a little space between, for they are not usually tightly closed, but Hope being so great a thing is still held as captive. Thus is this shell most aptly named, and we peer within to see what may be hidden there, and in the grains of sand are our hopes and our fortunes portrayed, for perhaps to the world the one is as important as the other.

On cold Winter days, as well as in Summer, a blind man comes out, and, with a long stick feels carefully for the drift wood. Oftentimes the small boys collect sticks, and placing them in his path, watch him find them.

A hermit came to the shore a few years ago and built his house of drift wood on the sand near the bridge, covering it with old tin and putting one small pane in the front for a window. With the fish he catches, the gulls and ducks that he shoots, and what can be found on the beach, he

gets a living, and pays no taxes. "A fellow must do something," says he, "and so I came here and built my house. I used to live over on Long Island." In the morning the sun comes up from the sea in front of his door, and at evening it sinks behind the western hills; but no man comes to disturb the hermit. He is a stranger to the rush and the set tasks of the world, and he is free, where many are fettered.

Of drift wood there is no end, neither is there of old shoes, mousetraps, brooms and all other household utensils. Even coal and metal objects are washed ashore. I found a table one day, with a full complement of legs, and a friend discovered a coffee pot, cover and all, and with a blameless bottom. One might become quite a connoisseur in bottles, for the Frenchman, the German, the Italian and the Irishman each throws his bottle overboard, and coming ashore they mix with the American bottles on the beach. So various in shape and general appearance are they that one readily falls to giving them supposed qualifications, such as phlegmatic, sanguine and bilious bottles. I have seen those that looked ill though full of medicine, and they are certainly often very blue. Some have contained "St. Jacob's Oil for man and beast," and others of a very odd shape that appear to have more difficulty in standing than most bottles, often protrude from the pockets of amateur fishermen.

There is nothing with which the waves seem to take more sport than with an empty barrel, and if the wind be high its bouncings and tossings are wild and fantastic. It rolls down the beach to meet the incoming wave, and

then, mid the foam, is sent on its journey up the strand again. There is no scarcity of barrels on the beach, and on Crooke's Point, which might be called the Cape Cod of Staten Island, they form the sides of the well. Several have been placed one above the other in the sand, and fresh water accumulates at the bottom.

All fruits in their season find their way hither, and ocean lays things side by side in strangest contrast. A loaf of bread, some withered flowers, an old straw bed on which, perhaps, a sailor died, often lay close together. Maybe he took some of the nostrums contained in the bottles scattered about, and they introduced his spirit to the unknown shore.

Thus, when we wander along this sandy South Beach, and see our foot-prints and think of the strange vagaries that beset us, as Hawthorne did on his ramble along the shore, other things come crowding before us too, and we look at the houses, the bulkheads, the line of the proposed railway, and think of the deer and wild turkeys in the days of Dankers and his friend. Do we not then conclude that however desirable civilization and all that it brings may be, yet its presence in no way tends to beautify the scene.

* * *

And now the years have sped on, a great portion of the beach is changed, the long stretch of uninhabited strand has been curtailed. Pleasure seekers abound on the Summer days, and there is a laugh, a gayety, a gentle splashing in the water, and a rumbling of the railroad trains.

The unconscious sand is held at great price, and the tiger beetles have been banished to further along the shore. Waiters rush about with their trays, where once the crows devoured the lady crabs, and the crowd is as lithesome and gay as were the sand-fleas of old.

There are as many footsteps on the sand as on a city pavement, and it is plain that it is not the beach, but the people, that form the chief attraction—they come to see one another. A stretch of the strand is their meeting-place, while all beyond is vacant, where only a few fishermen or lone wanderers find enjoyment.

There is a particular type that discovers the beach most congenial. Here his favorite beverage abounds, and he enjoys himself hugely all day long. He is possessed of much rotundity of person, his eyes are bulging, he is quite certain he knows all about the world. His philosophy is, that we live a little while, but are a long time dead. He bets that he can throw a ring over a cane, or can hit the bull's eye in the target, or one of the little tin birds that are ever going round. The publicity of the whole matter is what pleases him, and when he rides the deer or the polar bear, in the merry-go-round, he waves joyously to the crowd, and claps his hands to the music of the organ behind the screen.

That wonderful cow with a tin udder, that curiously enough fills her body to the exclusion of heart and lungs and other less important matters, is very attractive. He steps up and has some ice-cold milk, for this bovine is providently organized for summer weather.

Someone bets him that he cannot send the weight in the

sledge-machine up to the bell, and he bets he can. He grasps the heavy hammer confidently, and for once he is right; before his vigorous strokes the weight flies up and the bell rings. After all of that exercise he does not resort to the wonderful cow, but celebrates his success with lager beer.

At night he goes home supremely happy; he sings on the cars, and even dances a little. Mayhap the conductor comes by and holds a quiet talk with the merrymaker, but the official only produces a momentary quiet.

The simple blithesomeness of such a soul—the boyish manhood—is not without its pleasing aspect, and sometimes it is accompanied by an entertaining personality of no mean order. Once while the train lay in the station, the passengers crowding the smoker and the car adjoining, a jolly party sang their songs. One large man sang "Climbing up the Golden Stairs" in German, and with one accord two car-loads of passengers ceased speaking, there was a perfect hush while he sang, such was the power of sweet sounds.

In September, 1889, the swells of the sea visited the "hotels" in person, and few of the houses escaped without damage, some of them having their broad piazzas taken away, for such was the rollicking dance of Neptune's company. After nearly a week of dark and sullen skies, when the sun seemed to have forgotten the earth, it came at last, struggling through the clouds, and the workmen appeared in numbers on the beach, and engaged themselves in repairing the damage caused by the breakers. Among them was a young man with staring dark eyes,

that protruded far from his head, and had hardly a human expression. There was more of the white visible than of the colored iris, and the effect was ghastly—he looked to have the soul of a demon. He was in a hole, adjusting a post beneath a tottering bathing house, and I and another man approached—I from curiosity to see the wild eyes, which I had noticed on my way up the beach, and he to inspect the progress of the work. But those frightful eyes were truthful windows to a soul, and their possessor demanded, with an oath, what we had come to see.

Beyond New Creek much of the old time quietness still remains; we may ramble as of yore and sniff the salt breeze, and make a quiet loitering inspection of that wondrous hoard of wreck that ocean has flung to the land. The great value of these free gifts of the sea have always been taken account of, and in the days of the Revolution, in the announcement of the sale of the Seaman farm, the beach and its wealth are not forgotten. The property is described as "a valuable plantation that did belong to Mr. Jaquis Poilloin, deceased, containing 190 acres, exclusive of the beach and flats on the front of the said farm, which will be included in the purchase, on which comes great quantities of seaweed (a very valuable manure)."

Even in the days of summer I have rambled for miles without meeting anyone—have gone in bathing and sat on a log and ate my lunch while I dried, the warm, gentle breezes blowing about me. One day as I came upon the beach from the meadows there were heavy black clouds in the south, and a distant sound of thunder. Soon the sun

was hidden, and there were flashes of lightning. I hastened, and, getting a few boards together, made a little shed against a log, under which I placed my clothes—then I went into the water. Soon the waves rose white-capped, and I came ashore; a small boat in the distance drew down its sails and lowered its anchor. The sand was blown so swiftly before the gale that it stung my unprotected back; then there came a lull, and then the rain—a gentle summer shower. The drops pelting down on me seemed cold, and they dug little pits in the sand, striking it with much force. So long have we had umbrellas, coats or sheepskins, and dwelt in houses, that to stand thus unprotected in even a summer shower, is a memorable experience. Anon the sun burst forth, and quickly dried the sand and me; and to look over the placid scene one would have thought it unlikely that a few moments before the leaves had been wrenched from the trees. The black clouds went sailing off in the distance, the small boat drew up its anchor and spread its sails, and the grasshoppers sang again in the meadow.

The coming in and going out of the tide gives an extra interest to the shore, and he that lives by adjusts much of his daily employment to its rise and fall. He may go out in the morning and find a chair or a neat little boat cast up at his door, or maybe some poor fish that missed his reckoning, and was thrown on the sand in consequence. There is ever a newness, and you stand by expecting something, just as the fishermen do who look in the direction in which they cast their lines, though they can see nothing but the waves. I have noticed that when

dogs are seated on the beach they generally look seaward, too, and will often sit watching the horizon for a long time.

About thirty species of mollusks may commonly be collected upon the beach, though many more have actually been found there. The large collections of shells and little stones, which are held together by the silken cords with which the edible mussel attaches itself to all objects within its reach, are fruitful places for research when cast upon the shore, and there may be found the greatest number of prizes. Also the large native sponges, that come rolling in with the waves, contain many shells and other animals that find in them protection and a home.

In a few days thousands of shells of one species will sometimes be cast ashore, and next week it may be a school of fish or a countless multitude of crabs. Thus have I seen the shore for long distances so covered with the recently cast up shells of the sea, or skimmer clam, that it was impossible to walk without crushing them. The mole-crab is also occasionally thrown ashore in great numbers, forming a definite line along the beach where they have been left by the highest wave.

It was the large shells of the skimmer clam that were tied to sticks by the Indians, and used as hoes.

In September there are many kinds of fish in the creek—young bluefish, killifish, and pipefish—each kind in schools, and on the unprotected shore there is a certain little fish with a silvery band on its side that swims in the shallow water, going in and out with the waves. It comes so close to the dry beach that I have succeeded in capturing it with my insect net, which I slapped down upon

it as if it had been a butterfly. Further out from the shore there are often large schools of fish, that make the water dark for a space, and which may be individually distinguished as they are momentarily raised in a swelling wave above the general level of the sea.

Many sandpipers run along the beach at certain seasons, just at the edge of the waves, and sometimes the zig-zag of their motions is remarkable. They look like little dancing-machines, their movements are so rapid, and they turn at such sharp angles in their pursuit of the sandhoppers. It is fatal for a sand-flea to have rheumatism. One stormy day I particularly observed four of these birds standing in shoal water, and occasionally running their bills into the sand. The tide was out, and they appeared to be less active than usual, but stood about, scratched their heads with their wet feet, preened their feathers, and looked like four old men in gray coats standing solemnly together, with their heads pulled down between their shoulders. One of the number had but a single leg, but he nevertheless got about quickly, and seemed well-grounded and sure-footed. He would stand where the incoming wave washed against him, and I could not detect that he even so much as rocked on his frail support. The surviving leg was slanted under his body from left to right, so as to make the center of gravity fall in the proper place. One often hears the reports of guns by the meadow-creeks and on the shore, and sees the little clouds of smoke curl upward. It was thus that the sandpiper lost his leg, but the rest of his body was fortunate enough to fly away. In these days of pensions, what is he to receive?

The fishermen stand in a line along the beach, or sit on empty barrels, or old baskets, or boxes, and often they support their poles on uprights, and anxiously watch for them to bend. They busy themselves about the fire, and while one watches the poles another collects drift-wood to feed it. Their lunch is spread out near by, and they dig a hole in the sand wherein to put the apples and tomatoes, thus keeping them from rolling down the beach. The fire, with its crackle and blue curling smoke, and the captured fish lying by, all remind you of a primitive simplicity, and indeed it is this desire to live close, at least for one day, to the essentials of a natural life that prompts many of the men to visit the sea-shore. When seen at a distance, the smoke from the fires tones admirably with the ocean tints, and gives a pleasing haziness to the surroundings. Occasionally the fires are made against a big beam, or a pile, that has broken loose and drifted ashore, and these immense pieces of wood becoming ignited, burn with a dull sullenness long after the rest of the fire has gone out. These are pleasant places to tarry on the cold days, when the wind blows across the meadows from the north, and you may even sit on the beam and hang your hands over, near the glowing embers. The fire imparts an indescribable character to the wood; the beam that smokes seems to be essentially different from the others along the shore, and you discover yourself regarding it as half alive. But be very circumspect as to the logs, the driftwood, and pieces of old vessels, that you sit upon. On the warm days different substances—tar, pitch, resin, and their various combinations which give to a vessel a peculiar and

not unpleasant odor—stew out of these logs that lay on the hot sand. Though it is very easy to sit down upon them, yet it is not so easy often to get away at the precise moment you desire, and for a time you are like Theseus or Pirithous on the wayside stone in the land of Shades.

When the tide is low, the peat-cliffs, that rise a yard or more above the sand below their perpendicular fronts, form convenient stations from whence the fishermen cast their lines. The placid and shallow pools that remain between the tides on the peat-beds are most transparent, and usually some living creature is entrapped in the larger of them, and has to await the return of the waves to regain his liberty. There are also many sea-weeds in the pools that deck them out in bright array, and while you peer in at the marvels that are hidden there you may hear the water splashing in a miniature fall over the peat-cliff, as the pool is gradually drained away. The peat is not over a foot or two thick in most places, and under it is a layer of clay containing innumerable water-worn pebbles. Many of them are of brown sandstone, and it is from this source that the pebbles that line the immediate upshore come, and from which much of the beach to the eastward is entirely free. There is also a great number of edible mussel shells at this part of the shore, and they crackle under your feet as you walk along, and here it is that the crows pay regular visits, for the mussels and soft-shell clams are favorites with them. Not only do the empty shells lie about the logs high on the beach, where the crows have taken them, but they are also found far inland, in the most central portions of the island. Some-

times in the midst of the ferns and woodland vegetation, when you least expect to find a denizen of the sea, you come upon the empty valves of a soft-shell clam. An interesting feature connected with the life-history of this clam is the effect which the character of the beach exerts upon the shells. On the sandy shore, where the resistance is not great and about equal in all directions, the shells are thin and evenly developed, and are often very beautiful in form and color; but on the rocky shores of the island, where the conditions are not so favorable, the shells are distorted to fit the apertures in which they have grown. On the peat they are even more deformed than on the stony shore, and there are also many of a rounded form, the peat acting as a hard-pan, preventing them from burying deeply, and the constant scraping along its surface of drift material breaks the upper ends of the shells. The ribbed mussel also abounds in places on the peat, and I have sometimes found it difficult to secure perfect specimens, owing to the shells being broken on the edges from the cause already mentioned.

In several places on the surface of the peat there are evidences of ditches having been dug in years agone; perhaps most of them were made when the shore was a portion of the meadow. In a few instances they may be property lines, and not originally constructed for the more ordinary purpose of drainage. Now they are washed by the waves, the "property" is gradually being devoured, and they serve as channels wherein the sea may swash and swirl in that menacing playfulness that is often its mood.

Gradually the incoming tide forces the fishermen who are not protected by rubber boots, or who have not discarded artificial coverings to their feet, to seek the drier up-shore, and it is then, while the waves break in the cavernous recesses that they have worn in the face of the low cliffs, that the little fires of drift-wood are most welcome.

In certain localities wild beans grow in abundance on the up-shore, beyond the reach of the tide, and in September a great number may be gathered in a short time. The Indians picked them when they were here, and cooked them in their earthen vessels, and I, in these later days, have cooked them also. They have a curious tang—a concentrated bean flavor—but are not distasteful, and if it were not for Limas, the Valentines and the other cultivated varieties, we would be glad to get the wild Phaseolus.

At the commencement of the Point, and in places before you get so far along the beach, the shore is higher at the flood-tide mark than the contiguous meadows, and every now and then in the Spring and Fall, and occasionally during storms at other seasons, the waves wash entirely over the beach. There is in consequence a bank of sand—a sort of sandy wave that gradually rolls over the low-lying meadows, and you may see the cedar-trees standing dead, and, as it were, knee-deep in the sandy inundation.

In one place on the shore there stands a few cedar and cultivated cherry trees in a row, and they probably mark the site of an old fence, but all other evidences of the line are now obliterated by the sand. Where there is a growth of smilax, small cedars or any other thick and low vegeta-

tion, it will for a short time protect the meadow immediately behind it, and thus occasionally there is a low place on the upland side of one of these clumps, where the cat-tails still grow, while all about it will be sand.

The line is generally well defined between this barren waste and the fertile meadow, and close to its threatening edge grow the golden-rods and asters, whose roots by next year will probably be deeply buried. The purple and the green stemmed stramoniums find the sandy wastes to their liking, and particularly just along its edge often grow luxuriantly. The beach-grass follows the sand, and the little tufts that spring from the subterranean rhizoma all stand in a row and look like some queer feathery little soldiers marching across a sandy desert. There are sometimes quite complete circles described about these clumps of grass that stand alone, for being buffeted about by the wind, marks are left in the sand of their furthest reach in every direction. Some days the wind roars across the beach, and if you have a companion you must needs put your head close to his and shout loudly in order to make him hear. Then the sand is lifted off the up-shore, where it is dry, and comes flying against your face, and it does not do to turn the eyes in the direction from whence it comes. If the wind is from the north or northwest the spray from the waves is blown seaward again in great clouds, the gulls clang their doleful cries, and there is a grim seriousness in the scene that lives long in the memory. The hills, viewed from the shore across the intervening lowland, give you the impression of life, as if somehow the ridge that you saw in the distance was the dorsal

crest of some monstrous beast. It seems to be quietly slumbering there; to be dark and gray in Winter and in Spring to suddenly change its color, like a chameleon.

The wind also blows the sand off the deposits of black and slightly cemented iron-sand. These sheets are very thin and brittle, and it is seldom that one of any considerable size can be lifted by the hand from the place where it was formed.

On the Point there are many cedars, and near the house once stood a number of Lombardy poplars; but they have nearly all been cut down. It is said that the wind made too much noise "roaring in their branches;" they were so high and lithe that they responded to every breeze, and so ailanthus trees were planted near the house and the poplars felled. There are some very old bay bushes that have grown twelve feet high and proportionally robust in trunk, and under them the fowls congregate. The rooster may crow ever so lustily on the Point, and only be answered by the dismal cry of a seagull, for all the tones of defiance from the mainland come attempered by the breeze, and the chanticleers themselves would not know what to think of the far-away sound. Even the European or English sparrows do not often make their way thither, but the native song-sparrow is quite domestic, and hops about among the hen-coops or perches on their tops.

Years ago a few cultivated blackberry bushes grew near the house, and when in fruit they were tied with dangling shingles. Some poor catbird, in passing over the Point, always found these few bushes most tempting and tarried awhile—hence the shingles. Rabbits, too, frequent

the vicinity, and in Winter, after the ground is covered with snow, their tracks are innumerable. But one rabbit is very industrious in track-making, and it is surprising how many places he has a mind to visit, thus leading you to believe that a great number have been about the hen-coops.

The dunes on the Point run parallel and near to the shore on the south side, and it is pleasing to walk through the little vales that separate them. Often the evening primroses are conspicuous there, and the lowly camphor weed, the prickly pear and the gray and sombre *hudsonia* find favored situations. But I should not call the *hudsonia* gray and sombre, for though it appears during eleven months of the year that the earth has brought forth a grizzly and shaggy coat that seems about to wither and die away, yet in June and the latter part of May it decks itself in yellow blossoms, and shows that latent vitality that is ever so surprising in nature. *Syneda graphica*, a pretty moth, with marbled wings of yellow, of gray and of brown, frequents these patches of *hudsonia* twice a year, for its caterpillars probably feed upon it, and *Utetheisa bella*, that orange and white moth, with showy pink hind wings, also flies in numbers in the vicinity.

The beach-plums are a great attraction to a shore rambler, and the bay-berries to the white-breasted swallows that congregate on the Point in great flocks. It is believed to be a weather sign, this vast gathering of birds, for it is said that when the swallows visit the bay-berry bushes a storm is near. The branches of the bay often bend under their united weight, and the dark glossy blue of their backs make the group resplendent in color. On other portions

of the island they may, in the late Summer and Fall days, be seen winging their way shoreward in the morning, flying irregularly as if catching insects by the way, and at evening the flocks return northward. It is nothing for a swallow to feed on the bay-berries by the sea shore and fly far inland to roost.

You would hardly suspect, in walking along the sand, that many of the clumps of bay bushes were connected one with another by subterranean branches; but when this is once discovered it will also be observed how they, like the tufts of beach grass, often stand in line. These root-stocks are most marvelously contorted and interlaced, and it is no uncommon matter to find one that has doubled completely on its course. They are covered with a silvery yellow bark, like that at the base of the white birches, and many of them are over two inches in diameter and extend a number of feet, giving rise, as has already been said, to several clumps of upright, leaf-bearing branches. Thus do the bay bushes stand together in the sandy waste, and as the waves eat into the dunes, those that are furthest inland support for a little while the outermost member of their group.

There is a very thin subsoil of a blacker hue than the sand, and it is the highway to which many of the roots adhere. When the ocean covers it with several feet of cast-up shells and sand, and a pit has been dug into these several layers, then does the narrow black seam and its accompanying roots show most plainly.

Hawks fly about slowly over the dunes, close to the tops of the bushes. Mice are ever running in and out among the tussocks of grass, and the silent winged hawk

steals upon them unawares. Then, too, the great blue herons visit the unfrequented meadows, and stand sentinel there. The white herons used to come also, and the farmers and fishermen will tell you about them; but now they have ceased to visit the shore, or, at most, are a great rarity. Though the herons are imposing, and you feel that the earth still has a great bird when you see them fly, yet those ever busy, cawing crows, that meddle with the meadow hen's eggs, and incur the scoldings of the marsh wrens, are of more general interest. It is said that they used to be seen in vast numbers flying to their roost among the cedars on Sandy Hook. That in its day was one of the great crow roosts of the vicinity.

There are several wrecks along the beach, not those of recent years, but remains of old crafts that went to pieces long ago. What with the gradual washing away of the shore and the ever-busy sandmen, who land their schooners and sail away with portions of the Point, these wrecks have been exposed. I have stood in wonderment on the old water-worn sides of one of these hulks, whose iron bolts, eroded by time, encrusted the planking for many inches about their heads with a cement of iron, of pebbles and of sand; and the planking itself was eaten and worn and carved by the sea. Those feathery little sea plants that seem so incapable of withstanding the force of the waves, and yet are really so tough and strong, floated in the incoming tide; and the port-holes, through which murderous cannon had once shown their iron faces, looked peaceful enough, manned by barnacles and fringed by the soft, waving green weeds.

Perhaps it was in the days of the Revolution when this cruiser went ashore, and HYLER, that tormenter of the British stationed on the island, was responsible for her destruction. But it is just as likely to have been the other way, for the old wreck and the waves can tell nothing of the fortunes of war.* No doubt they were rough, brawling men who manned this war vessel—men who lived to eat, to drink, to fight and to swear; but they were hardly tougher customers than those who sail the sand-boats of to-day. Great brawny fellows are many of these, that absorb nearly as much fresh oxygen and sunlight through their skins as a Hottentot, for they wear in Summer hardly more clothes than the African. A flannel shirt and drawers, that are often sieve-like in character, complete their apparel, and, bare-footed and bare-headed, they wheel the sand aboard the schooners, and for each voyage they receive five dollars. The captain, perhaps, is slightly fuller dressed and may own the boat; if not, he receives seven dollars per trip. At half-tide they get the schooner close in to the shore, and place wooden horses from the vessel's side to the up-beach, and on these planks are laid. It is the custom for the captain, if he works, to walk off first, with his wheelbarrow, followed by the crew, and when the captain's barrow is full it is expected that each man will have his fully laden also, so that he may precede the captain up the plank. Thus, while the men dig, they keep an eye to the skipper, and lag or hasten as the exigencies of

* What remained of this wreck was broken up in the storm of October, 1890. At the same time great changes were wrought in the shifting sand of the beach.

the situation seem to demand. It takes them commonly five or six hours, according to the number of the crew and the size of the vessel, to complete the cargo.

If they do not intend to pay for the sand, that is, have the amount collected from the vessel in New York, where she is usually registered, the crew is large, and they lay several planks from the schooner to the up-shore, and work with the greatest diligence. One day I came upon a crew of this description, and overheard their comments as I approached, one of them declaring that I looked remarkably like a missionary. A member of the group had a guilty conscience, and I heard the others rallying him that I had come to spy him out. As it was late in the Fall they had donned their coats, but that same party-colored, harlequin-like attire worn in Summer was still in vogue, and one long-legged, thin fellow, with vermilion drawers and black coat, was particularly conspicuous as he walked up the plank.

It is related that a German, who lived down the beach some years ago, seeing the sand-boatmen wheeling his property aboard, went to collect the dollars that he thought were due him. But the sand-men didn't view it in the same way, and, calling him a Dutchman, with flourishes, whacked him severely with their shovels, until he was glad to part with his sand and their blows.

While waiting for the tide, the crews that have finished loading walk about the beach, split wood or lie on the sand, and if another sloop is being laden nearby, as sometimes happens, they watch the proceeding with evident interest. Then do they talk of what pleases them in life and what

they regard as its unpleasantries, the merits of the schooners, the captains and such matters. Above all do they discuss the purchasing power of the five dollars they are about to receive, when applied to the market value of beer and whiskey. A flaxen-haired giant of this description, who might have played with us as Otus or Ephialtes, for his muscles stood out large and strong, stood on the beach one day and lamented, in terms that would fill this page with dashes, the fact that he was minus all cash. A good specimen of anything—a resplendent flower, or even a big toad—is pleasant to gaze upon, and so this muscular youth, with his vivacious glances and rollicking ways, was a vigorous scion of the race, and admirable for his hardihood.

Such characters, no doubt, were the buccaneers of old days, who sailed the sea about the Point and landed on the shore, and who, it is said, buried money on the banks of Bass Creek. Perhaps even the burly, copper nosed Yan Yost Vanderscamp and his roistering followers from the "Wild Goose," at Communipaw, landed on this strand.

About eighteen hundred and twenty or thirty, men came for several successive years at Christmas time, and taking sight from a rock exposed at low-water, dug a long trench, and it is believed that they finally found the treasure, for remnants of tarred canvas and pieces of an old box were discovered in the trench which they had dug.

Crooke's Point was formerly known as Brown's Point, and on the old map of the island, already referred to, it is denominated a "Beach of Sand." Bass Creek is laid down on this and subsequent maps as of considerable proportions, but now only vestiges of it remain, it being nearly

obliterated by the sandy waves. This old map also makes the Point about three-eighths of a mile at its greatest breadth; but it is much less than that now, and, ere long, it will be "Crooke's Island," instead of Point. The waves have left but a narrow neck of sand only two or three yards wide in one place, and over this they often wash to the reedy meadows that lay between the beach and the Great Kill.

There are several lanes that lead from the upland across the meadows to the shore, and muddy, swaley roads are they. The cattails grow high at their sides, and nearer to the shore the taller varieties of salt meadow grass. One of these long, straight lanes, ditched on either side, has always left a pleasing memory picture, with the several hummocks over which it passed, where stood the gnarled wind-torn apple-trees, and where grew a few cabbages surrounded by a fence. I never saw anybody working there, and they might have been grown by the sea-gods or by some wild man of the moors, for all that appeared to the contrary. From my seat under the haystack I could see a lone tree in the distance, that bore a crow's nest in its branches, and the occasional splashing of a musk-rat in the creek nearby, the chirp of a song-sparrow or the squeak of a meadow mouse, indicated the life that was near. The shad-frogs are common on the meadows at times, and the easy-going toad also comes down to the sea.

Oft have I watched for a long while the soldier-crabs, or "fiddlers," that abound along the creek. I take it that life cannot be very dull to them mid so much sociability, they are so neighborly. In retreating to their holes

they do not always leave the big claw outermost, but sometimes go in with that claw first. They feed themselves with the little claw, often picking the mud, etc., from off the big one and putting it into their mandibles. Those with small claws only, feed themselves with both, first with one and then with the other, and seem to get on much faster than the others. At some seasons there is no quarreling among them, though they will lock their large claws occasionally, but do not pinch. Again, in the Spring, I have seen the males quite belligerent, many of them with their large claws interlocked, and so enraged that I have picked them up without their loosening their hold. Often, too, have I put several individuals into one hole and had them retire, nor do they speedily show themselves again, though so strangely situated. It is comical to see them bring their long, stalked eyes to bear upon you. "We are looking at you," they seem to say.

It is best when you come to a wet place in the meadow to run through it as fast as you can—to jump with judgment, but rapidly—for if you stop to look after each step the water soaks into your shoes. The meadow-grass hides a deal of moisture, and you slump into a depression or a miniature creek before you are aware. Thus do I remember falling in to a ditch, for being preoccupied, looking at the *Helenium* flowers, I did not observe what the rank vegetation concealed until I was knee-deep in water. How surprised we are at getting suddenly soused; one would think that water was a new element to us.

With an old piece of bamboo from the shore, or a tree-branch from the upland, to serve as a jumping-pole, you

may often get over the wet places in the lane tolerably well; and if, mayhap, your shoes get wet, run in the grass awhile on some dry knoll or ridge, for the grass will dry your shoes quite speedily.

I remember one cold, bright, windy day, as I came along the beach, seeing one of the Hermit's dogs tugging at the remains of an old white horse that lay on the sand. The dog stood with his legs braced and pulled at the tough, hard skin with all of his strength, but when he saw me, he ran across the bridge, casting an occasional sullen look behind. Then there was a general barking, and the four or five dogs made a rush for me—came bounding up on the end of the bridge, but I greeted them as a friend, and they concluded to regard me in that light, though I do not think their first intention was so kindly. Soon I had them growling at one another as each tried to get a larger share of the caresses I so lavishly bestowed.

Near by there was a stack of hay, and I sat myself down on its sunny side to eat lunch while the north wind blew. At one end of the stack there was a second white horse, a forlorn, decrepit animal, and probably the survivor of some hackman's team, whose other member I had seen lying dead. As I ate my crackers and bread and orange I could hear the horse grinding his provender, and when I returned, three hours later, he was still eating. There he stood, with his eyes half closed, and slowly munched the hay, while the north wind cast his shaggy coat into ridges.

It seems useless to describe natural scenery when every one may see it if they will, but the very color of the beach,

swept smooth by the broom of the ocean every twelve hours, and the yellow-brown tints of the meadow-grass in Autumn, tempt you to stop and to gaze. When all of this is spread out into acres, and into miles, and you recline, half dreaming, on a dune, and the pleasant wonderment of the scene steals into your mind, mayhap the tears will stream down your face. Yet you know not why the common scene affects you so, and that you should feel that sadness that seems akin to heavenly joy.

"It is a view of delight," says Lucretius, "to stand or walk upon the shore-side, and to see a ship tossed with tempest upon the sea . . . "; so, likewise, it is pleasant on the hazy and foggy days to hear the horns of the unseen steamers far out over the water. The sound comes booming across the waves—like some giant cow mooing most obstreperously in the distance, having lost her way.

At night the beach is strange. I have been there on dark, cloudy evenings, such as follow the lowering days that come late in the Fall. All of the drift-timber seems then to entangle your feet, and you come suddenly face to face with ghastly pieces of wreck, that mimic in their strangeness the fantastic forms of the creatures that inhabit the sea. What can be a greater wonder than the phosphorescent glimmerings that bedeck the waves as they break on the shore? The jellyfish, that die at the end of summer and disintegrate, make the sand luminous, and at every step you see your glowing tracks behind; you make golden foot-prints in the sands, as if indeed some superhuman being had passed that way. The glowing embers of the fishermen's fires start and die with the

breeze, and the light-house alternately opens and shuts its great red eye.

I have had one of the larger owls follow me at night for half a mile along the beach, flying in circles about my head, but keeping at a respectful distance, and retaining a sullen silence. When I have come to the bridge I have stolen across quietly, for the Hermit's dogs lay sleeping close by; and then gone along the shore as near to the waves and as far from the drift-wood as possible, as silently, as stealthily as the owl itself.

BY THE RIPPLING SEA.

ALL day I walked with the gentle murmur of the waves in my ears along the shore of Prince's Bay and the Great Kill. The morning had dawned sunny, breezy and cool, and it was one of those August days that herald the Fall. There is a subtilty in the expression of such a day that cannot be set down in words. You feel, but cannot tell why, it is so truly Fall-like. It is near akin to yesterday, and, again, to-morrow we may not see the face of Autumn thus plainly. I might try to tell wherein the difference lies, but it seems to be doing Nature an injustice to coarsely mention the soft brooding haze, or the suspicion of coolness that lingers about even the noon-tide hours of such a day.

The golden asters, in their silky coats, were along the wood-paths to the beach, and a number of widely branching yellow gerardias had taken possession of a little opening in the trees. Nature loves purple and gold, and with the exception of white and the omnipresent green of Summer, they are her favorite colors.

On the shore I plodded along, now in the sand and anon among the low shrubbery on the up-beach. The

wild plums were in all shades of purple, some of them dark in color, with a bloom on their surface; and these I ate. It is a pleasing reality to see the plum stretch forth its branches, laden with fruit, that are advertised by their color, and say, as it were, "Eat some, please, and throw away the pits. I grew them for you." But that is what the plum does, and so I gathered the lowest fruit, those that grew nearest the sand, and were, therefore, ripest, and distributed the pits along the shore, as the plum had bid me do.

All day long the crickets sang in the fields or ran from under the planks that I overturned on the up-beach, and now and then a Monarch butterfly or a hawk came sailing along the shore. Several green herons flew from the rushes and then dropped, as it were, suddenly into them again without uttering a sound.

Where the bay-berry bushes abounded, on a stretch of sand, there were countless numbers of white-breasted swallows, and between two posts of a fence, on the topmost wire, I counted thirty birds, and the second and third wires were equally laden. The ground beneath the wires, and on the tops of the fence posts, were bestrewn with the half-digested bay berries.

The sandpipers, running along by the incoming waves, had more confidence in me than I thought was right. I felt as if they ought to be shoon away, lest by my harmlessness I might lead them to suppose that all men would be kind to them. They are so intent upon hunting sand-fleas that they are easily hunted themselves, and the sand-fleas have cause to rejoice at the banging of the guns.

On a stretch of the beach two sandpipers kept each other company. One of them was a sprightly, industrious individual, that engaged himself in hunting operations, and the other, a broken-legged bird, with the injured member painfully discommoding every motion. Often it caught in the cast-up sea-weed and caused him to stumble. Nevertheless he caught a few fleas, but was forced now and then to rest, and would stand motionless for a time, while his companion waged war on the sand-hoppers.

A few small brooks came down to the beach, some of them losing their substance before they got across the sand; and in one place a rather languid spring issued from the base of the cliff. A tin can, perched on the top of a stake nearby, served as a means of introduction between us.

The red cliffs of drift material were particularly red after the soaking rain, and additional trees had recently fallen to the shore. I recognized a post-oak, under which I had sat some years back, now dead at the foot of the cliff. Every now and then the earth falls from the trees growing along the bank, and occasionally one of them rolls to the sand below. It produces a feeling of sadness to see the bluff falling away and the waves ever eating into the upland. It seems as if the ocean was taking what it did not own, that some injustice was being perpetrated, and that the cedars, oaks and other trees that come tumbling to the shore, owe their death to some powerful enemy, that works most stealthily even in the quiet days of Summer sunshine.

The cliffs extend along the shore for several miles,

though they are only high and perpendicular for a short distance, and, indeed, the low ones, that are not so steep, and are clothed with golden-rods, bay-berry bushes and asters, are much more companionable. There was a small cleft, or bight, in the cliff that opened to the southwest and met at right angles to the shore. It was so narrow that someone had laid a short beam from side to side and used it as a seat, from whence they might look along the shore and the sea. The view was bounded by a projecting cliff in the distance, where leaned some tottering trees. The white-breasted swallows skimmed the surface of the bay, now and then dipping as they flew, and a kingfisher sounded his rattle. The beach was covered with innumerable little stones, and the inrush and outgo of the waves caused them to roll, and the sound of their striking against one another was added to that produced by the sea itself. There was not a sign of a human habitation from the bight, or anything to remind me that mine were not the only footprints ever made in the sand. The world of men seemed far away, and the hours were as peaceful as if I had found one of the by-paths leading to the Garden of Eden.

A pear-tree leaned over the bank by the shore and cast its fruit down the slope to the sand, and there were also seedling apple-trees that gave me and the crickets of their abundance. At one place a small rat scampered away, and anon I passed by a sleeping dog on the sand, so silently that he he did not know that any one was near.

As I approached a small house by the shore, a frisky,

long-haired dog came bounding across the beach, and after the preliminaries indispensable to a proper acquaintance were gone through with, he commenced to bark and jump about in a most excited way. I was at a loss to know what ailed him and bid him be still, but could only enforce a momentary quiet, and directly he was barking as before. Soon he seized my stick in his teeth and I realized what he wanted, and securing a barrel hoop flung it down the beach many times, for he merely wished to play.

Two small pigs looked knowingly from their pen placed on the sand at the foot of the bank, and I made them put their light brown eyes close to one of the cracks between the boards, that I might look them fairly in the face. I observed where they had previously made their escape by burrowing in the soft sand, and several boards and stakes had been used to make their prison more secure.

Two ponds stretched back from the shore, one of them profaned by a hotel on its border, but the other remaining in all the glory of weedy margins and tree-covered banks. Near this pond I tarried awhile, for a wild honeysuckle had burst forth again in its June-time array of flowers, and a Carolina wren was chattering in the trees. *Hibiscus* flowers were along the pond-border, and also a tall, waving grass, that in ripening had turned to a beautiful purple-green.

At the upper end of the pond, hidden in the trees, was an old homestead, with its roof fallen in, a ruined chimney, and a few of those hardy flowers and shrubs growing round about, without which no old house seems complete. For years only one or two rooms appeared to be occupied

in this forlorn old mansion—only one or two of its windows let in the sun. The crane hung in the chimney, that was built with the most ancient part of the dwelling, and everything about the house seemed to look to the past—like an old man who sits by the fire and broods on the memory of bygone days.

The most joyous thing I ever saw near the old house were the daffodils in Spring, and the most industrious was a colony of wasps in the old cherry tree.

Perhaps the man who lived in this ancient dwelling was as proud as the turkey-gobbler that strutted about among the box bushes. It certainly was a fine bird, and perhaps he was an equally fine man, but Nature had not decked him out as gaily as she had the gobbler. Great folds of skin, of red, blue, and pink, blended together in a marvelous way, and with the flashing dark eyes. The pendant from the bill, reaching the breast, was equally gorgeous, and the feathers, black and glossy. Indeed, the turkey is a fashionable bird in feathers as well as without, and would do to walk the avenues, arrayed in his splendid attire, with those who parade for show.

But now the dwelling was deserted, and the barn door hung wide on its hinges. The turkeys were gone, and the open windows let in the rain. The roof of the older portion of the house had fallen further away from the more recent addition, though it still clung to the chimney where once hung the crane. A tree-toad pressed close to a mossy shingle, and was bathed in the afternoon sun, and beneath the tottering roof the spotted wasps had built one of their jug-like nests. The long branches of the matri-

mony bush, hidden for a time from the light, finally sought it again, and pierced the boards near the eaves; and the catnip growing at the chimney's base shed a pleasant odor about the crumbling pile.

Within was an old sofa, a rush-bottomed chair tied together with a rope, and over the floor a multitude of papers and a number of religious books and pamphlets. One of these was on the proper mode of spending the Sabbath, but I could find nothing therein about wandering afield alone. That was not *the religious* way, though it is eminently *a religious* way of spending the Sabbath. It contained a number of anecdotes concerning barns struck by lightning because they sheltered hay gathered on Sunday, but I saw no mention of the church near my home that has been twice thus visited, though its bell has tolled regularly every Sabbath day.

The attic contained several articles left there by a still older tenant—a pair of hatchels for separating the fibrous parts of hemp or flax, and the account-books of James La-Forge, who carried on the business of a smith in the first years of the century. A careful inspection of his books, covering a space of ten years, revealed that he had served in his trade one hundred and nineteen different persons, thirty-eight of them, likehimself, bearing a name of Huguenot origin. It was interesting to read a page of the domestic affairs of many of these worthies who figure in the records of the county; to see how many horses they had shod in a year, and the bolts, and bars, and chains, that were made or mended for them. Placed between the leaves of one of these old volumes was an interesting bill of items

purchased at the country store, and also one for twenty-six shad at nine cents each.

Nature looked joyous outside through the open window, and the ruddy-cheeked apples glowed on the tree, but within was a spirit of sadness that brooded over all like a heavy vapor. If you moved a door its creaking sounded *past*, as if it had wearied with the years, and I know not what charm it would have taken to have made the rooms seem glad again, unless it might have been the laugh of a little child or the gambols of a kitten.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

MY friend and I walked along the lane. It had been used for more than a hundred years, and the constant wear of the wheels, and the ever washing of the rain, had made it a wide rut, the width of a wagon. Little streams of water trickled in the soft earth where the wheels had made their last impressions; the woods skirted one side, and a straggling hedge, with some large trees, and the broad open fields the other. The messages, the letters and the news, the tidings of war and of peace that have been borne along the lane! The limbs of the trees overshadow it, the alder catkins dangle by its side, and in Spring, the first little blue butterflies—those blossoms with wings—flutter along it, as if they too were touched by the dreams that hover with them in the lane.

As we walked silently on, we stepped backward in time, we heard the foxes barking, and the sound of the first tree falling. We saw Daniel Lake hurrying to his home with his deed patent of the untilled land. We saw his little children, beheld them playing in the lane, and we followed old Daniel to his grave, and stood mourners with the family there. Just as you turn the leaves of a book

and the scenes of life and of death that are written there are pictured to you, so the old lane and the fields brought a thousand impressions that made us laugh and weep in turn. The songs of Summer, the wind rustling in the trees, the wind again in Winter, and all the fields white with snow, and that ever dawning and setting of the sun.

All of this came to us, and we trembled as we entered the old gate between the giant poplars at the end of the lane, and stood by the thick stone walls of the house. It was deserted now; no face watched at the window, only our own reflections peered back upon us like a visual echo, as we looked on the little square panes.

We knocked at the door; perhaps the shade of Mr. Moorewood, the last occupant, might be lingering there, engaged in reverie, so we knocked hard on the door with the knocker. A sound gently prepares you for a presence, and we hoped not to intrude too abruptly upon his Sabbath meditations.

There is a sadness in beholding the rooms once thought so homelike given over to solitude and dampness. How seldom we picture our own home as deserted forever, and the fire gone out, for the pent-up fire has a warm, bright soul of its own. The sun shining in at the window, and even the singing of the birds without, seem strange in the deserted room. A man's garments found in a field cause you to start. So any artificial thing without its counterpart is a surprise; a road without vehicles and a house without tenants alike impress us with the sense of incompletenesss.

No wonder, then, that we stood before the hearth

without speaking; no wonder that we opened the cupboard doors gently, lest their creaking in some way might be a rude interruption. Empty bottles stood on the shelves, a straw hat lay there also, and over all had settled a fine dust that had been brought by the vagrant wind.

We got down on our knees and measured the broad boards of the floor with a rule, inspected the front door, remarkable for its massive solidity, and made in two parts, as is now again the fashion. Thus we wandered from room to room, and learned the plan of the structure, that must have been so deeply imprinted in the minds of its many former occupants, now in their graves in the field. Indeed, it is a curious knowledge we have of our homes; like the rabbit's information of the clover in the field, there are many things that can be known only to us.

So the house was strange, and the tones of our voices were new to its walls. The sigh of the wind was the same as we had heard elsewhere, and even the outlooks reminded us of similar scenes miles away. But we lingered at the little window that looked between the poplars, down the lane. It was one of those garden views wherein the blending of nature with the artificial has made a pleasing result. Perhaps it was strengthened by the knowledge of antiquity, by the old fence, the poplars falling to decay, and by the rank, tall weeds along the hedge, that seemed to bespeak a strong vitality still, though their stems were dead from the cold.

Is it any wonder that we searched the garret well? for the greatest treasures of an old house are most often there. The bottles and straw hats may be kept in the cupboard

down stairs, but the general litter of the garret tells more of the family history than all the other rooms combined. The garret is the private museum of the homestead, and if you can see it in all its completeness you will know how long the family have dwelt in the mansion. The parlor makes its contributions from time to time, and so keeps fresh and new; the kitchen sends its old pots and pans, and many papers are piled there that are thought too interesting to be thrown away, but which lay unread and forgotten.

So we searched diligently in the litter; the floor was strewn with scores of copies of *The Albion*, many of them stained with yellow lines by the rain that had beaten in through the roof, and all of them imbrowned by time. We turned their pages—read of the cholera in England and Scotland, of the last illness of Goethe, and perused the reviews of the latest novels. There is nothing that loses so much of its pith with the years as political discussions and events. We cannot feel all the glow of the times. We reverence the story-teller, for it is the clothing in words that so often makes one fact, or the life of one man, stand out more noticeably in the past than another. The old news in the *Albion* is read in a different sense from that which was first intended; we view it now as we would the account of the war of Inisthona. The "total overthrow and utter prostration of the revolutionists" has often been told, and that Sheriff Dugan restored order after Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Shannon were pelted with eggs is not new to history.

Turning the pages, we came to a piece of purple silk

laid between the leaves, that had probably formed a part of Miss Moorewood's dress, and copy-books on the floor showed samples of her writing. Family letters lay in this old pile, accompanied by used checks returned by the bank. These letters remind you in tone of those written yesterday, of those written to you by your friend. Their messages are the same. It needs but the change of signatures, with the change of years, for the general truths are there. They show the ironbound fate that must ever hold us. It was these documents, now so brown and stained by the weather, that they read with eager eyes walking in the lane. They gathered by the hearth or in the hall, and the letter was read aloud; it was treasured, stored in the attic, and now is pulled from its hiding.

We find a receipt, dated July, 1836, for one hundred and seventeen dollars, for rent, perhaps for this same old house; and also a detailed account of the letters sent by Mr. Moorewood in 1827. The diligent correspondent spent as much for postage and wax and paper in those days as he did for the taxes or rent of his broad acres.

While I turned the pile my friend climbed through the skylight and sat in the sun, ever and anon calling to me how beautiful the meadows looked on this bright day. "I can hear you scratching, scratching down there, like a mouse in the wall," he shouted, and, poking his head into the garret, inspected my progress, and then turned away to his vision of fair meadows again.

Still I burrowed on, now upturning a certificate stating that Mr. Moorewood had learned surveying in Halifax, and now a number of Eugene Sue's novel, "The Wander-

ing Jew." A mutilated copy of "Lalla Rookh," and the "Memoirs of My Youth," that book of sweet confidence, by Lamartine. As I turn the pages, I find that the passages here and there have been marked—marked by some one living in this old house—and when Lamartine describes so beautifully his father reading Tasso aloud by the fire, when the doors of the little house of Milly were closed and the dog barked in the courtyard, then this admiring hand writes on the margin, "What can surpass domestic joys?"

Yes, yes, kind annotator, but do not think me unfriendly for speaking out your secret mind, for it is your own house of Milly, with its fireplace, its thick beams blackened by the smoke, and its domestic joys, of which we fain would speak, though so much now is left to fancy alone.

My friend still sat upon the roof, and, climbing by his side, we looked across the bright meadows out to the sea. The seashore formed a glistening line, and the ships crept along so slowly in the distance that they seemed to be fixtures there, like some great sea creatures that were content to idly sun themselves. So we sat together and talked, and Nature seemed very kind to us. What can be more pleasing than the full confidence in the sincerity of your friend? A man's best nature, as well as his worst, is the development of mutual intercourse.

We climbed again through the skylight, to the old trunk, and so to the floor, and once more explored the rooms. When we got outside we viewed the house from different points, for each aspect gave a slightly different impression. Houses, like individuals, seem to be stern or

mild, seem to be happy or sorrowful, and no doubt they affect the character of those who live within their walls.

As we walked away across the fields we lingered, and now and then cast our looks behind. There was the long, low house, with the broad salt meadows coming close to its walls. Its trees, its barn, and the family grave-yard, seemed all in keeping, as if Nature herself had said, "If man must live here, build the house this way," and they had followed her plan. She is most kind to these low, rambling, rural houses, and sheds about them a homelike aspect. Indeed, it is very hard to build a large, pretentious mansion that will be thoroughly in accord with the scene. Nature appears overtaxed with it, and the windows do not peep out the same homelike rays. The green spreading lawns, with their display of flowers in mathematically exact beds, all representing a great expenditure, do not produce a more pleasing impression than the little gardens with their hardy flowers and vegetables side by side, and maybe the red apples, in Autumn, lying promiscuously over the ground.

TENANTS.

A LARGE dwelling stood empty in the Clove valley for many years, save for the natural tenantry that every old house and barn is bound to receive. Wasps, bats, owls and their kindred only respect the rights of preoccupancy, and any vacant place is theirs if they wish it and are strong enough to retain their particular nooks and crannies. Thus this old house and neighboring out-buildings were fully occupied. Woodpeckers had bored holes into the piazza posts and house-side, a swarm of honey bees lived in the chimney, a colony of Carolina bats in the barn, and in Spring a phoebe bird built her nest under its eaves.

An old German and his wife occupied the gate-house, and their cows cropped the grass on the hill-side or stood in their stalls in the barn. Horses were taken to board in Summer, and the old man spent his days looking after them and the cows, repairing the fence to keep them in, or in sallying forth on an anxious journey in quest of some restless Bucephalus who, breaking the fence, had cantered away.

In rambling about the premises, I often met the old

man, who had all the garrulity of age, and would talk to me by the hour of the beasts that tenanted the mansion and of that parade of interesting items that nature, like a well-conducted newspaper, spreads before us day by day. Then, again, he would tell of his misfortunes, how he had been running up and down the roads, this way and that, searching for an escaped horse, and, finally growing tired, he had to be brought home in a wagon, for he was an old man now.

Often I stood at a distance and watched him chop wood under the shed near his dwelling, or follow, with bowed head, the narrow path that led from his door to the barn. The path wound up the hill under the trees and back of the mansion, and nearby a dog was chained to his house, and would gyrate and yelp most piteously when he saw the old man passing by.

One Summer two calves were confined for a time in the corner of the orchard fence, near the path, and their little anxious heads were thrust through the paling at whomsoever passed that way. The old man said "they would be three days old to-morrow," so anxious was he to have them grow as fast as possible, to have a few more hairs on their diminutive bodies. One of them endeavored to swallow my hand in my efforts to discover the condition of its teeth, but that member, much to the disappointment of the calf, came away with me.

Near the path stood a broad-spreading hemlock, also several maples and some other trees, and beneath their shade several seats had been constructed. It was here that the old man most often sat and talked, and on Summer

days watched the bees fly from the chimney. He had placed a flagstone over the flue which they occupied, and never disturbed them, for his father had kept bees in Germany, and these flying from the chimney brought to his mind the scenes of his boyhood. He delighted to tell me how his father managed his straw hives, and how many he had, and then, mayhap, we would inspect the large paper nests that the spotted wasps were ever building somewhere about the deserted mansion.

One year one of these structures was fastened to the grape arbor by the house-side, and was protected by its eaves. The entrance to the nest was about two inches from the bottom, and the old man wished me to take it, stop up the hole at night, when the wasps were in, and take it away if I desired. Then he fell to telling me how kind the wasps were, how they minded their own business, and if people would only let them alone they would never be stung. We drew close to the nest and watched the workers busily engaged on its top in making it larger, for they work most industriously as long as the warm weather lasts, never dreaming, apparently, that Summer will not be always, but die finally of the cold, leaving young in various stages of growth in the cells within.

The old man was particularly loquacious on the subject of speculators; he who lived so quietly wished to hear the clangings of the outer world, but he was mistrustful, for, like St. Pierre, he considered himself taught by calamity. "Ah!" he would say, "wasn't I hit on the head by a fellow at Four Corners, and what a lot of trouble I had over it. I went to the justice's twice and then to Richmond,

and finally the man was acquitted, though indicted by the grand jury for assault with intent to kill."

Thus would we sit under the trees and discourse on the law, the speculators, the railroads and the bees, and the old man would call me his "dear friend," would take me by the sleeve, and put his hand on my shoulder and talk most earnestly. He would walk away as if to depart, and then return and sit by my side again. He had not lived in vain, for he was content to die—had a philosophical desperation; he saw that he must surrender to circumstances and to what he was.

Sometimes when the rain fell we took shelter under one of the piazzas, the roof of which was upheld by trimmed cedars, the original supports having rotted away. There were several poles stretched from post to post to keep the cattle from invading the premises, and under its floor dwelt a rabbit. Often I remained there for hours alone, while the rain fell upon the roof, and looked out upon the scene I knew in all of its moods. The cattle grazing on the slope, the brook below in the meadow, and the hills beyond clothed with trees. If rain were not so common we would regard it with wonder—the blue sky of an hour ago shedding tears.

The wall of the house was built of stones gathered from the neighboring hills, and they might have been labeled, if the house had had a tenant, and served as his geological museum of the drift boulders of the vicinity. There were two or three granites, trap, several limestones and sandstones, including Jersey trias. Sometimes when the rain fell in torrents and came gushing from the spout connected

with the roof, the horses ran to the protection of the house and, wheeling about, placed their heads in the most sheltered situation. There they would stand, with their heads under the piazza roof viewing me with mild, patient eyes, and waiting for the storm to go over.

Another shelter from the rain was the old chicken house behind the barn, and oft have I sat in the nests on the leaves that had blown therein from the neighboring trees. They were the collection of years, for the nests had been eggless for a long time, and the door gone from its hinges. Now and then a cow came and placed her head on the pole nailed athwart the doorway, reached her nose as far out toward me as she could, and gave several sniffs of surprise. I used to regard the withered leaves affectionately, for they were the souvenirs of some past Summer, and chance had saved them from decay. The breeze that rustled in the neighboring green trees caused them to gyrate about the floor, and, no doubt, many were lost through the open door-way.

The wild mice had stored many nuts and seeds in the convenient nooks in the roof, and the nests were well stocked with remnants of their feasts that had dropped from the beams above. There was a blending of Summer and Winter in the scene that was ever interesting. I could hear the *z-ing* of the harvest flies without, whose song might be termed the essence of Summer, for no sound has more of Summer in its tone, while within were the withered leaves and the gnawed nuts from the mouse's Winter store.

Occasionally a gray squirrel hopped about beneath the trees, and at evening the rabbits came from their hiding.

Once I sat on the prostrate trunk of a willow that some storm of several summers past had blown down, watching the bats fly from the ventilator in the roof of the barn, when from under the building came a rabbit and shortly, from beneath the house, another. They ran about in the grass, twitching their noses and flapping their ears. One sat in the path as a horse came near, and finally when it was obliged to retreat, ran under the log on which I lay. Afterward it sat in the grass near the doghouse, whose occupant commenced to howl, for just then the old German came driving a cow along the path to the barn. The rabbit remained quiet, though so plainly visible, and the old man and the cow passed close by. Whether from knowingness or stupidity, this habit of keeping still at the approach of danger has saved many members of Bunny's family from destruction.

The anxious howling of the dog was easily explained, for his supper was given him in the barn, and when he was untied he made a dead set for the door, and often bunked against it. He ran as fast as he could for his supper, and as he slept in the barn, this daily run was the chief novelty of his existence, the only change.

In June, when the young bats left their mothers and flew about on their own account, many of them fell within the reach of this same dog and were quickly despatched. In the morning their dead bodies were thrown out of the window by the old man, who complained of their foolishness. These little bats would also hang up anywhere about the barn, for, perhaps, they were unable to find the way to the general assemblies of their kind. All day sev-

eral large clusters of the bats hung from the rafters of the roof, and when the sun was setting they commenced to *click* incessantly, and at dusk flew singly and by twos and threes from the slatted windows.

The English sparrows used to go in and out of the stall windows, which were without glass, but a scarlet tanager coming in that way became confused and flew against the glazed window on the opposite side, beneath which I found its dead body.

The old man rarely found fault with the creatures that lived about the place, and helped them all he could in their struggle for existence. He once complained that the crows pulled his pears for him—pulled them all off and dropped them on the ground; but he was friendly to the rabbits, and felt much grieved one day when a nest of theirs had been destroyed. "Monday I made hay," said he, "Tuesday I made hay again, and I had two fellows to help me. Up in the orchard they found a rabbit's nest with seven young ones, and they, fools, thought they were rats and killed them with the forks. They might have known by the ears. Anyhow, in the Fall they get shot, so they only die a little sooner."

Even the woodpeckers that bored into the side of the house, and looked out from their fastness and cackled at us as we stood below, were not regarded as trespassers, though the old man, one Autumn, after they had gone, did nail some pieces of tin over the holes. Nevertheless they came back the next year and reared their young in the side of the house as usual. The wily high-holders knew they had a good residence and were loath to leave, and the old

man considered them most knowing and praiseworthy birds.

After years of unoccupancy this old mansion was at last to find a human tenant. The bees were banished from the chimney, the rabbit from beneath the piazza floor, and the woodpeckers were to poke their heads no longer from the house-side and cackle at us below, for with the natural tenantry, the old man and I were forced to leave.

It has been said by the poetess Landon that memory sheds no gladness o'er the past, and that it cannot make the present more bright and cheerful; yet is a pleasant recollection that lingers about the old man and the creatures that sought the protection of the silent, weather-stained mansion and the neighboring trees.

Percival spoke nearer the truth when he said that many hours of the past are brightened as "time steals away." This is especially true of the memory of hours spent afield, for a man is rarely out of touch with nature, however he may find fault with his human companions. Indeed what would we do without our memories, for do they not help us to mind the coming way; and even in the matter of rambling afield, the halo that hovers about our previous journeys tinges the present hour, and causes the surroundings to wear a special significance to each of us, for we see through the spectacles of our experience.

NATIVE BROOKS.

A BROOK that is purely natural, that shows no trace of man's innovation throughout its course, is a great rarity. A bit of newspaper or an old, rusty tin can lodged somewhere mid the tangled tree-roots, tells the age, if not the year, and in the more utilitarian communities there is that process of cleaning up, before which the trees and ferns are swept away. A brook without ferns, without shade, with old tin cans and bits of newspaper, is no longer under the rule of Sylvanus, and every additional stroke of the axe is one for the stream also, for a man cuts off his brook when he cuts down his trees.

However, on Staten Island there are some woodland brooks still remaining, though not purely wild ones, and others whose banks have been partly cleared, but which still retain many pleasing features. They are naturally divided into those of the eastern and western portions, for the Fresh Kill, from the Sound, reaching inward, approaches quite close to the Great Kill, and these arms of the sea leave only a neck of land a mile and three quarters wide. On the eastern portion about a dozen streams have found

their way on the map, but a map gives a poor history, and though it may exhibit with great exactness all the windings and fantastic curves that a little brook may take, it cannot say whether its course is over sand or rocks, nor anything of the trees that grow along its banks. The map tells just as much to-day of the brook that runs down to the shore nearly parallel to the Turnpike road, by Brook Street, as it did a hundred years ago when it emptied as a pure little stream near the "Watering Place," where the ships stopped to fill their casks before going to sea. No one will say of it now "how beautiful," nor quote a line from Bryant's "Wind and Stream," and of all the wild creatures that once wandered along its banks, only a few muskrats, that occasionally appear on sidewalks and in cellars, now remain.

It is the same with the Jersey Street brook, that once ran to the shore by the "Still House Landing," and the one that winds its way through Stapleton, an humble prisoner except in freshet time, when it occasionally assists the Prohibition party, floating chairs and tables conveniently out of the saloon doors and basement windows. Such was the effect of the storm of July 23d, 1887.

That the alders, with their dangling catkins, grew along the banks of these little streams is a certainty, and that some Dutch settler, with expansive pantaloons—a "tough breeches," as Washington Irving would call him—lived near by, is a great probability. But that definite description of the times and of the relationship of man to the surrounding natural features, that always lends a charm to a locality, cannot be made in these later days.

The little spring in the slightly rising ground near the swamp to the northeast of Silver Lake—or Fresh Pond, as it used to be called—is much more interesting for bearing the name of Logan, the Indian who is said to have lived near it. He, no doubt, would share our sorrow in seeing how often it is dry in recent years, and would help if he could in clearing away the paper boxes and egg-shells that are left by the average picnic party. Logan's Spring brook is a rocky one for Staten Island. In one place it is lost to view for several yards under rocks and tree-roots, except when it is full of water, when it also makes use of an upper channel. There are monstrous crayfish hidden away under the rocks, and no end of "water-measurers"—or "water-spiders," as they are called—that wait patiently for some luckless creature, often a cricket, floating down the stream. In the grounds of the Sailors' Snug Harbor it runs through a thick growth of little trees, where the bluejays are numerous, and finally over a steep incline of serpentine rock and under the wall. It finds its way through many a shaded lawn in its course to the Kill von Kull, but art rarely improves upon nature, and a little brook cannot be made more beautiful by being confined between two straight stone walls.

Clove Valley, formed by a fork of the otherwise nearly straight range of serpentine hills, forcibly reminds the rambler of more northern views—of the hills and mild farming country along portions of the Hudson River, only there the rock is different. So well is the valley itself walled in, that if a dam were built at the Clove, and another where Britton's mill once stood, a considerable lake would be

formed. In olden time, just after the first pond was made, the place was particularly favorable for a naturalist; for in these days it is occasionally visited by the great blue herons, many rare plants grow there, and the *phaeton* butterfly flies feebly in June. Trout have been caught in some numbers, even in recent years, and the common sucker abounds. A night rambler, with a lantern, will discover, in the month of May, scores of them swimming upstream to spawn, and when a shallow place is approached there is a scurry among the fish, accompanied by much splashing, as they make for deeper water.

About 1796 John McVicker, who lived in the Dongan mansion, constructed a canal through the valley from Silver Lake to bring more water for the mill on "Mill Creek," and it was not so long ago that the trees were felled and turned into bungs for beer-barrels at the mill on Clove Pond. Clove Valley Brook once flowed through a deep ravine, and it is evident that there was less swamp then than there is to-day, for the numerous dams made to collect the water into ponds have also caused the muggy meadows.

The brook system, one branch of which drains the region about Four Corners—or Centreville, as it used to be called—is quite extensive, and its exact watershed is hard to define. The main stream forms for a considerable distance the boundary-line between Castleton and Northfield, and in the days of Gov. Dongan was known as Palmer's Run. It formerly received the entire drainage from the Clove Valley, and its waters have at one time or another turned the wheels of many different mills. A

portion of its course is still through pleasant pasture-land, but a brook is so in sympathy with the season, that it depends largely when you see it as to the impression it leaves; it seems in Winter hardly the one we knew in Summer days. Occasionally, as late as April, the more placid portions are frozen over, the caddis fly larvæ and water beetles may be seen on the bottom through the ice, and it seems at such times nothing short of a miracle when it is considered what a change a few days will bring, and how considerable that change really is. When Spring is fairly started it comes very fast indeed, and one may almost give the day of the month by the unfolding of the *benzoin* flowers—they keep so truly the schedule time of the season.

On the banks of the branch of Palmer's Run, that crosses the Turnpike to the north-west of Four Corners, there stands a large white oak, with wide spreading branches, and the fern *Polypodium* finds a home there, growing on the top of a large boulder. This is a rare plant on the Island, though so common northward and on higher ground. An old Indian wanders often about the woods, and occasionally along this stream, carrying a book of songs under his arm, and when he gets tired of walking he sits down and sings. He says he can sing better than he can do anything else. One day he had a bundle of catnip, which he had gathered for a cat belonging to a family of his acquaintance in the city, and as he walked along he gave an account of his people: "Among Indians, no education. Father take child to another tribe—he learn to speak language. Go by horse, across great prairie—only

see grass and little bushes—great blue sky—nice." The idea of sky was expressed by throwing his arm over his head, and looking upward, and the little bushes were compared to one near by.

Willow brook is one of the best known streams on the Island, and also one of the longest; rising near the highest point, it empties into that arm of Fresh Kill, known as "Main Branch," having in all a course of about four miles. At various times its water has been used by mills and small factories, the best known of these being the gun factory near the Willow Brook road, and the Crocheron mill, near the Bull's Head, or Phœnixville. This mill was standing in 1884, though much decayed, and the Italians employed on the proposed cross island railroad, made the building their home. It is now fallen down, most of the timbers removed, the wild flowers growing over the remaining ones, and through the shaft-hole in the mill stone. By the pond, that once served as a head of water for this mill, there stands three trees of the river birch, which is not a common kind on the Island, though so plentiful along some of the New Jersey rivers. Since these trees were discovered, some others have been found, and along the Annadale road, by a brook side, there are quite a number. They always seem dissatisfied, as it were, with their bark, apparently wishing to get rid of a portion of it, for it hangs in loose pieces that flap in the wind. Perhaps this bark is useful in retaining the rain that falls on it, as the tree is a particularly moisture-loving species.

A shag-bark hickory grows near by, and the nuts are remarkable for their thin shells and large size. The wild mice

have also found this out, and congregate at the foot of the tree in a little pile of stones. They are not in favor of perpetuating this particular variety, and know nothing of selection for the good of their kind, and so nibble two small holes in every nut. There is also a peperidge, or sour gum tree, near the brook, which is next in size to the large one on New Dorp lane. It has long served as a corner of a fence, and perhaps is the mark of an old boundary line. The fence rails enter its hollow trunk at right angles, and are fastened to an old post propped up inside the cavity. A gray squirrel retreated to the tree, and wasps flew in circles about their home in its broken top, one September day, when the leaves were just commencing to turn to that beautiful crimson, so characteristic of the peperidge tree. Not even the red maple, with its red flowers in spring, its branch tips red, and its vivid red leaves in autumn, ever attains such a deep blood color as the peperidge tree.

Brooks are not only in sympathy with the seasons, but they are glad or sad at we take them, and the Moravian brook, as it winds its way mid the white and gray tombstones in the cemetery, seems to be in accord with the scene. It is not the glad little brook that starts from the Woolsey pond on the Todt Hill road, nor does it seem the same that flows through the low-lying meadows to New Creek by the shore. Out on these meadows it is joined by the stream from Garretson's, one branch of which rises in Mersereau's valley, where the hermit had his cabin by the spring in the days of the Revolution, and where was enacted that tragedy that makes the place so interesting.

An old deserted farm-house, with hand-made lath and beams, and filled in with mud, stands on the hill facing this deep ravine, and the outlook, extending to the ocean beyond, is one of the most pleasing on the island. Some of the orchard trees are very large and have many tenants among the birds, and cardinal grossbeaks live Winter and Summer mid the catbrier on the hill-side. The other branch of this brook rises in the swamp, where the Reeds, father and son, raised willows for basket-making. The trees still remain, and "forget-me-nots" grow along the brook bank, but the house is gone.

To the northwest of Richmond village there is a wild piece of country, and two little brooks join in the woods and flow into that arm of the Kill that reaches so far into the island. As late as 1884, the night herons made their home near its banks, and the deserted nests in young swamp oaks, often several in a tree, and an occasional one in a white birch or cedar, may still be seen. The people in the neighborhood gathered the eggs and, beating them together, fed them to the cows, and the Italians also ate many. They are as large as the eggs laid by many breeds of hens, so a very few would make a meal. These birds utter a dismal "qua" and always seem sad, sitting motionless on the trees through the day until evening, when they go fishing in the Kills.

There is a dark, gloomy old house in the woods near this brook, where some of the Italians lived when employed on the railroad. It is now given over to chimney swallows and wasps, and the carpenter bees have made their tunnels in the boards for many years. One of these boards

has been tunneled sixty-five times, the work of many pleasant Summer days.

Woodland brooks and springs are not only beautiful and interesting, but they play no unimportant part in the household economy, and their sanitary condition is of great moment. Dairies are named after them, and citizens can choose their water supply with great accuracy. Many a cow has done the trustful purchaser of her lacteal product a great injustice, by standing with her feet in the water of some pond or little purling stream. The dairyman will tell you that it is done to keep the flies off, but "Bos," "Cush," and "Speckled Jenny," only smile with a sort of increased-dividend expression, when slyly interrogated on this point.

In April the blood-root blossoms, and its single leaf often closely clasps the flower stem, forming a sort of green collar. It is a dainty flower but none too choice to deck the steep hill sides of the crooked and shaded ravine where it grows in greatest profusion. This is Blood-root Valley and Blood-root Valley brook, along the course of which, it is said, a British messenger, in Revolutionary days, travelled on his way from camp to camp. This stream, which is often dry in summer, also rises near the highest point, and goes to form the Richmond brook. The drainage of the district was formerly collected in a pond, used by a saw-mill, of which there is now only a few beams left, and the dam is broken. About 1870, the boys bathed in this pond, and a little lame boy with crutches and a board for support, used to enjoy himself as much as his companions.

A number of skirmishes occurred along Richmond or Stony brook, in the years of the Revolution, particularly on the day of the fight at St. Andrew's Church. But it is more pleasing to think of it in the times of peace, to see the water snakes glide in so smoothly, the turtles scuttle with much haste and the wayward frogs jump recklessly off the bank frightening the black-nosed dace below. When these little fish are disturbed, they will scatter in all directions, coming together shortly, if they imagine the danger is past. At other times they will sink to the deepest places in the stream, and remain on the sand or pebbles, not moving a fin, and as their backs are sand colored, they are not easily seen from above. Occasionally when there is nothing to fear, one will be seen lying motionless for a long time between two pebbles, and thus can they rest and sleep when they desire.

There are numbers of plane-wood trees on the banks of this stream, and a profusion of wild flowers and a patch of periwinkle on the steep hill-side to the west. A wooded slope, with a brook nearby, always proves attractive to the birds, and this one is a great favorite with them. Catbirds congregate about the smilax patches and sing their varied songs, which are always worth listening to, but it is in May, just before nest building commences, when the males talk to their drab-colored mates in coaxing, faint undertones, that they are most interesting, and those who have not listened to this bright-eyed bird at such a time, only know a small portion of his vocabulary.

There has been much discussion of late as to the real source of the Mississippi, and it would turn an explorer's

hair gray to discover just where Old Place brook rises, to decide to the world's satisfaction from under which particular skunk cabbage leaf courses the first little rill. The marsh-marigolds, that grow so plentifully nearby, do not know where it rises, and the snails that float on their backs, each with its broad fleshy foot turned up to the sun, do not care. They start from some water-parsnips stem or dead twig, on their journey, but all trials to place them gently in the water with the hand, and have them float away, result in failures, for they also can appreciate the appearance of danger.

To the east of the Bohman mansion, near Bohman's Point, there is a little brook, that flows through a sandy semi pasture and woodland region. It is bordered in part by willows and old orchard trees, and the land has that unmistakable air of an ancient farming spot. On the high sand dune, nearby, about which this brook bends in bow fashion, the Indians lived in old time, and their implements and little heaps of flint chips, where the arrows were made, may still be discovered. The spring, where they got water, is on the hill-side, though now filled up with sand and grass grown, but the stones that formed its sides mark the site, and a tiny rill issues from among them in very wet weather.

They had an eye for beauty, as evinced by the patterns on the broken pieces of pottery lying about, and no doubt they thought the warblers very gay, that congregate in spring-time about a moist place near the brook. The warblers come every year, just the same, but the Indians are gone, and probably in the large factory across the Kill

with its thousands of employes, only one or two would recognize their implements scattered among the other stones on the sand.

There are many brooks on the eastern portion of the Island, too small to be recorded on any map and known to but few, but it is with brooks as when viewing a great estate, just as often the little gate house, as the mansion on the hill, that leaves the most pleasing impression. Many a man remembers with affection the rill that turned his first water wheel, or maybe where the brook-mint grew, and though enlarged experience may show that it was a poor little stream indeed, yet it is the one that brings the tears to his eyes.

THE POND-MEADOW.

IT is dark, the snow lies on the ground, and I sit silently in the house and think of the warmer days when I rambled at eventide, when the sun did not set so early and there was a greater margin to the afternoons. It was pleasant then, when the hurry and disquiet of town employment were at an end, to steal away to some retired nook, where only the louder and more piercing cries uttered in the warfare of commerce, could intrude upon the ear. It was easy to find such surroundings, and they seemed to bespeak unbroken solitude, where perchance the foot of man had not been for many weeks. But soon there broke upon the ear a multitude of artificial sounds that had found their way thither through the leafy trees, and which proclaimed the still existing uproar of the outer world. We cannot escape these clangings, if we live within the reach of baker's bread, and our ears have become so accustomed to them, to the blowing of whistles, the firing of guns and the rumbling of trains, that we often fail to give them heed. There is also a certain companionship that is not objectionable in the far away sounds that are due to human agency—mankind is reachable they seem to say, and awaits you in the distance. This is especially true of the whistling, rum-

bling train across the meadows, that does not break but rather, as a reminder of the outer world, deepens the sense of retirement.

Such a place of rural scenes, where nevertheless the sounds of commerce are ever audible, are the acres of woodland and uncultivated sandy fields on the north shore of the Island, between Old Place creek and the settlement along the kill. For many years prior to the railroad, though in sight of the cities across the Sound, and not far from New York itself, this corner escaped the enterprise of trade; utility went round and left these acres to the grasshoppers, to the bitterns, and to me.

With the railroad came changes, but not immediately, and for the first years of its occupancy, save for the width of the track, the land was undisturbed. Much of it indeed, still remains unoccupied, but commerce having looked that way, already covets the water fronts, and the speculator has raised his signs of "Lots for Sale." By-and-by will be the factories, the rows of squalid houses, the goats and the tin cans.

The land is low and swampy in places, where the trees grow large, and anon there are sandy tracts which support only a few blackberry bushes and sumachs. Along the salt meadows, to the west, are several irregular dunes, and cutting deep into the woods through a narrow neck, is a bay-like salt meadow with a straggling creek in its midst.

In these barren worn out fields, in the woods on the edge of the salt meadow, and particularly of the bay or pond shaped meadow, which is now crossed by the railroad trestle, I have spent many hours, often staying into the

night to hear the bitterns and the whippoorwills. I built perches or roosts in the trees, from whence I might see across the pond-meadow, or climbing upon the trestle, watched the life that abounded in the creek and the grass below.

When seated mid the large beams that composed the trestle that stretched far in the distance, I used to feel very small indeed, and I was often reminded as I sunned myself there, of the traveller's story of the Egyptian in the ear of the Sphinx. I quickly found that I was placed in an unusual position, and might watch the many creatures below me unobserved by them, and thus to good advantage to myself.

The muskrats are numerous in the creek, and in the ditches, dug on either side of the trestle, probably for the dual purpose of drainage and protection from meadow fires. In making these trenches the earth was thrown up in piles, and these, when suitable, are taken possession of by the muskrats, who tunneling them find dry retreats above the highest tides. Occasionally at twilight, the parent muskrats bring their half grown young out to swim, and the family go paddling up and down the ditch. One of the musquashes will sometimes call continuously, in a low somewhat musical strain to his mate, and whenever they come near each other, they will touch noses, which no doubt in muskrat etiquette signifies great affection, as it does in some African tribes. The muskrat's pappoose is a very independent individual, and his wilful ways, when he has reached a certain size, cause his mother much anxiety. She swims after him, and rat minor goes where he lists.

When swimming they ripple their tails, and perhaps this aids them in their progress. They make considerable way against even the strongest tides, and leave well defined V-shaped wakes.

The high-tide bushes grow by the creek banks, and also along the ditches on either side of the trestle, making two dark green parallel lines in the lighter colored and shorter meadow grass. These bushes are the home of the common long-billed marsh-wrens, who weave their domed nests in the branches, and whose bubbling, gushing songs, often continue late into the night. I have heard them in June, as late as 8.20 P. M., and they also sing until the middle of September. Often they throw themselves into the air, and fly slowly with a hovering, dangling flight, while they utter their impetuous song, falling again into the meadow as suddenly as they arose. It is pleasing to watch them go up and down a vertical stem, their tails most pertly turned over their backs in the opposite direction from that more fashionable adjustment of the same appendage in other birds. They often linger about the lower beams of the trestle, especially where some of them have been laid over a reedy ditch, and on a neighboring plank-walk; I remember one day, that my approaching foot-steps disturbed one of these sprightly little birds, and instead of jumping off its side, as a sparrow would have done, it simply slipped between two of the boards and disappeared into the meadow below. The sea-side finches are neighbors of the marsh-wrens and at evening a number of them sing along the creek, their quaint song being among the most entertaining to be heard from the trestle. It starts pleasantly

but ends rather oddly, as if indeed something had happened the songster in the midst of his melody and caused him to suddenly modify his tune. It may be roughly rendered in *treele-ahn*, the *ahn* being much drawn out. Occasionally one will hover in the air over the high-tide bushes and sing a slightly more extended song, which, however, ends in the same way as the shorter one. At times they also sing a short *treele-he.* The birds appear about the first of May with the marsh-wrens, long before the high-tide bushes are in leaf, and I have heard them singing in September. I have seen two small finches in the spring, one on either side of the creek, and each singing most continuously, while a female spent her time in flying from one to the other of her rival suitors, staying but a short time with each. She had evidently not made up her mind—was greatly perplexed as to which she ought to choose.

Often along the creek, the snipe call to their fellows flying high above, and the alternate call and reply, is one of the most pleasing bird notes to be heard from the trestle. One could not address his friend in more kindly tones.

The little green herons often perch on the beams above the creek, and if it chances to be on the topmost one that offers an unobstructed run-way, they trot along for a considerable distance, if not approached too rapidly. Indeed the trestle is a favorite perching place for many birds, where they may look out over the wide expanse of meadow. King-fishers and swallows often tarry there, while nearer the upland it is the resort of song-sparrows, robins and cat-birds. It is ever interesting to see the dark, Spanish gentle-

man of a cat-bird, perched on one of the beams, and perking his inquisitive head from side to side, or to hear at evening a song-sparrow pour forth his sweetest melody, while all the meadow lies before him. The barn-swallows, when their nesting time is o'er, range themselves in rows along those nerves of the railroad, the telegraph wires, and sing that short song for which they ought to be famous; or they skim the velvety meadow grass, as if it were the surface of a pond. Indeed the bay-meadow is so remarkably pond-like in aspect, in the little capes and minor bays, that the simile is quite a reasonable one.

Many of the tides overflow a considerable stretch of the only road crossed by the trestle, and looking down I have often seen the fish swimming over the road itself. At night they skip and jump about most recklessly, and it is no wonder that many of them meet their death, and that the bitterns and the musk-rats have an ample supply. Occasionally in the spring and fall, when the tides are exceptionally high, the low lying roads in the vicinity are flooded quite deeply, and the water reaches two or three feet up the hay stacks on the meadows, so that a cat-boat might easily be sailed among them.

At dusk, when the whippoorwills come flying across the pond-meadow, near the junction of the trestle with the upland, they go over the track instead of going between the piles, as would be expected of such cover seeking birds. They call most energetically at times, and are not even frightened by the rumbling train that comes at evening over the trestle. I used to sit often on one of the cross beams, and the train would go rattling by, and

seemed every moment to be falling upon me. Each car hummed a different tune, dependent upon the relative looseness of its bolts, and sometimes a box would blaze, and make the passage of the train in the dark, even more impressive and weird.

As soon as it was gone the whippoorwills would call again among the thick growth by the track, and often they used the whip more lavishly than a Russian tax collector, and chastised poor William from eighty to a hundred times. But as the night progressed, and after the first outburst of their dark and sombre soul was o'er, they sang less often, and uttered the notes fewer times in succession. They have also a second call that I have heard particularly in June and July, and which is less loud than the *whip-poorwill*, and resembles *took-took-took*. If you are not close by, it is inaudible, and it probably is only a part of their nearer conversation.

The whippoorwills add depth to the woods, their voices are inseparable from the mist and dusk of night. But even after they have commenced, the evening bell of the wood-thrush may be heard as he tolls it solemnly in the woods. The catbirds fly out in the dusk to the few stunted trees that grow partly in the meadow grass, and there is a blending of day and night songs—a space in time, that reminds you of the material shore, where the land and the sea do meet.

At the end of the calm summer days, when all nature seemed so peaceful, the trestle was an especially fitting place to spend the evening. The sun set plainly in view, often aflame, and the wide expanse of sky was tinted a

thousand hues. Sometimes at the close of day, a Monarch butterfly came sailing high in the air, and borne on the breeze to the opposite shore. The milk-weeds there supplied it and its progeny with food, and it finally died in some far away pasture. Wandering, wandering, always wandering, never perhaps returning to the same field, its home and its food everywhere; its canopy, a bending leaf.

Year after year the butterflies sail on just the same, the meadows are as green, the melody of the marsh-wren reaches from summer to summer, but a mystery clothes them still. Our investigations end in a sigh; a long breath tells of the hopelessness of the inquiry.

The over-seeing power in the landscape gardening of this world, has wrought on the principle of never making a meadow creek conform to even the suggestion of a straight line, and certainly there is nothing more winding, more tortuous than a salt meadow kill. It seems unwilling to leave the green meadows, and so lengthens the way; and its meandering course may be followed through many turns with the eye, aided by the taller plants growing on its banks. This vegetation is of a different shade than the sunny green meadow; of a darker color—the upland wood tint traced in serpentine patterns on the lighter green grass. Even at dusk, with only a few remaining rays of light, the carpet-like meadow wears a particularly vivid green, and one is apt to look to westward, to make quite sure that the sun has really set. The creek slumbers along between its weedy banks, and is over-spread at evening with a host of mysterious shadows. The drift-wood sails a long, lazy, winding journey, and probably much of it never reaches

the main arm of the sea, but returns with the incoming tide.

On the bridges, where the creek and its arm cross the road, the catchers of crabs often station themselves, and tying pieces of meat, or fish heads, to strings, bait the wily crustaceans. An entertaining party of three negroes occupied the bridge one August afternoon, and laughingly told how the crabs came to eat of a dead dog that lay in the water just up the kill; and which kind chance, aided by a string, a brick and a man, had brought that way. One with a fishing line baited with a small piece of meat, had captured all of the crabs, because his line was longest, and he threw it nearer to the dog. He now and then slyly inquired of his companions, how many they had caught with their large pieces of meat. Then there was an uproarious darky laugh, loud enough to frighten all of the epicurean crabs from their chosen feast, and cause them to run sidewise for half a mile.

The same afternoon, a little boy in a blue cotton shirt, was crab fishing near the mill. He said that they knew better than to take hold of his bait, which no doubt accounted for the fact that he had secured but a single individual that was retained in the net with which he hoped to make further conquests. He ran about most comically from place to place, holding his meat fast by the string, in one hand, his net with the kicking crab in the other, and all the while whistling, or mumbling about the crabs being afraid of his bait. At last he shouted that he had seen a "devil crab," and immediately began to divest himself of his shoes and stockings. While he was thus employed, I

went fishing, and drew a crab gently to the shore. Either through my maladroitness or the evil disposition of the bait, as avowed by the little boy, the crab ran away, before the net containing the now troublesome captive, could be brought into action.

So instead of crabbing we sat on one of the beams from the old mill, and looked out over the meadow, which at mid-summer is beautifully marbled. Nature gives then a display in greens, with here and there patches of brown, where the grass has gone to seed. Later comes the samphire turned a bright red, a few asters, the sea lavender, and the salt meadow golden-rod.

The clinking of the mower may be heard a long distance over the meadow, and the horses, the machine and the men appear very small; they seem lost on the ocean of grass, as unimportant as a man in a row-boat on the sea. The usual land perspective will not serve for the broad stretch of meadows, and you are not sure how far away objects really are.

Some of the farmers believe that an abundant crop of meadow grass indicates a severe winter, as if the earth brought forth a thick growth to keep itself warm. Where man has shorn the meadow, the crows go looking for grasshoppers, for they can catch them there much more easily than in the longer grass.

The mosquitoes abound on the meadows at certain seasons, and often drive away the crab catchers, whom I have seen sitting with their heads drawn down in their coats, the collars of which were turned up in order to leave the least possible area open to attack. Though there are mosqui-

toes on the meadows throughout the summer, still they come more particularly at certain seasons, and when these times are known, one's excursions may be planned so as not to meet with them at the periods of greatest abundance. In ordinary years, there are usually a few at the end of May, a considerable visitation during the first days of July, and again about the same time in August and September. After the first of August, or at most the first few days in the month, the mosquitoes become fairly numerous at all times on the meadows, and for forty or fifty days it is well to go armed with a branch of sweet gum or bay berry, that may be switched about the head. The periods of greatest abundance are about thirty days apart, the first and the last being somewhat more, owing to the cooler weather. Occasionally this order of appearance will be changed slightly, as after the exceptionally warm winter of 1889–90, when the swarm ordinarily coming in July, appeared in the latter part of June.

Staten Island has been denominated "a mosquito-infested Isle," and its natives are said to develop coriaceous skins, only the fittest surviving. However, the population has increased; the leathery skinned native often lives to be very old and waxes stout if he gets enough to eat, and talks back most energetically at all who have aught to say against his home. It is true he has memories of mosquitoes, such as the visitation of July 3, 1863, when the vegetables were left unpicked in the gardens for a week and people wore mosquito net over their hats.

At the time of this plague two men were going to the ferry landing; one of them with a net over his hat, the

other depending solely upon the energy of his arms, and also, very likely, upon whiffs of tobacco smoke, to keep the armed enemy at a distance. But like the little red savages in Sindbad's voyage, they made up in numbers what they lacked in individual strength, and he that was provided with the net, led his unfortunate companion home by the hand, where proper anointment and time reduced the swellings.

In those pestiferous days, the cornice in rooms in daily use became so covered by mosquitoes, that it appeared black or brown, and after the third or fourth day, when they commenced to die, they were swept up in numbers on the floor. Though there have been mosquito years since 1863—1882 being a representative of the series, still there has been nothing equal to the great visitation.

Mosquitoes even attack turtles, and I have observed about a yellow-spotted water-turtle, quite a cloud of them that wished to suck his half warm blood. Sitting on a fence one day, I saw a tiny ribbon-snake in the grass, and running to see it closer, found that it had hidden away. After a time it moved and glided rapidly through the grass stems. I picked it up and put it in my straw hat, and it was so small that it had difficulty in getting out again. A mosquito discovered it and tried very hard to get its proboscis in between the scales, but finally gave it up and came to me.

Both the male and female mosquitoes congregate on the flowers of the wild parsnip, and I have seen individuals greatly swollen with the white juice that they had extracted therefrom. They are also fond of the sugar mixtures that

are spread on trees to attract moths, and sip the beer and molasses as greedily as they do human blood. But mosquitoes in the winged state are not without enemies, and in walking across the meadows I have been attended by one of the larger dragon flies (*Aeschna*), that flew close about me and captured them as my disturbing feet caused them to rise. Sometimes the jaws of a darning-needle may be heard grating against each other, as they open and shut to receive the tiny *Culex*.

The small *Berenice* dragon-fly, occurs in vast numbers on the meadows, at certain seasons, and they are very useful in devouring the mosquitoes at headquarters. At evening, if it is calm, these dragon flies settle quietly on the grass stems, where they spend the night.

Even at the time of their greatest numbers, the woodland and meadow scenes may be enjoyed by climbing a tree, for the higher you ascend the less abundant is *Culex*. The trestle itself is an excellent refuge from them, they can find but little hiding there, and one walks, as it were, through the meadow grass on stilts.

The bitterns were once numerous on the pond-meadow, but persecution has driven most of them away. The gunners stationed themselves at evening in a secluded place, often by the side of the railroad embankment on the edge of the meadow, and when the slow-flying bittern came unsuspectingly from the woods over the opening, he was fired at from below. A long tongue of flame shot upward from the gun, the bittern sometimes screamed most piteously if wounded, and the large yellow eyes flashed fire as he lay helpless among the weeds. One summer served

to drive most of these dark interesting birds, that made the night more gloomy, away from the vicinity of the trestle. They inhabited the meadows from April to November, and at mid-summer, in the thickly-wooded low-lands, their voices sounded like the barking of a puppy—a particularly short *puck-puck.*

The gunner's dog seemed to delight in rushing pell-mell into the meadow ditches where the bitterns fished and frightening not only them, but the timid creatures that had their dwelling there, with his ponderosity and prodigious splashing. It was, as if a Minhocao—that gigantic worm-like animal, reported to turn brooks from their beds in Brazil—came plowing through one of our quiet rural villages.

Dogs care naught for wet feet, though they will shiver in cold weather, after coming out of the water, but if the glee of the moment is any criterion, they seem as happy as when lying in front of the fire. Perhaps the violent series of shakes, that sends the water flying in innumerable tangents from their bodies, has an exhilarating influence that we humans, who are incapable of such gymnastics, know not of. But there is no accounting for nature, and the best we can do is to observe the facts, and say that matters are thus and so; that frogs delight in their hourly bath, Bruno splashes in the ditches or sits by the fire, and that Tabby is displeased if she even so much as wets her feet. If she goes out in the dewy grass, she lifts her feet comically high, so as to be as far removed from the moisture as possible, and often she will shake her legs violently. When there is snow on the ground, she finds

walking particularly disagreeable, and the high lifting and oft shaking of the feet become still more pronounced. But I must say, as it were in parenthesis, that I once saw a cat from my seat on the trestle, splashing about in the water, and interesting accounts have been given of felines that went fishing, and dove and swam with evident pleasure. Nevertheless the average Tabby is averse to a soaking, and the exceptions to the rule may be likened to that fraternity of tramping naturalists, who spend hours in ponds, in swamps, and in sundry swaley places.

Domestic fowls are also averse to standing in water, and are generally very quick to seek shelter in a heavy rain. If it is not a complete protection, they will slope their backs considerably, so that the water may run as speedily as possible down to their tails, and drip off on the ground. The hen that goes out in the morning after a light fall of snow, walks as if her own legs were borrowed ones, and that she was learning how to use the newly acquired members. She lifts her feet high, looks about circumspectly, and utters a "my, my" sort of chuckle, and presently goes back into the house or under the shed. Thus do wet feet prove unpleasant to cats, to hens, and to the majority of humans, who have invented rubber shoes so that they may keep out of the water when they go in it. Even barefooted boys have to exercise an effort to go through a puddle, and if they are thinking about something else, their instinct is to go round.

There are times of the year when the earth seems to have become semi-aqueous, and the hill-sides and the vales are soaking wet, and the little brooks go wandering

from their beds. Those who go into the woods only in Summer, have no idea how inundated they are at the season of Spring, and the places where they walked dryly on the mossy carpet, or sat on the scrawny roots, are covered knee-deep by dark mysterious pools that reflect the tree trunks from their placid surfaces.

Then again in the Fall, when even the village walks are strewn thick with leaves, and the rain comes pattering down for days at a time, there is no escaping the general distribution of water, and by-and-by you feel it making its way through your shoes. First one foot, whose shoe is not quite as tight as its neighbor, becomes a little wet, or perhaps you precipitate matters by stepping into a puddle, and you feel the cool water come suddenly in. After that you don't care; you give over your former circumspection and go plodding along in a mood of indifference. The first puddle seems uncommonly cold, but after your shoes and stockings get thoroughly saturated, it makes little difference, as regards temperature, how many more puddles you step into. There is certainly a limit of absorption, and the water next to your epidermis, becomes warm, and whether from its cosy retreat or from whatever cause, I cannot say, it nevertheless prevents the general inrush of its cooler brother molecules. Thus it is the first wetting that makes you draw your breath hastily between your teeth, and after that, you wait for the water to get warm, for should we not ever be turning our mishaps into pleasantries, or at least make the best of the rain that is showered so liberally upon us all?

A pipe-line, bringing petroleum from Pennsylvania,

runs across a little swamp on the borders of the meadow, and there the bitterns often stationed themselves, and sat silently watching the surface of the water. One summer that portion of the pipe that was lain in the salt meadow, was dug up for the purpose of being cleaned and boxed, and placing my ear to its side, I could hear the slow flowing oil within.

Where the meadow meets the upland there is a procession of flowers, and at mid-summer the array is particularly splendid. The turk's cap lilies make its edge quite gorgeous in August, and later the sunflowers cause it to be still more gay. The upland has a golden fringe, the meadow a yellow border.

The purple bonesets are conspicuous at the end of the trestle in season, intermixed with the giant sunflowers and the golden rods—the royal colors of purple and gold. Probably no single species of flower gives a greater and more wide-spread splendor to the low-lands, than does the purple boneset. It stands often seven feet high, and as a little man walks beside it, is it any wonder that he should open wide his eyes at its glory, and marvel at the growth of a single summer? The equally tall swamp thistle, with purple flowers that match the bonesets in hue, and also with a maroon stem, likewise grows along the edge of the meadow. Its prickly arms stretch about it, and bid you let it alone, or at least to handle it gently. "Go round," says the thistle, "touch me not," and it sways gently in the breeze. A bumble-bee burys itself as deeply as it can in the soft heads, and the heads that have gone to seed are pulled apart by the yellow-birds, and the downy-winged

seeds fly away. Thus does the thistle have to pay a little —have to give the yellow birds and the bumble-bees something to help it along in the world, but it wants you, to "go round."

The tall meadow-rue, the swamp milk-weed, the cardinal lobelia and the Canada burnet, also blossom in turn at the end of the trestle where the up-land meets the meadow, and a few hundred feet away, the blazing-star grows in abundance. The long spikes of purple flowers, blooming from the top downward, are indeed "blazing-stars" in the meadow.

There is always this narrow zone of plants and high growing grass, close to the woods, and its appearance does not suggest at first any such strife as we know is going on there. Yet here the limits of certain species are most forcibly shown, and we see, in spite of the peaceful aspect, the continuous struggle among them. Occasionally there is a lone tree growing further in the grass than the rest, a poor stunted representative of its kind. If it be a sour-gum, as is often the case, some of its leaves turn crimson by mid-summer. This meadow tree is a favorite with the birds; they fly out from the edge of the woods, perch upon it, and then fly back again. It is only at morning and at evening, that a correct idea can be formed of their number.

This winding, turning line, where the upland meets the meadow, must ever be an interesting territory; it is so broken, opening up such unexpected views; the line is a zig-zag, and it has followed the pattern of the meadow creek itself.

I made a roost on the border of the pond-meadow, in a

swamp-oak and a young cedar, by placing a rail, that I found in the grass, from one to the other. It was flat and solidly fixed in the trees, and withal made a confortable seat, where I might go in the late afternoon, and look over the meadow. Perched above the grass as I was, I received only the partial attention of the mosquitoes, though now and then one flew away heavily laden.

From my perch the masts of the vessels on the Sound were visible in the distance among the trees, and anon they would appear across the open meadow, and move along as if they glided through the grass itself. The large flowered *Sabbatia* starred the grass in August at the base of the tree, and meadow mice often rummaged about among the pink blossoms. A catbird lit on the perch beside me, one afternoon, a yard away, but it staid only a moment. Once a white-eyed vireo came within arm's length, exasperated that after all its scolding I had not become afraid and gone away. The chickadees also visited the oak tree, and in addition to the note from whence they get their name, and the plaintive long-drawn *t—d*, gave expression to those more conversational utterances that they bestow upon one another. Thus they said very plainly, and as it were with a jerk, *we-three*, *we-three*, and *such-as-we*, *such-as-we*. The chickadee is commonly a preoccupied bird; is always busy about its own affairs, and gives you but little heed. One chickadee is a cure for the blues; the only time that it becomes plaintive is when it utters its *t—d* note, chiefly in the gladsome and sunny hours of Spring.

At times a night-hawk appeared against the sun-set sky,

and went through his gymnastics with the red clouds for a back ground; and a harvest-fly would occasionally *zie* as if half asleep, having lost all of the zest of the noontide hours. A mink came one afternoon and sniffed about the grass stems and bushes at the base of the tree, and once I saw one cross the railroad track, and watched the serpentine undulations of his long and lithe body, as he prowled about the edge of a pool, spreading consternation among the frogs. One almost despairs of any goodness in nature, after looking a mink in the face.

The slanting rays of the setting sun often shed a mild peaceful glory about the perch and many of the patches of humble flowers in the woods behind. The sun gilds a particular leaf or branch in the woods and we then, as it were, see the sun's shine, whereas its light is generally so omnipresent, that we do not take special cognizance of it.

As I watched from the perch, a haze often brooded over the meadow and dimmed the view; it nestled down on the opposite woodland and made it soft and dreamy. The country may have its roads and be mapped, but it isn't thoroughly explored. There is no need of a far away fairy-land, for the earth is unknown before us—the cow-paths lead to mysterious fields. There is indeed a light of fairy-land in the thick woods at sunset—a golden green—and at mid-summer a myriad of minor songs, a constant tingling, tingling. Though the names of the singers may be mentioned, it does not spoil the enchantment or lessen the charm.

Withal the perch was a pleasant place, and often I felt akin to a bird, as if, perhaps, I might presently fly over the pond-meadow in company with a bittern.

THE PARKS.

IT is reported that in old days, while the Indians still lived on the dunes and open sandy ground by the pond-meadow, that a settler of giant stature used to stalk about the woods and clearings, and when the natives saw his stalwart form approaching, they ran from fear. This big, burly man was ever accompanied by a dwarfed son, who was so inseparably attached to his gigantic sire, that when the latter died, he also took to his bed, and only survived him a few days. Thus the barren fields are not without legendary interest—the giant walked there and the Indians ran away. It is easy to conjure up the scene in those twilight hours, when the globes of fluffy milkweed seeds lend a glamour of uncertainty, and invite the sprites and dryads of the woodland, to a shadowy procession.

There are five of these fields that were once cultivated, but are now partly overgrown with briers and young trees, and are surrounded on three sides by woody hedges, or the woods themselves. My companion once called them "the parks." In several of the fields there are small fairy circles of moss, often quite exact in outline, and this same moss (*Polytrichum*) also grows in one of the parks, on the little hills where corn was planted many years ago. The field

in consequence is quite regularly decked with these patches of green, darker than the surrounding grass. Not only the moss, but also white birches and bushes, have grown upon these old corn hills, and the trees have attained considerable size.

In one of the parks there is a patch of wild strawberries. The bright tinted leaves that come even in June, attract your attention to the vines, and thus often lead to the discovery of the berries. When the grass is low the berries nestle close to the earth, and when it is high, they are borne on long stems. If the ground has been burned over, the berries grow luxuriantly, and seem to be riches springing from poverty, the bright red fruit among the black and burned stems. The best way to eat them, especially when they are small, is to gather several and put them into your mouth at once, the flavor is intensified thereby. But the strawberry has its revenge and seems to say, " you cannot part me from my calyx and bruise me so, without detection, you shall have my blood on your hands," and so you go away with crimson fingers.

There are generally too many berries for the birds to eat. Nature is like a kind mother, she would give her children plenty. This relation of the birds to the berries, each deriving a benefit from the other, is also pleasing.

It seems rather dreadful to put one's big splay feet into these little natural strawberry beds, and crush most clumsily the nodding fruit, but we cannot walk without committing great havoc, and I often notice where I have trodden down he cities of the ants.

Later come the bunch cherries. The shining black

cherries remind one of bright new shoe buttons, but my companion has said it was shameful to compare them to such things, and Pomona would not be pleased if she heard me say it. Indeed she did not forget to give them a decided flavor—the flavor of wild cherries, who cannot remember that? You taste it to the bottom of your stomach.

Pomona also provides huckleberries, and the cat-birds, as a short cut to them, build their nests in the bushes, and often scold me, if I appear at the other end of the patch.

Still later come the apples, borne on a few twisted sprawling trees standing in one of the parks, and surrounded by cedars, by oaks, and by other indigenous growth. I do not think the fruit would bring a high price in the market, but it is far too good to send there, it serves a better purpose where it is. It is not always well to send all the apples to market, or pick all the nuts from a tree—you do not then get the best they can give you.

The ants run about under the apple trees, and what an important matter to them is this falling off of the fruit. Who can tell if many are not killed so; they run a great risk. Probably the universal eye beholds the meteors falling to the Earth, as often as we see the apples descending to the ground, and yet men are not killed by them, the land and the sea are so wide. Thus, perhaps, it rarely happens, that an ant is crushed to death beneath an apple tree.

Some of the apple trees look aflame with their fruit, and the ground is speckled red. How pleasing are the little dots on the rosy skin, they seem to be made for

beauty's sake alone. September is indeed the harvest time; the apples falling from the trees—the fruit of the Earth constantly pelting their poor old mother.

When I compare mentally the early autumn scenes that I can remember; call to mind the vivid red of the sumach leaves, the dark blue lobelias, and that singing, singing, that continuous song of the insects, I am impressed how life for us all, is the same. That gradual change of the ages does not effect the life of man more than it does the cricket of this Summer, and if I had lived a thousand years ago, or should walk the fields a thousand years to come, the scenes would be the same.

It is good to ramble in the autumn fields, in one of the barren sandy nooks where the sweet-fern grows, and where a sad pleasant flavored joy, seems to pervade all about you. With dextrous throws you bring down the apples, and though they may be gnarled and puny, you eat them with a relish, for they seem such free gifts from nature. They come without the asking or the toil, like the persimmons, or the strawberries in the field.

Autumn colors the barren ground vegetation very early with the deepest dye, and as we are taller than most of the plants that grow on the sand, we may look over them, and thus get a wide and varied view. The Virginia creeper runs flaming red along the ground, and the sumachs, the cat-briers and the poison ivy vines, are most vividly colored.

Perhaps the most curious tint of all the autumnal show is the greenish-white leaves of the bitter-sweet vine, that are speckled with yellow. They have an odd

appearance, for all about them the leaves have turned to most vivid colors, while they alone have assumed so white and ghostly a shade. In the chestnuts and some of the oaks, the green color remains longest near the mid-rib, and in the oaks it is often a deep olive shade, and greatly adds to the beauty of the turning leaf. The wild cherry trees color an orange red, and the seedling cultivated cherries are flushed with red and look to be in a fever. The chestnut-oaks turn a light yellow, as do the chestnut trees and the hickories.

There is a vividness of color in many of the leaves that seems almost supernatural, and it is plain that we, who live and grow old on the Earth, can never cease to wonder at the yearly display. "Look," says the little boy, "at that Virginia creeper," and in manhood he points again in wonderment at the flaming red vine in the cedar tree.

The swamp-oaks grow in numbers in the sandy soil, which is not very dry a yard or more below the surface. It nevertheless produces an effect upon the trees, whose horizontal branches start close to the ground, often resting upon it, and whose leaves are finer and more incised than when the trees stand in a richer soil. The cat-brier (*Smilax glauca*) that grows on the dunes, also shows the effect of the sandy ground, and the vines have larger and more frequent tubers for the storage of moisture and nourishment, than when they grow in wetter situations.

The semi-woodland pastures and barren fields are favorite haunts of the doves, and often they coo in the cedar trees, or come flying by with whistling wings. The far-away voice of the dove!—no bird note gives such

an impression of distance as the long *ac-koo* of the dove.

A few leaves still remain in November and fall from the trees ghosts of their former selves. It causes a twinge of regret to see a lone weak butterfly flit across a field on its last excursion, or to see an old tree die; but the dropping of the dead leaves in Autumn, though a part of the funeral procession of the year, does not bring the same feeling. Yet it is as natural for the tree as the leaf to die, and perhaps it is only that the dead leaves are so common, their graves are everywhere, whereas the butterfly and the old orchard tree, with its last apple, appeal more directly to our attention—they are greater deaths.

Often on a Sunday, while seated in the sun on the open sandy ground, I have heard the distant church bells. I noticed that the tolling of the bell was regulated by the breathing of the ringer, with each inspiration he pulled the rope.

The best preaching of a church is often done by its bell. They call it a relic of barbarism, or at least of the times before watches and clocks, but they who speak thus slightingly have never sat alone and listened to the distant tolling of the bells. There is a rhyme, a cadence of the bells, they talk out with their tongues and preach sermons in sound.

The bells of Elizabethport across the kill, answered to those of Mariner's Harbor, and their different tones seemed to speak different desires. Like living things they too seemed to have desires. Did they call *come, come*, or was it *hark, hark?* I interpreted it as the latter, for nature would never have you run wildly about the world, she is

sufficient, right about you. Morally she preaches the same sermon everywhere.

There is indeed a solemnity in the meadows and in the woods like the tolling of a bell—the tolling of a bell in the night—and it is our own fault if the scene does not touch us deeply.

THE TURNPIKE ROAD.

I HAVE rambled along the Turnpike road so often, the experiences have become so blended together, that now, to think over them is like the remembrance of a year. Time has rounded it all, and woven and interwoven the scenes. Here and there a bright colored bird perches on the trees, or an unknown moth hovers over the blackberry blossoms in June, and the day is vividly recalled, for it is most often the occasional, the unexpected, that plows deepest furrows in the memory. And then there are sunny hours that shine forth, though they do not differ from the common passing ones by any outward sign, yet their memory is ensured, for it is sometimes the glow within us, and not always external happenings, that leaves a lasting impression. Thus there is a Turnpike of memory that is not the same as the actual road, and is different to each one of us. It is a gradual growth, an accumulation of experiences and those memory pictures that are never repeated in all of their details. If we ramble along the highway we not only see what is there to-day, but not being free to leave the past behind, an array of trivialities and more weighty reminiscences, come trooping by our side, for we have traveled before with them on the Turnpike road.

The every-day wayside scenes—the common pictures of common life, though they live long in the mind, yet they are difficult to describe with all of the reality that they seem to wear. Perhaps the sun shines obliquely, across the stony hill, upon the houses on the opposite side of the way, and as the curtains wave in the open windows, an occasional glimpse is offered of the little parlor within, of the books arranged after a certain plan on the table, and of the motto, knit in worsted over the door, for there is a conventional parlor as there is a style in dress. Or, perchance, there is an imprint of a child's naked foot in the soft earth by the wayside; or a little girl stops you and inquires if you have seen her mother, and looks with pitiful amazement when she finds you are not a family acquaintance.

The houses crowd about the base of the round topped hill, that overlooks the village and the bay. With its steep rocky sides it keeps the dwellings from scrambling up, so at least we can get a long, uninterrupted outlook from its top. The Camberwell butterflies come from under the loose stones on its side, in early spring, and their wings rattle against them, as they fly with weak, uncertain flight. The first butterfly of Spring, but a remnant of the old year —all the yellow faded out of the borders of her wings during the long winter sleep.

What a curious phase of existence is this sleeping and awakening; to hibernate through all the winter days, and to gradually be ushered into active life again by the warming sun. There is a peace, a quietness and a mys tery, that attaches itself to the lives of these lone waifs of a

by-gone year, and you remember all of the winter storms, and marvel that these fragile beings should have survived among the rocks on the hill-side.

When the butterflies leave their winter dwellings, then mankind leave their dwellings too, and many an unfortunate fellow creature labors with his goods on the Turnpike road. It is amusing from an ultra-social point of view, to see him moving. He stands in front of his house among all his effects. He inspects a chair and then a table, and is very solicitous concerning an old leather bag acquired in his youth. It is as the actions of a squirrel; as if he came out of his nest with a shaving in his mouth, and said: "Sir, this is part of my bed, I would have you know that I have property." But it is well to be solicitous concerning an old leather bag or a shaving; we must love something or languish as an unhappy member of the school of despair.

The stage coach once rumbled along the Turnpike, carrying passengers and mail across the Island to the New Blazing Star landing on the Sound. It was one of the highways between New York and Philadelphia, and no doubt many Van Cortlands, De Peysters and Bleeckers admired the autumnal tints, or the greenness of spring, as they jogged along the serpentine hills.

The boulders by the roadside, and a few old houses, are the surviving monuments of the time, for with one of two exceptions the ancient trees have been cut down. But the Turnpike has still the same trend, and we may wander from bay to kill, on the journey that has so often been performed. But alas, our simple experiences do not bring all

that they should to us, we walk carelessly and unobserving. The old red Turnpike road, even when tenanted by all of fancy's picturings, is probably far less marvelous than any single year of its truthful history which must remain unknown.

If we slop along the muddy road, we are apt to think of it only as muddy, and not consider all that it means. It is well to call vividly to mind how a particular reach appears at different seasons; how it looks on a bright June afternoon, a dark November day, when frozen as hard as adamant in Winter, and when it lies in muddy stretches. Plod, plod, have been the foot-steps along it these many years, and the dust and the mud—perhaps this same mud, mixed for the one hundredth winter—has bedaubed many a pedestrian. When we think of this we straightway fall to dreaming, and walk on truly historic ground.

The Indians Quervequeen, Aquepo, Sachemack and their comrades, from whom Governor Lovelace purchased the Island, once hunted where now runs the Turnpike road. Little did they dream that the farmer's lumbering wagon would slowly climb the hill-side, and meander along where stood these almost insurmountable barriers of rocks and trees, and little did they think either of the roisterly laughter of the pic-nickers, and of those drunken and hilarious shouts that are uttered by the savages of civilization.

A murderer buried his wife in the hollow, and nearby, the cemetery bell often solemnly tolls with funeral sadness, as the carriages leave the highway and approach the open

grave. An old woman drove her vegetable wagon along the road, and sat crying as she urged her horse onward, for while she was in the village below, her husband had died. "Ah! my old man, he die, he die, while I down there," and she pointed in the direction of the village with her whip. Thus do the shouts of the revellers, the sobs and the funeral bell, chime in the memory, and a wondrous song is heard on the Turnpike road.

The wind blows and the dead leaves skip about sembling butterflies in their motions. A mullein plant fresh and green, has a favored situation on the sunny side of a tree stump. When you unfold the soft downy leaves, you think you see the face of Summer there, but it is only a dream. Little insects have tucked themselves in the soft warm bed, formed by the overlaying of these mullein leaves, and thus await the sun. What marvelous faith have they, everything is well to them, and though we complain of the long, long, cold winds, yet they wait patiently in the mullein, and go abroad on the sunny day that is sure to come.

In a hollow stump the sorrel grows, spreading its tender leaves on the ground. It is protected from the weather by the walls of wood, and the sun shines for a little while each day through the open at the top; but the leaves are not quite so sour to the taste, not quite so potent, as those matured in the open field.

How strangely the cold and stormy days follow close to the bright and even warm ones. The little pools by the wayside, look smiling and sunny on a spring day, when, lo! on the morrow, they are frozen over, and their surface becomes beautifully marbled. The curved lines and streaks

in the ice, would make a fair pattern for the laying out of walks and rambles in a public park. When the snow falls among the cedar trees, the effect is pleasing, the green and the white make a pretty contrast. If the sun is shining the scene is enhanced, for there are sun-snows, as well as sun-showers. The little flakes descending among the dead plants by the road-side, make a gentle rustle, as they fall against the withered leaves. The close cropped pastures look particularly beautiful, after the snow; they present one uninterrupted immaculate surface. Most of the fields, however, have many weeds and tall grasses, which show more conspicuously against the pure white background than they did before. The crows appear blacker when the snow lays on the ground than at any other time, and it is also most profitable then, "to walk in another's footsteps." Every man helps to wear the path, as musk-rats do in the meadow-grass.

The foot-prints of the inquisitive dogs, that ran from their masters, to where the mice had been in the night, show plainly; and the tiny tracks of the mice themselves, about the dead stems of the asters and golden-rods, indicate their efforts to secure the seeds.

You can see where one wagon has turned out to let another pass; even where they have stopped, perhaps to talk and ask the news. The snow silently records the wanderings of every creature, and tells of his purpose and his vagaries. A dog led by some curious knowledge, or by the memory of a former visit, before the snow, trots across the field, to where a dead member of his species lies. The snow records his great excitement; how he pranced

about the lifeless body, and went once quite close to its head, and then ran away up the hill. Perhaps he was touched by uncertainties and doubts, akin to human ones.

It is the general impression that there is little or nothing to see of animal life on a winter ramble, and that during the dead months, as they are called, every thing is truly dead. There are books on nature, that take great pains to point out this seeming, and to some extent, actual error in the popular mind, but though it is true that there are mice and birds, and even flies and moth abroad, yet it is also true, that we walk over the snow as a man in the depths of night along the main street of the village when all are sleeping. It is not correct to call Winter the season of the dead, but with much accuracy, we may say, that it is the months, or days, of the sleepers. The brown chrysalis wrapped in withered leaves and silk, is the purple and green Luna moth of June.

The cows wander along the hill-sides, and eat bush twigs and the dry oak leaves. They also devour the red bunches of sumach berries, and sometimes, in Summer, the poison ivy vine. The cow looks well among the bushes; stands for us in place of the wild deer, and the other browsing creatures that have gone. We would miss them greatly, and a Japanese landscape is wanting much, in its dearth of cattle. Sometimes she scratches her head with a hind leg, and then the mild eyed cow loses her grace; she seems to be trying a new feat in gymnastics—a new one to the race of kine.

The bells on their necks sound quaintly; they have even a sylvan tone. A constant, tingling, tingling, as the

unseen cows meander with unsteady gait mid the birch and cedar trees on the distant hill-side. A little bit of art adds much to nature, and a great deal of nature enhances art. The cow-bell would sound a discord on a city street.

A thick patch of woods by the road-side has lately been cleared away. It consisted mainly of cedars and gums, and a most luxuriant growth of smilax. The wild honeysuckle grew there, and among many other birds, a cardinal bred every year in the tangle. In speaking of the bird the female is generally forgotten, or if mentioned, it is said that she is brown only. It is true she is brown, but a beautiful warm brown, and then her bill is pink as if to make a noticeable contrast. Once while sitting in a cedar tree in a swamp, one lit close by, within two yards, and there was a good opportunity to see what a pretty bird she was. When the males, in their scarlet coats, hop about on the snow, you are impressed with the sight, you are not apt to forget those winter days, there seems to be something unnatural in all this bright color in the otherwise sombre thickets of January.

While the woodmen were chopping the trees, a male cardinal flew close about them, for the axe had sounded so many days in his favorite haunt, that he became quite bold. How surprised must be the brown thrushes, and the many pairs of catbirds, that annually rear their young in a tangle, when returning in hopeful Spring, they find the ground cleared. There are many anxious twitterings then.

But it is the all-consuming fire, and not the axe, that causes the most damage among the trees; it is the smoke curling up between the hills, that brings a deeper sigh than

does the rhythmic chop, chop, of the woodmen, as they strike in alternate succession. The odor of the burning leaves and grass, is like the fragrance from some giant pipe, and the smoke goes upward in great clouds, as if some unseen sylvan deity, were smoking the forest leaves. Thus he puffs and puffs, and burns the withered leaves in the Fall; and again in Spring after the snow, he lights his pipe once more. Pussy willows, with their soft and downy catkins; azaleas, with their pink buds, and all the young and tender plants that promised to array the fields with the freshness of Spring, are burned by this sylvan smoker.

It commonly takes two years for a sufficient growth to spring up to make a secure winter retreat for the rabbits. But, even then, they are rarely secure, and they spend much of their time in fleeing from their enemies. Their ears are ever open; their noses twitch in their efforts to secure the latest scent, and bunny has a thousand frights and suspicions in a day. Nevertheless, if you stand still in the road, at evening, she may come within a few feet, probably mistaking you for some upstart of a tree. Maybe she will make her toilet while sitting on her hind legs before you, seeming all the time quite unconcerned until, perhaps, a slight motion, a gentle swaying of your body, attracts her attention, when she bounds most wonderfully down the road.

Unless a man is very hungry, it is a shame to kill poor bunny, especially where her kind does not abound; but then man is ever seeking a dinner, and it is only a sort of gastronomic etiquette, that prevents many a mild faced little tabby, from getting nearer to the fire than the hearth-stone.

It is a blessing that the road is not neat, that is, not neat in the usual sense. The small trees, the black-berry bushes, and a profusion of wild flowers that pathetically bloom and die in their season, grow in many places along either side. No grassy margin and painted fence, could match the splendor of these natural hedges, and praises be to him, who might have, but did not cut them down.

There are a few pits by the side of the highway, where treasure was buried, near to a large stone and a forked oak tree. At night a man came with a lantern and dug as silently, as stealthily as he could, in great hope of finding the secret store. He started, no doubt, when his pick struck the hard stones, and the night and the mission, made his pulse run high.

Houseman, and his negro servant, shortly after the Revolution, dug several caverns into a steep hill-side, and you may sit at the mouth of one of the caves, now surrounded by undergrowth and trees, and see the passers-by on the Turnpike. He found no gold, it is said, only dug these holes that make quiet nestling places for lonely ramblers, where they may sit on the dry dead leaves, throw their coats open and let the sun beat warmly down. Many wandering creatures take advantage of their shelter, for they are favorites with the woodland tenantry.

Wild apple trees grow down the lane in the thicket. Two of them bore an abundance of fruit last August; great mellow apples, red and yellow streaked, and the crickets and wild mice helped to devour them. When you sit under the tree and bite deep into one of the apples, disclosing to the light the brown seeds that have been

hidden in the white pulp, there seems to be a kind of a zest accompanying the proceeding, a happy crackling as if the apple enjoyed it also. That is the reason, it is held, that the pulp is there; it makes the fruit attractive, and eating it, we throw the core away, and a seedling apple tree grows by the lane.

Further to the west, is a small village, and the posters of the Salvation Army bedeck the fences: "If sinners entice thee consent thou not." The usual corner loungers bask in the sun; there is a busying in the little grocery, and a sound of laughter in the tavern. Though boisterous laughter may bring a good digestion and a happy hour, yet it seems somewhat inconsistent with nature. Do we ever see great levity in the hedge-row? The bird sings merrily in the tree, while his mate brings a luckless caterpillar to feed the young, and with one look we see the dark and light spots in the mosaic. The average is not a joyful scene, neither is it a wholly sad one, but it is like our own minds with their cloudy and sunny hours, with their songs and discords.

It is pleasant to buy crackers in the little grocery at evening, at the close of a long May day, and go eating them on your journey, or when seated on the fence, while the birds are singing. The Italian laborers come in a group along the road with their large variously colored bundles slung on sticks over their shoulders. The road is red, the dog-woods are decked in white blossoms and the sun gilds the edges of the black clouds behind which it is setting.

There is a mysteriousness about the commonplace road

at evening, and the pale geranium blossoms, that nod by the wayside, seem but the ghosts of flowers. The gravestones show plainly on the hill, and twilight, death, bird's songs and evening rambles, mix themselves into that inexplicable maze, which makes the beauty and the substance of a dream.

The days of May and of June are the main-springs of Summer. To go afield, is like attending a grand show, a visit to a large museum, and walking hastily through its halls. There is so much, that you become bewildered, it makes your head ache. The plants grow up and bloom, while it seems you have been but around the field. At night the fog comes as a wall of mist up the bay, and the trees are dripping wet; and at noon the sun is hot, and the leaves and branches grow—fairly bound along the path of life. They come to the uphill, about the first of July.

There are many dwellings along the Turnpike road, built long ago, but now deserted, and falling into ruin. Their grounds offer pleasant rambling places, for they seem experienced bits of mother earth; first wild, then cultivated, and now running wild again. Like those who have traveled much, they seem capable of giving advice. It may be a hard saying, but it is a truth, as gleaned from them, that there is too much hope. Men are unreasonably buoyed up in spite of facts—think that no doubt all will be well with them, and so plant many fields and build innumerable structures. But nature has no care on which face the copper falls, because it makes no difference to nature and it is the same with every artificial hope, it is as likely to end one way as another.

Nature is a house breaker. She will pull the windows out, knock down the doors, topple over the chimney, and will finally have the clap boards off, or the stones from out the wall.

These old broken down buildings, along the road, were erected mid great expectations, and their blank, dark windows, now look solemnly across the sunny fields. They lost their soul when they lost their tenants. The smoke from a chimney seems to tell more of life to us, than even the swallows that fly swiftly from its flues.

Sometimes these houses are partly inhabited, one or two rooms will be occupied by an individual, who seems to have borrowed his character from the domicile—to be as forlorn as the structure in which he lives. The red-peppers and seed-corn are hung under his porch, and the family dog and cat, and the chickens, bask in the sunshine, on the warm dry boards by his door. He will tell you stories of long ago, when he was a young man, which he says, "wasn't yesterday." He was jolly and gay then, for he used to visit Cedar Grove nigh every night with David Playmore. He could fiddle, and there wasn't any fun without music. But alas, for these orgies, David's head began to twitch—he was always a nervous fellow—and the doctor, who was unfamiliar with Cedar Grove, said he tied his necktie too tight, it stopped the circulation.

So the old man chuckles; the memories of his revels amuse him still, and yet he is half ashamed of them, does not speak so openly as when he tells of the cut on his hand, which he got while chopping wood.

It is pleasant at lunch time to seek the sunny side of an

old weathered building, or hay stack, where you may eat your sandwich, and look out over the meadows with their silver streak of a kill, for where the Turnpike road runs on the crest of Long Neck, there is a wide and uninterrupted view. The far away houses, the stacks of hay, the light and dark spots caused by passing clouds, the lines of trees running down to the meadow edge, and the lone cedars, sycamores and apple trees, twisted by the wind, are all interesting. There is no colder place in Winter than these same salt meadows, for the north wind has an uninterrupted sweep across them, and every little grass stem seems to wave it on. "All grass is dead now," says the wind, "and I have no heart, let all things freeze on the meadow to-day."

We are in truth, as much of nature as the grass on the meadows, or the hardy little mice and the song-sparrows along its edge, and so we ought to congratulate ourselves, include our own persons in the praise that we bestow upon them for their endurance.

These same song-sparrows should put our occasional unhappiness to shame. They have not only a living to gain, but they are beset by powerful enemies; a hawk, that pruner of the avian world, must needs catch some of them sooner or later. The early colonists, who expected Indians behind the tree-trunks, lived in much the same trepidation.

The tightly-stretched telegraph wires, along the road, are played by the wind; the passing breeze is turned to music, and speeds you on your way. To the ear placed on the pole it hums peculiarly, as if far away beyond the

hills, there was an endless bridge, over which a heavy train was ever passing, and you heard the distant rumbling sound.

The stage coach has not been put entirely by; it comes rattling along drawn by three horses abreast—a ponderous vehicle formerly used in the crush and the jam of the city. Now in its old age it is granted a probation, and having proved itself unsmashable, is allowed to spend its declining years on the Turnpike road. Before the time of Governor Tompkins, the highway ran differently than it does to-day; it passed between the old Ridgway mansion and the Fresh Kill meadows, to the only house beyond. There were but three or four families living on the Neck then, and they enjoyed almost an insular seclusion, like the lone farm house that now stands on "Price's Island," that curious rise in the meadows, near the Fresh Kill. It gathers its chief interest from its peculiar situation. Even the household cat seems wilder there, and runs up an apple tree when you approach, and the poor disabled, ridge-backed horses, stare like creatures of another world, for they are seldom disturbed in their solitary haunts. The salt meadow roundabout has been the occasion of endless bickering and dispute; the unconscious waving grass has caused much unhappiness among the inhabitants. There was once sufficient meadow for all, and the assessors did not consider the entire acreage in their levy. The marsh-wrens and the cackling dabchicks, alone claimed absolute ownership. But with the fences came the unhappy quarrels, and among the inhabitants of a scantily-settled district, disagreements are most distressing. The solitude nurses their woe, it

changes their character and leads to perpetual broodings. As the wind that sighs in the pines at the door seems to attune with the feelings, so all nature goads them on, and the quarrel extends from the line fence to the straying cattle and the use of the lane.

There are many warm, sandy fields on Long or Karle's Neck, often divided by hedges that have grown unkept these many years. Clumps of sassafras and a variety of other trees, have sprung up in these abandoned places, and give them a peculiarly pleasant character. The yellow and the pitch pines, have lain a carpet of needles, and the paths that wind over it, are often dry and attractive in Winter.

The Indians once lived on the dunes, for their implements are scattered about, and you find the arrow-heads and hammer-stones where they left them. There is a certain charm in picking a flint from the sand, and knowing that the last human hand that held it before your own, was that of a wandering Indian.

Winter ought to be warmer to those who have built their houses in these sandy situations. The low persimmon trees, the pines, the open woods, and here and there the barren spots that are always dry, seem to coax Winter not to be too severe, and are ever beckoning to Spring. Some of the persimmon trees retain their dried calyxes, and they serve to show all Winter the fruitfulness of the tree, as shavings tell of the carpenter's industry.

Many a happy day has been spent wandering on the Neck, the rabbits occasionally skipping about over the clumps of *Hudsonia*, or poverty-grass, as it is called on

Cape Cod. It is amusing to watch a little dog pursuing "Molly," she outstrips him quite easily, and he is so earnest that he will run quite upon you before he is aware, and then retires abashed. All his energy is centered in his sense of smell, on such occasions. You can see that he sees nothing, only smells his way along the trail, and bays. The voice of a dog after a rabbit.

On these dry dunes, mid the cedars, the pines and the *Hudsonia*, the sunny days seem one long song; there is a cadence rising from the earth, and the heat dances in a shimmering light along the warming ground. A sad unspeakable joy, a tingling of the nerves, an awful sense of the unknown, settles calmly but profoundly down.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE is no jesting in nature; she may seem glad or sad, but she is earnest. A trifling man in the field cannot fool the crickets; and yet there is much misrepresentation in nature. I see the hickory trees turn yellow and brown in Autumn; they would have me believe that they didn't bear any fruit this year. God's creatures often appear to one another what they are not—they are tricky. Harmless snakes mimic poisonous ones, the semblance of many moth to yellow leaves is striking; white spiders inhabit white flowers, and yellow spiders occur on yellow ones. Thus they escape their enemies, or prove the hidden enemies of others. The operations of nature are akin to those of Wall Street. When we walk in the woods we cannot be sure of what we see, so much is done for appearance sake alone, the truth is hidden mid a pageant of bright petals. Circe is ever abroad, and the milk-weeds lure flies and bees and hold them captive till they die.

Any action that is possible is permissible in nature; she even tolerates murder. Let those who can, do, is the motto in the fields. The crimes that a lone man may commit in the woods, or on the sea shore know no law,

and even seem without the pale of the conscience. If he crushes a snail, or barks a tree nature does not revenge herself.

Yet the ants have a standard of justice among themselves, that is a conscience as far as their community and species go. Also there is a law among crows, they do not destroy each other's nests. Our own justice hardly steps outside of human affairs, but we owe something to animals. The cow in the field appreciates kindness, and we should strive to please the more helpless creatures, as well as our friend and our kindred.

Perhaps the chief value of going afield, is that we are judged by a true standard—a dollar isn't worth a cent there. Death is a great leveller it is said, and so is nature's influence. In the city a man is surrounded by artificial conditions and has the help of his fellows, but in the open country he comes more to the realization of himself. A lone journey in the meadows or a day spent silently in the woods, is sobering, and many suffer considerably when thus imprisoned with themselves. They cannot find anything of interest in the meadows, they complain of quiet in the midst of warfare, and are generally fretful.

A man who concerns himself principally with the artificial, and who thinks that the world is for stirring business alone, misses entirely that divine halo that rests about much in nature. To him all things are certain. He can have a particular tree cut down or an ox killed at command, and he is ever busy spinning a web of affairs. You see him hurrying across the street with rapid strides, for hasn't the Valley railroad declared a dividend! Such

things must be, but they are not the safest springs of pleasure. We must not put by entirely the chippy singing in the apple tree, or the white clouds, for nature declares a dividend every hour—the dew-drops always pay par to the summer leaves.

If we could constantly bear in mind many of our experiences, most of us would be quite content to remain in some sequestered nook for the length of our days, but the freshness of the smart wears off—we forget, and are burned again.

Those who are unconsolably miserable, and feel that they have all of the ills, should inspect the lilies of the field. There is hardly a perfect one among them, and no doubt they would often be glad to spin and reap, if they might thereby forget the gnawing caterpillars that devour their leaves. There should be many doctors among the plants. I meet with ailing individuals that would gladly consult specialists on stamens and pistils.

We sometimes get a wider view of our homes by going afield. Like Lynceus we see well at a distance. The chief value of an excursion is often the last step across the threshold. We walk twenty miles in order to get acquainted with our family cat. We walk and walk, and think we are going to discover something of interest; we go a long way from home and find ourselves finally in some man's back yard, where he is already at home. Stanley in all his explorations always found some one at home. The black men fed him with vegetables from their kitchen gardens.

Our enjoyment of a place is often proportioned to the effort we have made to get there. The further it is away

and the longer the tramp, the sharper our eyes become, and vivid is the mental picture we carry away. One of the chief advantages in visiting different meadows and pieces of woodland, is, that it whets our perception, we are more on the look out. But probably there isn't a ten acre woodlot even near home, that has been thoroughly explored. If you think there is, go through it again, and see if there isn't a nut tree, that you have before passed by without discovery.

It is often well to select some circumscribed piece of mother earth, and watch it particularly throughout the year; comparing it with the other fields to which occasional journeys are made. The rhythm of the warmer months is broken by scattering our observation too wide. There is a cadence of the year; one continuous song changing gradually and almost imperceptibly, and of which each musical creature sings in turn his part. The first outburst of melody of the song-sparrow, the black birds in the swamp, the crickets, the katy-dids, the *z-ing* of the harvest flies, and the late fall notes of the birds going southward; these and many more, all come as signs of the seasons, and mark for each patch of mother earth, the progress of the year. They make a beautiful and pathetic march, and are best seen and most forcibly impressed, by looking steadily at the same acres. If we stand with open eyes, there is no pageant so varied as the march of the warmer days. But the rapid change that characterizes Summer is gone in Winter. There may be snow or there may be none, but we have generally to look close to note that a few more dead leaves have blown off an oak

on the hill-side, or that the blackhaw berries are a little more shrivelled than they were a month ago. When the ban of Boreas is o'er the land, and the leaves huddle together in the depressions in the woods, as if they would keep one another warm, and the snow lays on the earth, then a view of one field, of one hill-side, is so similar to the view a month hence, that one falls back on the calendar, for the want of any change betokening the march of time out of doors.

Nature does indeed will us strange fortunes, but generally she is tolerably kind, and if we do not try to visit the North Pole, or spend a Summer in the Sahara, we may live along without any marked break in our mutual, friendly relations. We may go musing calmly in the meadows, in the woodland, and along the country lanes, and hark to those inward murmurings of fancy that cause a strange array of natural and human transactions, to move in turn over old Staten Island, that seems to sleep so peacefully to-day beneath the autumn sun. Yet no doubt the present is quite as unquiet and wrangling as many a bygone year, but over the past there always rests a halo, and time, like a kind critic, idealizes for us the jumbled maze, and only gives forth a poetic tincture of the whole.

The patroons and their Bouwries, the Peach war, the British troops quartered on the Island, and the domestic scenes in the Dutch and Huguenot families, wear to us a garment of quiet and pleasing interest, though its seams chafed harshly enough, many of those who wore it of old.