Title: A Northern Countryside

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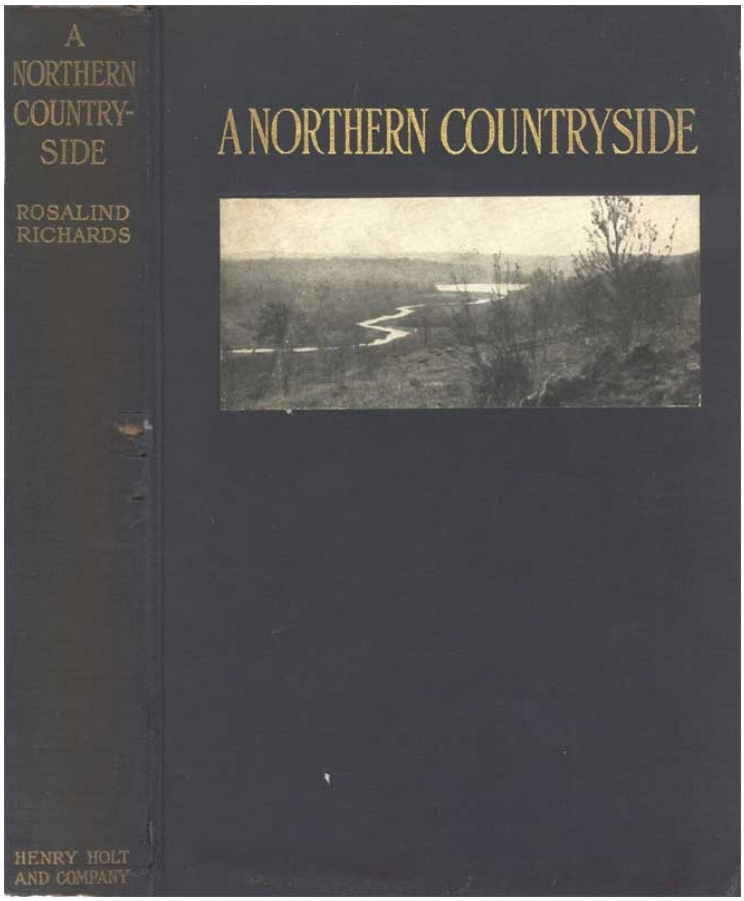
Release date: April 25, 2011 [EBook #35956]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Roger Frank, Juliet Sutherland and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net



From a Wentworth Photograph

ON THE EASTMAN HILL CROSS-ROAD.

A NORTHERN COUNTRYSIDE

By

ROSALIND RICHARDS

Illustrated from photographs

by

BERTRAND H. WENTWORTH

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1916

Published April, 1916

THE QUINN & BODEN CO. PRESS

RAHWAY, N. J.

To

J. R., L. E. W., and L. T. S.,

without whose help this small record

could not have been written.

PREFACE

No one person can fitly describe a neighborhood, no matter how long known, how well loved. Yet records of what is lovely and of good report in a district should be treasured and preserved, however imperfectly.

My father’s name, not mine, should rightly be signed to these pages, for it is his intimate knowledge of our countryside, loved and explored with a boy’s ardor and a naturalist’s insight since childhood, which they strive to set down.

I have taken care to write almost wholly of two or more generations ago, and of persons who, with few exceptions, have now passed out of this life; and I have in all cases altered names, and shifted families from one part of the county to another, to avoid possible annoyance to surviving connections. It has even seemed best in some cases—though I have done so with reluctance—to change the names of villages, of hills and streams, as well.

Beyond this, I have striven only to record faithfully the anecdotes and memories that have come down to me. But no record, however faithful, can be in any way adequate. The rays will be refracted by the medium of the writer’s personality; and the best that can be done will be but a small mirrored fragment, before the daily repeated miracle of the living reality.

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Thanks are due Mr. Bertrand H. Wentworth of Gardiner, Maine, for his very kind permission to illustrate this book with reproductions of his photographs.

ILLUSTRATIONS

A NORTHERN COUNTRYSIDE

CHAPTER I—A NORTHERN COUNTRYSIDE

Our county lies in a northern State, in the midst of one of those districts known geographically as “regions of innumerable lakes.” It is in good part wooded—hilly, irregular country, not mountainous, but often bold and marked in outline. Save for its lakes, strangers might pass through it without especial notice; but its broken hills have a peculiar intimacy and lovableness, and to us it is so beautiful that new wonder falls on us year after year as we dwell in it.

There is a marked trend of the land. I suppose the first landmark a bird would distinguish in its flight would be our long, round-shouldered ridges, running north and south. Driving across country, either eastward or westward, you go up and up in leisurely rises, with plenty of fairly level resting places between, up long calm shoulder after shoulder, to the Height of Land. And there you take breath of wonder, for lo, before you and below you, behold a whole new countryside framed by new hills.

Sometimes the lower country thus revealed is in its turn broken into lesser hills, or moulded into noble rounding valleys. Sometimes there are stretches of intervale or old lake bottom, of real flat-land, a rare beauty with us, on which the eyes rest with delight. More often than not there is shining water, lake or pond or stream. Sometimes this lower valley country extends for miles before the next range rises, so that your glance travels restfully out over the wide spaces. Sometimes it is little, like a cup.

As you get up towards the Height of Land you come to what makes the returning New Englander draw breath quickly, the pleasure is so poignant: upland pastures dotted with juniper and boulders, and broken by clumps of balsam fir and spruce. Most fragrant, most beloved places. Dicksonia fern grows thick about the boulders. The pasturage is thin June-grass, the color of beach sand, as it ripens, and in August this is transformed to a queen’s garden by the blossoming of blue asters and the little *nemoralis* golden-rod, which grew unnoticed all the earlier summer. Often whole stretches of the slope are carpeted with mayflowers and checkerberries, and as you climb higher, and meet the wind from the other side of the ridge, your foot crunches on gray reindeer-moss.

Last week, before climbing a small bare-peaked mountain, I turned aside to explore a path which led through a field of scattered balsam firs, with lady-fern growing thick about their feet. A little further on, the firs were assembled in groups and clumps, and then group was joined to group. The valley grew deeper and darker, and still the same small path led on, till I found myself in the tallest and most solemn wood of firs that I have ever seen. They were sixty feet high, needle-pointed, black, and they filled the long hollow between the hills, like a dark river.

The woods alternate with fields to clothe the hills and intervales and valleys, and make a constant and lovely variety over the landscape. Sometimes they seem a shore instead of a river. They jut out into the meadowland, in capes and promontories, and stand in little islands, clustered round an outcropping ledge or a boulder too big to be removed. You are confronted everywhere with this meeting of the natural and indented shore of the woods, close, feathery, impenetrable, with the bays and inlets of field and pasture and meadow. The jutting portions are apt to be made more sharp and marked by the most striking part of our growth, the evergreens. There they grow, white pine and red pine, black spruce, hemlock, and balsam fir, in lovely sisterhood. Their needles shine in the sun. They taper perfectly, finished at every point, clean, dry, and resinous; and the fragrance distilled from them by our crystal air is as surely the very breath of New England as that of the Spice Islands is the breath of the East.

Our soil is often spoken of as barren, but this is only where it has been neglected. Hay and apples give us abundant crops; indeed our apples have made a name at home and abroad. Potatoes also give us a very fine yield, and a great part of the State is rich in lumber. When it is left to itself, the land reverts to wave after wave of luxuriant pine forest. Forty miles east of us they are cutting out masts again where the *Constitution’s* masts were cut.

From a Wentworth Photograph

THE WOODS JUT OUT IN ISLANDS ROUND AN OUTCROPPING LEDGE

The apple orchards are scattered over the slopes. In the more upland places, sheep are kept, and the sheep-pastures are often hillside orchards of tall sugar maples. We have neat fields of oats and barley, more or less scattered, and once in a while a buckwheat patch, while every farm has a good cornfield, beans, pumpkins, and potatoes, besides "the woman's" little patch of "garden truck." A good many bees are kept, in colonies of gray hives under the apple trees.

The people who live on the farms are, I suppose, much like farm people everywhere. "Folks are folks"; yet, after being much with them, certain qualities impress themselves upon one's notice as characteristic; they have a dry sense of humor, and quaint and whimsical ways of expressing it, and with this, a refinement of thought and speech that is almost fastidious; a fine reticence about the physical aspects of life such as is only found, I believe, in a strong race, a people drawing their vigor from deep and untainted springs. I often wonder whether there is another place in the world where women are sheltered from any possible coarseness of expression with such considerate delicacy as they find among the rough men on a New England farm.

The life is so hard, the hours so necessarily long, in our harsh climate, that small-natured persons too often become little more than machines. They get through their work, and they save every penny they can; and that is all. The Granges, however, are increasing a pleasant and wholesome social element which is beyond price, and all winter you meet sleighs full of rosy-cheeked families, driving to the Hall for Grange Meeting, or Sunday Meeting, or for the weekly dance.

Many of the farm people are large-minded enough to do their work well, and still keep above and on top of it; and some of these stand up in a sort of splendor. Their fibres have been seasoned in a life that calls for all a man's powers. Their grave kind faces show that, living all their lives in one place, they have taken the longest of all journeys, and traveled deep into the un-map-able country of Life. I do not know how to write fittingly of some of these older farm people; wise enough to be simple, and deep-rooted as the trees that grow round them; so strong and attuned to their work that the burdens of others grow light in their presence, and life takes on its right and happier proportions when one is with them.

If the first impression of our country is its uniformity, the second and amazing one is its surprises, its secret places. The long ridges accentuate themselves suddenly into sharp slopes and steep cup-shaped valleys, covered with sweet-fern and juniper. The wooded hills are often full of hidden cliffs (rich gardens in themselves, they are so deep in ferns and moss), and quick brooks run through them, so that you are never long without the talk of one to keep you company. There are rocky glens, where you meet cold, sweet air, the ceaseless comforting of a waterfall, and moss on moss, to velvet depths of green.

The ridges rise and slope and rise again with general likeness, but two of them open amazingly to disclose the wide blue surface of our great River. We are rich in rivers, and never have to journey far to reach one, but I never can get quite used to the surprise of coming among the hills on this broad strong full-running stream, with gulls circling over it.

One thing sets us apart from other regions: our wonderful lakes. They lie all around us, so that from every hill-top you see their shining and gleaming. It is as if the worn mirror of the glacier had been splintered into a thousand shining fragments, and the common saying is that our State is more than half water. They are so many that we call them *ponds*, not lakes, whether they are two miles long, or ten, or twenty.[1] I have counted over nine hundred on the State map, and then

given up counting. No one person could ever know them all; there still would be new “Lost Ponds” and “New Found Lakes.”

The greater part of them lie in the unbroken woods, but countless numbers are in open farming country. They run from great sunlit sheets with many islands to the most perfect tiny hidden forest jewels, places utterly lonely and apart, mirroring only the depths of the green woods. 11

Each “pond,” large or little, is a world in itself. You can almost believe that the moon looks down on each with different radiance, that the south wind has a special fragrance as it blows across each; and each one has some peculiar, intimate beauty; deep bays, lovely and secluded channels between wooded islands, or small curved beaches which shine between dark headlands, lit up now and then by a camp fire.

Hill after hill, round-shouldered ridge after ridge; low nearer the salt water, increasing very gradually in height till they form the wild amphitheatre of blue peaks in the northern part of the State; partly farming country, and greater part wooded; this is our countryside, and across it and in and out of the forests its countless lovely lakes shine and its great rivers thread their tranquil way to the sea.

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[1] The legal distinction in our State is not between ponds and lakes, but between ponds and “Great Ponds.” All land-locked waters over ten acres in area are Great Ponds; in which the public have rights of fishing, ice-cutting, etc.

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CHAPTER II—THE RIVER

Our river is one of the pair of kingly streams which traverse almost our entire State from north to south. The first twenty-five miles of its course, after leaving the great lake which it drains, is a tearing rapid between rocky walls: then follows perhaps a hundred miles of alternating falls and “dead water,” the falls being now fast taken up as water powers. It has eleven hundred feet to fall to reach the sea, and it does most of this in its first thirty miles.

The river’s course through part of our county is marked by a noticeable geological formation. For a space of fifteen miles, the greater and lesser tributary streams have broken their way down through the western ridge of the river valley in a succession of small chasms that are so many true mountain defiles in little. They have the sharp descents and extreme variety of slopes and counter-slopes, though with walls never more than a hundred and fifty feet high. 13

There are forty or fifty of these ravines, some nourishing strong brooks, some a mere trickle, or a stream of green marsh and ferns where water once ran. Acushticook, which threads the largest, is really a river, and Rollingdam, Bombahook, and Worromontogus are all powerful streams. Rollingdam follows a very private course, hidden in deep mossy woods for several miles. The ravine presently deepens and becomes more marked, descending in abrupt slopes, then narrows to a gorge, the rocky sides of which are covered with moss and ferns, nourished by spray. The brook runs through it in two or three short cascades, and falls sheer and white to a pool, twelve feet below.

Below our Town, the river sweeps on, steadily wider and nobler in expanse, till it reaches the place where five other rivers pour their streams into its waters, and it broadens into the sheet of Merrymeeting Bay, three miles from shore to shore.

Below the bay the channel narrows almost to a gorge. The sides are steep and rocky, crowned with black growth of fir and spruce, and through this space the swollen waters pour in great force. There are strong tide races, in which the river steamers reel and tremble, and below this there begins a perfect labyrinth of channels, some mere backwaters, some leading through intricate passages among a hundred fairy islands. There are cliffs, moss and fern-grown, and countless dark headlands. The islands are heavily wooded with characteristic evergreen growth, dense, fragrant, of a rich color, and they are ringed with cream-white granite above the sea-weed, where the blue water circles them.—And so down, till the first break of blue sea shows between the spruces. 14

We never feel cut off, or too far inland, having our river. The actual sea fog reaches us on a south wind, salt to the lips. Gulls come up all the way from the sea, and save for the winter months, there is hardly a day when you do not see four or five of them wheeling and circling; while twice or thrice in a lifetime a gale brings us Mother Carey’s chickens, scudding low, or else worn out and resting after the storm. 15

The river sleeps all winter under its white covering, but great cracks go ringing and resounding up stream as the tide makes or ebbs, leaping half a mile to a note, to tell of the life that is pulsing beneath; and before the snow comes, you can watch, through the black ice, the drift stuff move quietly beneath your feet with the tide as you skate. I have read fine print through two feet of ice, from a bit of newspaper carried along below by the current. One winter a dovekie lived for three weeks by a small open space made by the eddy near some ledges; then a hard freeze came, and the poor thing broke its neck, diving at the round black space of ice which looked scarcely different from the same space of open water.

The river lies frozen for at least four months. The ice weakens with the March thaws and rains. Then comes a night in April when the forces which move the mountains are at work, and in the morning, lo, the chains are broken. The great stream runs swift and brown and the ice cakes crowd and jostle each other as they spin past. 16

The river traffic goes steadily on through our three open seasons, and with it a little of the longer perspective of all sea-faring life comes to us, and off-sets the day-in-day-out of the town's shop and factory routine.

Our southern lumber is brought us by handsome three and four-masted schooners, which take northern lumber and ice on the return voyage. The other day two schooners, on their maiden voyage, white and trim as yachts, were at the lumber wharf, the *Break of Day* and the *Herald of the Morning*.

Our coal comes in the usual long ugly barges. One or two small excursion steamers connect us with the nearer coast towns, forty miles distant, and every day all summer, the one large passenger steamer which connects us with the big coast cities, comes to or from our town. She takes her tranquil way between the river hills, not without majesty, while the water draws back from the shores as she passes and the high banks reverberate to the peaceful thunder of her paddles. Like other river towns, we have now a fleet of motor boats, in use for pleasure and small fishing. 17

Traffic on the river shrank immensely with the forming of the Ice Trust, which holds our ice-fields now only as a reserve. We see three or four tall schooners at a time now, where we used to count the riding lights of a dozen at anchor in the channel.

The greater part of our fleet of tugs is scattered. The *Resolute* and *Adelia*,—dear me, even their names are like old friends—the *Clara Clarita*, the *City of Lynn*, the *Knickerbocker*, and the trim smart twin tugs, *Charlie Lawrence* and *Stella*, have gone to other waters. The *Ice-King* plies now in the coast-wise trade. Our lessened river work is done by the *Seguin*, a large and handsome boat, the *Ariel*, a T-wharf tug from Boston, and the *Sarah J. Green*, an ugly boat with a smokestack too tall for her.

The Government boat comes up in late April, while the river is still very rapid, brown and swirling after the spring freshet, and sets the channel buoys. We always thrill a little at her unwonted, sea-sounding whistle. She comes again in November, takes up the buoys, and carries them to some strange buoy paddock in one of the winter harbors, where hundreds and hundreds of them 18 are stacked and repainted. The names of the revenue cutters in this service are prettily chosen, the *Lilac*, *Geranium*, etc.

Before the days of tugs, schooners and larger vessels sailed up and down the thirty-odd navigable miles of our river under their own canvas, and the traffic to and from Atlantic ports was carried on by packets: brigs, schooners, and topsail schooners. One of the captains has told me that, seventy-five years ago, on his first voyage, it took his brig seven days to beat to the mouth of the river, a passage now made in six hours. It must have been extremely difficult piloting. The channel is narrow in many places, though the river itself is so wide. There are sand-bars, mud-flats, and ledges.

In my Father's childhood a curious, indeed a unique type of vessel, known as a Waterville Sloop, plied between what was then (before the building of the dams), the head of navigation, twenty-six miles above us, and Boston, taking lumber and hay. They carried one square-rigged mast, and sailed with lee-boards, like the Dutch galliots, and were in fact a survival of the square-rigged 19 sloops of old time, immortal in the memories of the glorious Sloops of War, and in Turner's pictures.

Once in a while you still see "pinkies," which were once so common: small schooner-rigged vessels with a "pink" (probably originally a *pinked*) stern, *i.e.*, a stern rising to a point, with a crotch to rest the boom in.

Scows are rarer than they used to be, but they still carry on their humble, casual lumber and hay business, sailing up with the flood-tide, and tying up for the ebb. They are sloop-rigged, quite smart-looking under sail, and sail with lee-boards, like the Waterville Sloops.

The Lobster Smack, a tiny two-masted schooner, not more than thirty feet long, comes once a week in the season, and we buy our lobsters on the wharf and carry them home all sprawling, and are delighted when we get a little sea-weed with them.

The laborers of the river are the dredges, pile-drivers, and their kind. They must see to the journeyman's work that keeps the river's traffic unhampered. They drive piers and jetties and 20 dredge out sand-bars. They go and come, unnoticed by smarter vessels, laden heavily with broken stone, sand, or gravel. They are dingy powerful boats, fitted with a derrick and hoist or other machinery. They carry big rope buffers at bow and sides, and in spite of this their bulwarks are splintered and scarred where they have been jammed against wharves and knocked about. There is no fresh paint or bright brass about them, they are grimy citizens, but are all strong and seaworthy. Sometimes the Captain is also owner; sometimes one man owns a whole little fleet, of two dredges, say, and a small tug, named perhaps after wife and daughters, as in one case I know, the *Nellie*, *Sophia*, and *Doris*. This is the family venture, followed with as much anxious pride in "our Vessels" as if the fleet were Cunarders.

One day what should come up the river but a white schooner, tapering and tall, and glistening with new masts and cordage, bearing a fairy cargo of shells and corals. The rare shells, some of

them costly museum pieces, were to be sold to collectors, if any were to be found along our northern harbors, while others, as beautiful as flowers or sunset clouds, the children might have for a few pennies.

The Captain was a young Spaniard, very dark, and as handsome, grave, and simple in bearing, as a Spanish Captain should be. His men seemed to adore him, and to obey the turn of his eyelashes. They all gave us a charming welcome, especially to the children. It was a leisurely and pleasant little venture. I do not know whether it brought in profit, but all the town flocked to the schooner, day after day, for the week that she stayed with us.

The rafts come down the river when they please. They look about as easy to manœuvre as an ice-house, but the flannel-shirted lumbermen who operate them, two to a raft, seem unconcerned, and scull away at their long "sweeps," in the apparently hopeless task of keeping their clumsy craft off the shallows. With the breaking up of the ice, stray logs, escaped from the holding booms, come down stream. The moment the ice-cakes are out of the river, even before, you begin to notice shabby old row-boats tied up and waiting at the mouth of every stream and "guzzle"; and as soon as a log whirls down amongst the confusion of ice, you will see boats put out, perhaps with a couple of boys, or else some old humped-up fellow, in a coat green with age, rowing cross-handed, nosing out like an old pickerel watching for minnows. The logs that are missed drift about till they are water-logged, when they sink little by little, and at last become what are known as "tide-waiters," or "tide-rollers," *i.e.* snags drifting above, or resting partly on, the bottom, a menace to vessels.

There are holding booms at different turns of the river, with odd shabby little house-boats for the rafts-men moored beside them; and what are these called but *gundalows*, an old, old "Down-east" corruption of *gondola*; whether in derision, or in ignorance, is not now known. Sometimes they are fitted up with some coziness, perhaps with white curtains and a little fresh paint, and I have even seen geraniums at their windows.

Another brand-new schooner, the *William D'Arcy*, tied up at our lumber wharf this last spring, and lay there for nearly a week. We all went on board her. She lay at the sheltered side of the wharf, out of the cold wind, and the sun poured down on her. The smell of salt and cordage was so strong that you could almost feel the lift of her bows to the swell, but there she lay, as quiet as if she had never lifted to a wave at all. The men were at work at various jobs; no one was in a hurry; it plainly made no difference whether they were two days at the wharf or ten.

The bulwarks and outside fittings, anchors, hawsers, and hawse-holes, seemed wonderfully large to our landsman eyes, and the inside fittings, lockers, etc., as wonderfully small and compact. The enormous masts were of new yellow Oregon pine.

The Captain welcomed us hospitably, and took us down into his cabin, which was fitted with shelves, lockers, and cupboards, neat and compact, all brand-new and shining with varnish. There was a shelf of books, the table had a red cover and reading lamp, and the wife's work-basket stood on it, with some mending. She had gone "upstreet" for her marketing.

"Oh," said one of us, "it looks so homelike and cozy!"

The Captain looked round it complacently, but with remembering eyes that spoke of many things. He had been cruising all winter.

"It looks so to you," he said, "but often it ain't."

CHAPTER III—THE BANKS OF THE RIVER

The river-bank boys pick up, as easily as they breathe, knowledge as miscellaneous as the drift piled on the shores. They know all the shoals and principal eddies, without the aid of buoys. They know the ways and seasons of the different fish. They learn to recognize the owner's marks on the logs, and they know the times and ways of all the humbler as well as the larger river craft, the scows and smacks, and the "gundalows" which spend mysterious month after month hauled up among the sedges at the mouths of the streams. Their own row-boats are heavy, square at both ends, and clumsy to row, but as I have said, they are out in them in the spring before the floating ice is out of the river, rescuing logs and fragments of lumber from between the ice-cakes.

There is a good deal to the business of picking up logs. The price for returning "strays" to the right owners is ten cents a log (the rate increasing as you go down stream), and a good many can be towed at once by a small boat. The price per log rises to twenty-five cents, near the sea. In times of high freshet, the up-river booms often break, and then there is a tremendous to-do at the mouth of the river: men, women, and children, all who can handle or half-handle a dory, are at work at log-rescuing. Incoming ships have found the surface of the ocean brown with logs at these times, and have a great work to get through them.

Logs that have lost their marks are called "scalawags," and these are sold for the benefit of the log-driving company. Hollow-hearted *pine* logs are known by the curious term "concussy," or "conquassy." To show the immense change in the prices of lumber, the best pine lumber, which

in 1870 was worth ten dollars a thousand feet, is now one hundred dollars a thousand.

Now and then a boy takes to the river so strongly that he makes his life work out of its teachings. The captains and engineers of most of our river and harbor steamers, and of bigger craft, too, began life as riverbank boys. Some of them take to fishing in earnest, some become lumbermen, or go into the Coast-Survey service, or the Rivers and Harbors; and the winter work on the ice leads to an interesting life for a good many others. Once in a while one of these boys goes far from home. We have had word of one and another, serving as pilot or engineer in Japanese, Brazilian, and East Indian waters.

The three Tucker brothers, Joel, Reuel, and Amos, three finely-built men, all worked up to be registered pilots. Joel, the eldest, was pilot of an ocean-going steamer all his life. He grew very stout, and had a fine nautical presence, in blue cloth and brass buttons. Reuel was lazy. He never went higher than small raft-towing tugs, and he often gave up his work and loafed about, fishing. He was the man who swam five miles down river, and stopped then because he was bored, not because he was tired. Amos, the finest of them, a gallant looking fellow, with very bright blue eyes, was a pilot for a good many years, and then a foreman in the ice business. He was a man of such shining kindness that he was always up to the handle in work in the heart of his town, as selectman, honorary and volunteer overseer of the poor, and helper-out in general. In a case of all-night nursing, in a poor family, where a man's strength was needed, Amos was on hand, rubbing his eyes, but watchful and ready. Once, when a neighbor's wife had to be taken to the Insane Hospital, Amos undertook the sad task, and his gentleness made it just bearable. Parents looked to him for help in the care of a bad or unruly boy.

Then there were the Tracys, who ran—and still run—a queer little ferry at Jonestown, "according to seasons." When the ice begins to break up they row the passengers across, somehow, in a heavy flat-boat, between the ice cakes. Their regular boat, in which they embark wagons and even a motor, is a large scow pulled across by a chain, with a sail to help when the wind serves. The Tracys' ferry is, I think, unique for one regulation; man and wife go as one fare.

Some of the river bank people are mere squatters. *The* squatter, as we called him, *par excellence*, pulled the logs and bits for his dwelling actually out of the river, as a muskrat collects bits of drift for his house. He was a Frenchman, and such a house as he built! Part tar-paper, part bark, part clay bank, the rest logs, barrel-staves, and a few railroad sleepers. But there he lived, on a tiny level plot under the railroad bank, so near the river that each spring freshet threatened entire destruction. He made or acquired a boat that matched his house, and presently he brought not only his wife and children, but two brothers and an old mother to live with him. The women contrived some tiny garden patches on the slopes of the river bank, and with the rich silt of the stream these throve wonderfully. The men fished, and "odd-jobbed" about.

Then came the Great Freshet. Dear me! shall we ever forget it? We woke one March night to hear every bell in town ringing, while a long ominous whistle repeated the terrifying signal of the freshet alarm.

There was a confusion of sounds from the river, wild crashings and grindings and thunders, as the ice broke up in its full strength, with a noise almost like cannon.

The water rose and rose. By daybreak it was up to the shop-counters in the street, and people paddled in and out of the shops in canoes, rescuing their goods. The ice-cakes were piled ten feet high on our unfortunate railroad. Then a great holding-boom broke, a mile up river. A twenty-foot wall of logs swept round the bend, and the watchers on the roofs and raised platforms saw it splinter and carry out the Town Bridge as if it had been kindlings.

Sheds and boat-houses and wharfing were whirled past all day in the tumble of ice cakes. Like other people in danger, the Squatter carried out his gipsy household goods, and moved up town with his family; all but the old French mother. She would not be moved, but sat in the middle of the road on a backless chair, watching her dwelling. She could have done nothing to save it, but nothing could tear her away. The rain poured all that day and the next. Some one lent her a big broken umbrella, and there she sat. I could think of nothing but a forlorn old eaves swallow, watching the place where her mud dwelling was being torn off.

By some miracle of the eddy, however, the house stayed intact; but soon after they all moved away, to safer, and, I believe, more comfortable quarters.

The Lamont family lived a mile north of the Town. They had a ramshackle house and barn, in a bit of open meadow by the mouth of one of the brooks. You might say of the Lamonts that they were so steeped in river mud that every bone of them was lazy and easy and slack. There were the father and mother, and seven children. They were as unkempt and ragged as could be, but they always seemed cheerful and smiling, and the younger children were fat as little dumplings. The three eldest were shambling young men; they and the father seemed perfectly content with a little fishing and odd-jobbing, and now and then one of them took a turn as deck-hand or stevedore, or—as a last resort—as farm-hand. The girls and the mother dug and sold dandelion greens, dock, and thoroughwort and other old-fashioned simples.

None of them had ever gone to school a day beyond the time required by law, and they kept the truant officer busy at that; then all of a sudden the youngest and fattest Lamont, whose incongruous name was Hernaldo, appeared at the High School. He was an imperturbable child, and quite dull, but he worked with a cheerful slow patience. He only held on for a year, but no one had imagined he could keep on for so long, and he did not do badly.

The elders died before the younger children were quite grown, and the family scattered; one

night, after it had been empty a year or two, the ramshackle house burned, leaving the barn standing.

One morning about ten years afterwards a radiant being appeared at the High School, a fat young man in frock coat and tall hat, who came forward and shook hands effusively. It was Hernaldo Lamont! He was now *chef*, it appeared, at one of the great California hotels through the winters, and in Vancouver in summer, at a very large salary. A pretty girl, charmingly dressed, whom he introduced as his wife, waited modestly at the door. 33

His clothes were quite wonderful. He was shining with soap and with fashion, and so full of warmth and of pleasure. He brought out colored photographs of his two fat little children, told of his staff and his patrons, beamed upon everyone, and showed his pretty wife all about our plain High School, admiring and reverent. I think that if it had been Oxford he could not have been prouder, and indeed Oxford could never be to the average student a place of higher achievement than High School to a Lamont!

He was so simple and kindly that I believe he would have taken his wife to the Lamont shanty as happily. The Lamont barn is still standing, grown up with tall nettles and dandelions. A farmer uses it for his extra hay, mowed in the low rich patches of river meadow. Tramps sleep in the hay, and quantities of barn-swallows flash in and out of the empty windows.

Long ago our River was one of the great salmon streams of the country. In my great 34
grandfather's time agreements between apprentices and servants, and their employers, held the stipulation that the employees should not have to eat salmon *above five times in the week*; and the fish were used for fertilizing the fields. There are none now at all, and the sturgeon fishing, which in my father's boyhood used to make summer nights on the River a time of torchlit adventure, is over too, though still late on a summer afternoon you may see now and then a silver flash, and hear a crash, as the huge creature jumps; and only last week two sturgeon of over eight hundred pounds weight each were brought in right near the Town Bridge. They were caught by two hard-working lads, and brought them a little fortune, for they were sold in New York for over $250.

Not even the flight of the birds from the south, unbelievable in wonder as this is, is more miraculous than the run of the fish, from the vast spaces of ocean up all our fresh-water streams for hundreds of miles. Their bright thousands find their way unerringly, up into the heart of the country. No one knows whence they come, and save for an occasional straggler, no one has ever 35
taken salmon or shad or ale-wife in deep water. We know their passage up-stream, but no one knows when they take their way down again.

The smelts run up, when winter is still at its height. They are caught through holes in the ice. The men build huts of boards or of boughs, each round his own smelt hole. They build a fire on the ice, or have a kerosene lantern or lamp, and fish thus all day in fair comfort. They catch smelts by thousands, so that our town's people, who can eat them not two hours out of the water, are spoiled for the smelts which are called fresh in cities. Tom-cod come up a little ahead of the smelts.

Soon after the ice goes out, while the water is still very rapid and turgid, the alewives run up, and they are as good eating as smelts, though too full of bones. They are smoked slightly, but not salted. About this time, too, the smaller boys begin catching yellow-perch at the mouths of the brooks. These, and tom-cod, are not thought worth putting on the market, but they are crisp little 36
fish, and a string of them, thirteen for twelve cents, makes a good supper.[2]

Suckers also come with the opening of the brooks. The discovery has been made lately, that these fish, which New Englanders despise (quite wrongly, for if well cooked they are firm and good), are prized by the Jewish population of some of the bigger cities, and bring a good price. A ton and a half of suckers were shipped from our river this season.

Our royal fish are the shad, which arrive in the middle of May, when the woods are all blossoming. The May river is full of their great silvery squadrons. They are caught at night, in drift nets, by hundreds. Most of them are shipped away, but our Town must and does eat as many as possible. One family, who know what they like, practically abjure all other solid food for the shad season!

Of all our fish, eels are the most mysterious; for they go *down* river to the ocean (out of the fresh water streams and lakes) to spawn, instead of coming up. No one knows what mysterious depths 37
they penetrate, but it is said that baby eels are found in one and two thousand fathoms of water. By midsummer they are about six inches long, and are running home up the brooks. They wriggle up waterfalls and scale the sheer faces of dams. They stay three or four years in their inland home, growing to full size, and in September, the fat grown-up eels run down the streams again, to spawn in the sea. This is the time when they are caught at dams and in mill streams, and shipped to the big cities in quantities. Our biggest paper mill, not long ago, was shut down entirely because of the eels, which got in through the flumes by hundreds, and stopped the water wheels.

The taking of the Acushticook eels is now a regular industry, and this came about rather sadly. Stephen Mitchell, the millwright of the Acushticook paper mill, was a fine man, with a turn for inventing. His ideas were sound and a good many of his mechanical devices turned out excellently. He became interested in explosives, and worked for a long time at a new method for 38
capping torpedoes. He had been warned time and again, and such an intelligent man must have realized perfectly the danger of work with explosive materials, but one day an accident

happened. There was an explosion which took not only both hands, but his eyes.

I think everyone in the town felt sickened by the accident, and by the prospect of helpless invalidism ahead of a fine active man. But Stephen, as soon as his wounds healed, began looking for something to do.

The Acushticook eels had always been fished for in a desultory fashion, and Stephen cast about for a way to make the fishing amount to more. The mill owners did all in their power to help him. They gladly gave him the sole right of the use of the stream, and helped him in building his dam. He had also a grant from the Legislature. He hired good workers, and for many years he and his wife, who was a master hand, lived happily and successfully on their fishery. Sometimes two tons of eels were shipped in the course of the autumn.

Stephen always was cheerful. He could see enough difference between light and darkness to find 39
his way about town, and he was so quick to recognize voices that you forgot his blindness. He kept among people a great deal, and was an animated talker at town gatherings. He was an opinionated man, but a fine and upright one. After his death his widow kept on with the fishery, and she still runs it with profit.

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[2] Both tom-cod and perch are now shipped to the cities in quantities.

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CHAPTER IV.—THE CAPTAINS

You would never think now that tall Indiamen were once built here in our town, but they were, and sailed hence round the world away, and we too boasted our wharves, with the once-familiar notice:

“All ships required to cock-a-bill their yards before lying at this dock.”

The last ship built in the town was the *Valley Forge*, launched about 1860; the last built at Bowman’s Point, two miles above, was the *Two Brothers*. The *Valley Forge* for ten whole years was never out of Eastern waters, plying between China and Sumatra, and the seaports of the Inland Sea.

Mr. Peter Simons, one of our early magnates, and “ship’s husband,” of many vessels (kind, merry, handsome Mr. Peter, he never was husband to anyone but his ships), took a treasure voyage to the Spanish Main once, and brought home a moderate sized treasure, some of the doubloons of 41
which are preserved in his family to this day.

Ship-building was the chief industry of the place. There were four principal ship-yards. The skippers as well as the lumber came from close at hand. It seems a wonderful thing, in these stay-at-home times, that keen young lads from the farms could have been, at twenty-one, in command of full-rigged ships, fearlessly making their way, in prosperous trade, to places that might as well be in Mars, for all most of us know of them to-day: but Java and the Spice Islands, Shanghai, Tasmania, and the Moluccas were household words in those days, and you still hear a sentence now and then which shows the one-time familiarity of ways which have passed from our knowledge.

The portraits at the house of Captain George Annable, the last of our clipper-ship captains, were painted in Antwerp. So were those (very queer ones), at Captain Charles Aiken’s, and at Captain Andrews’. It appears now in talk with Captain Annable that *of course* they were painted at 42
Antwerp, for that was where the American skippers as a rule wintered. Living there was better and cheaper for them and their families than at any other foreign port. It became the custom to winter at Antwerp, and there grew to be an American society there.

Captain Annable has crossed the Atlantic sixty-three times, sailing clipper mail-ships.

The Captains are nearly all gone now. Little trace of the ship-yards remains, and even the wharves from which the Indiamen sailed have rotted, and been replaced by the lumber and coal wharves of to-day; but all through the countryside you come on touches of the shipping days, and of the East, as startling as a sudden fragrance of sandalwood in some old cabinet. At one house I know there is a collection of butterflies and moths of the Far East, with two cream-colored Atlas moths eight inches from tip to tip. At another there is a set of rice-paper paintings of the orders of the Japanese nobility and gentry, with full insignia of state robes, which ought to be in a museum; and the parlor of a third neighbor, the gracious widow of a sea-captain, has, besides carved teak furniture and Chinese embroideries, a set of carved ivory chessmen fit for a palace. 43
The king and queen stand over eight inches high. The castles are true elephant-and-castles, and the pawns are tiny mounted and turbaned warriors, brandishing scimitars. The figures stand on carved open-work balls-within-balls, four deep—“Laborious Orient ivory, sphere in sphere”—as delicate as frost-work. This set was bought in Shanghai, when the foreign compound still had its guard of soldiers, and the Chinese thronged the doorways to stare at the “white devils.”

The great gold-figured lacquer cabinet, the pride of one of our statelier houses, was brought from China a hundred years ago, by a young Captain Jameson, who was coming home for his wedding.

He sailed again with his bride immediately after the marriage, and their ship never was heard of. The cabinet was sold, and then sold again, till it finally reached the setting which fits it so well.

You find lacquered Indian teapoys, Eastern porcelains, shells and corals from all round the world far out in scattered farmhouses; and farm-hands are still summoned to meals by a blast on a conch-shell, a queer note, not unlike the belling of an elk. 44

Beside the actual china and embroideries and carvings, something of the character bred in the seafaring days has spread, like nourishing silt, through our countryside. The Captains were grave, quiet men. They had power of command, and keenness in emergency. Contact with many people of many nations quickened their perceptions and gave them charming manners; but more than this, there was something large-minded and tranquil about them. All their lives they had to deal with an element stronger than themselves. The next day's work could never be planned or calculated on, and something of the detached quality which comes from dealing with the sea, a long and simple perspective towards human affairs, became part of them.

An expression of married life, so beautiful that I can never forget it, came from the lips of the widow of one of our sea-captains, a little old lady, now over eighty, who lives alone in a tiny brick cottage (where she has accomplished the almost unique feat of making English ivy flourish in our sub-arctic climate). She wears a wonderful cap, and fills her house with quilts and cushions of silk patch-work which would make a kaleidoscope blink. I had an errand to her about a poorer neighbor, one Thanksgiving time. Her house is an outlying one, and I remember how the farm lights, scattered all about our river hills, shone in the soft autumn evening. 45

Her bright warm kitchen was coziness itself, with a shiny stove, full to the brim with red coals, and a big lamp. She sat with her cat on her knee, sewing on an orange and green cushion, made in queer little puffs, and she jumped up, dropping thimble, and spectacles, in her warm-hearted welcome. After my errand, we fell into talk, about "Cap'n," and their long voyaging together. That was when the Captains as a matter of course took their wives, and often their children, with them, keeping a cow on board for the family's use, and sometimes chickens and pigs. Many babies who grew to be sturdy citizens were born on the high seas in those days.

She told about long peaceful days, slipping through the Trades, and about gales, but mostly about china and pottery, for this was their hobby, almost their passion. They took inconvenient journeys of great length to see new potteries, and hoped at last to see all the sea-board china factories, in East and West. She showed me her treasures, pretty bits of Sevres, majolica, Doulton, and Wedgewood, all standing together, and among them an alabaster model of the leaning tower of Pisa (Pysa, she called it). At last, with a lowered voice, she spoke of the worst danger they had ever been through, a typhoon in the Bay of Bengal. The ship lay dismasted, and the waves broke over her helplessness. She was lifted up and dashed down like a log, and every soul on board expected only to perish. 46

"Cap'n come downstairs to our cabin:

"Oh, Mary," he says, "if only you was to home! I could die easy if only you was to home!"

"I be to home!" I says. "If I had the wings of a dove, I wouldn't be anywheres but where I be!"

This ranks with the epitaph at Nantucket:

"Think what a wife should be, and she was that!" 47

Another seafaring friend was, as so often happens, the last person whom you would ever connect with adventures, a little lady so tiny, so dainty, that a trip across the lawn with garden gloves and hat, to tie up her roses, might have been her longest excursion; but instead she has sailed round and round the world with her courtly sea-captain father, has lifted her quiet gray eyes to see coral islands and spice islands, and the strange mountain ranges of the East Indies.

"She wore white mostly when we were in the Trades or the Tropics," her father has told me, "and she sat on deck all day, with her white fancy-work. She always seemed to like whatever was happening."

One day, in a fog with a heavy sea running, the ship ran on a reef. The life-saving crew got the men off with great difficulty, but the Captain refused to leave his post, and little Miss Jessie refused too.

"No, thank you," she said, in her soft voice, "No, thanks very much, I think I will stay with the Captain."

"And you couldn't move her," he said, "any more than the rock of Gibraltar." 48

With the night the storm lessened, and almost by a miracle the ship was got off safely next morning.

I must tell of one more seafaring couple, who lived down the river in a low white cottage where "Captain," retired from service, could watch vessels passing, even without his handsome brass-bound binoculars, a much-prized tribute for life-saving.

The wife was long paralyzed, and the Captain, with the simple-minded nephew they had adopted, tended her as he might have tended an adored child. He bought her silk waists, fine aprons, little frills of one sort or another, fastened them on her with clumsy, loving fingers, and then would sit back, laughing with pride, while the paralyzed woman, with her wrecked face, managed to make uncouth sounds of pleasure.

"Don't she look handsome? Don't she look nice as anybody?" he would ask of the neighbors, and

show the new wig he had bought her, as the poor hair was thin. His simple pride thought it as beautiful as any young girl's curls, and indeed it was very youthful. One's heart was wrung, yet uplifted, too, for here was love which had passed through the absolute wrecking of life, and was untouched.

The Captain was a tall hearty man, but it was he who died first, after all, and all in a minute. The paralyzed creature thus bereaved, moaned, day after day; her eyes seemed to be asking for something, there in the room, and no one could find the right thing, till someone thought of the Captain's binoculars, which he always had by him. From that moment she became tranquil, and even grew happy again, if only she had the bright brass thing where her poor hand could touch it. If it was moved, she moaned for it to be set back. It was her precious token, from his hand to hers. With it beside her she could wait and be good, poor dear soul, until, in about two years, her release came, and she went to join "Captain."

One word more about Mr. Peter Simons, of whom the town keeps pleasant memories. He lived handsomely, in a handsome house overlooking the river, and his housekeeper, Deborah Twycross, was as much of a magnate in her own way as himself. Mr. Peter was very high with her; but he stood in awe of her, too. Still, he never would let her engage his second servant, a privilege which she coveted.

In his young days a "hired girl" received $2.00 a week wages, if she could milk, $1.50 if she could not. By the time Mr. Peter was established in stately bachelor housekeeping no girl was any longer expected to milk, and few knew how. But when engaging a servant, if he did not like the applicant's looks, Mr. Peter would say,

"Can you milk?"

Of course, she could not, and there the matter would end. He never asked a girl whose looks he liked, if she could milk!

He was a man of endless secret benevolence, and posed all the time as a hard-fisted person and a miser. He was at the most devious pains to conceal his constant kindnesses. The noble minister who at that time carried our Town on his young shoulders, received sums of money, in every time of need, for library, schools, or cases of poverty and suffering, directed in a variety of elaborately disguised handwritings. He was able in time to trace them all to Mr. Peter. Many a struggling young man was set on his feet and established in life by this secret benefactor; and after Mr. Peter's death, his coal dealer told how for years he had had orders to deliver loads of coal to this and that family in distress, after dark, and as noiselessly as possible, under an agreement of secrecy, enforced by such threats that he never dared disobey.

The Town has changed since Mr. Peter's day. Boys no longer brave the terrors of a visit to a White Witch to have their warts charmed, or a toothache healed. ("Mother Hatch," who plied her arts some thirty years ago, was the last of these. Her appliances for fortune-telling were the correct ones of cards, an ink-well, and a glass to gaze in; but a small trembling sufferer in knickerbockers—a hero to the still more trembling group of friends and eggers-on outside—did not benefit by these higher mysteries. The enchantress, beside her traffic in the black arts, took in washing; she would withdraw her hands from the suds, and lay a reeking finger on the offending tooth, the patient gasping and shutting his terror-stricken eyes while she recited a sufficient incantation.)

Even the memory of the Whipping-post, which still stood in Mr. Peter's childhood, has long since vanished. The town bell is no longer rung at seven in the morning and at noon, and a steam fire-whistle has replaced the tocsin of alarm that formerly was rung from all the church steeples; but the curfew still rings every night, at nine in the evening (the bell which rings it was made by Paul Revere); and, among the customary Scriptural-sounding offices of fence-viewers, field-drivers, measurers of wood and bark, etc., the town still has a town crier. A very few years ago it still had a pound-keeper and hog-reeve, but by now the outlines of the pound itself have disappeared.

CHAPTER V—BY THE ACUSHTICOOK

A smaller river, the Acushticook, tumbles and foams down through the midst of our town, and brings us the wonderfully soft pure water of a chain of over twenty lakes and ponds. It flung the hills apart to join the larger stream which it meets at right angles at the Town Bridge, and the last mile of its course is through a beautiful small gorge, in a succession of falls, now compacted into the eight dams which turn our mills.

Above the falls, though it breaks into occasional rapids, its course is quieter, and as you travel towards the setting sun, your canoe follows a peaceful stream, running for the most part through woods.

The country along the Acushticook is broken and hilly, woods or open pastures full of boulders and junipers. The farms depend on their stock and apple orchards for their prosperity. You see big chicken yards, and the more enterprising farmers send their eggs and broilers to city markets. Pigs do well among the apple trees, and most of the farms have ducks and geese as well

as chickens. A well-trodden road follows the crest of the ridge, parallel to the river.

The Baxters, good, silent people, live well out on this road, and handsome Ambrose Baxter has a thriving milk route. Sefami Baxter, his uncle, worked in the paper mill his whole life, and now his son, young Sefami, has built up a good market garden business on the Acushticook road. He started it years ago with a tiny greenhouse, which he built on to his farm kitchen. He raised tomatoes and other seedlings, and early lettuce. It was an innovation in our part of the world, and neighbors shook their heads; but one bit of greenhouse was added to another, and now Sefami has three long stacks of them and is a prosperous man. He has a whole field of rhubarb and a large orchard, where he keeps twenty hives of bees. He had no capital beyond the savings of a plain working family, and he had to find his market for himself.

The Drews, now old people, live beyond Ambrose Baxter, and life has been a more poignant thing for them than for most of the farm neighbors. Their boy, Lawrence, was born for learning. He *foamed* to it, as a stream rushes down hill, and he had the vision and faithfulness which lead to high and lonely places. The parents were industrious and frugal, and Lawrence was the channel through which everything they had, mind and ambitions as well as savings, poured itself out. As a boy, he was all ardor and eagerness. Now he is a tall careworn man of fifty, unmarried, with hair and beard streaked with gray. He is a man of importance in many ways beside that of his own department in a great Western university. He is a good son, and comes home to the comfortable white farmhouse for every day in the year that it is possible, but his parents, of necessity, have had to grow old without him, and their look, in speaking of him, is one of acceptance, as well as of a high pride.

Acushticook has changed her course from time to time through the centuries, and about five miles from town a stretch of flat land which must once have been either intervale along the river's course or one of its many small lakes, lies pocketed among the hills. This stretch, which is very fertile, belongs, or belonged, to the Dunnacks, and they were surely a family which will be remembered. They never pretended to be anything more than plain farming people, but they were marked by a personal dignity and refinement, even fastidiousness, by their intelligence, and alas, by their many sorrows. Old Warren Dunnack was a farmer of substance. His son, the Warren Dunnack of our time, was nearly all his life in charge of the "Homestead" (one of the few country places in our neighborhood), during the long absence abroad of its owners. He married a beautiful woman, Sarah Brant. She was a magnificent creature, in a hard, almost animal sort of way, but was a shallow person, with a vain nature, coveting show, fine food and clothes, and she broke Warren's heart. He took her back again and again after her many flights, for he had an unconquerable chivalry and gentleness for all women, and he let her have everything that he could earn.

From a Wentworth Photograph

INTERVALE ALONG THE RIVER'S COURSE

Lucretia was the beauty of the family, a slip of a girl with eyes like black diamonds. She married a showy business man, who turned out badly. She came home, a handsome and embittered older woman, and made life uncomfortable for herself and everyone else on the farm. Afterwards she became companion to a widow of some means, a fantastic person, and they lived together (unharmoniously) all their days.

Delia, who was so pretty, though not striking like Lucretia, married silly Ephraim Simmons; but her affection for her brother Warren was the abiding thing of her life. When Warren's wife left him, and Delia was offered the position of housekeeper at the Homestead, she took it, and there

she and Warren kept house for fifteen years. Two good-natured slack daughters (they were all Simmons; not a trace of their mother's fire in them) helped Ephraim with his farm, and he certainly needed the money that their mother earned. He was a poor enough farmer; but his foolish face used to look wistful when he drove the six miles, every other Saturday, to see Delia.

Delia, for her part, never seemed anything but clear as to her duty. She drove over now and then 58
to see Ephraim, and sent her money to him and the girls, or put it in the bank for them, but her heart clave to her brother. She kept the long delightfully rambling house, and he kept the farm, lawns, and gardens, punctiliously in order for the owners who never came; and the honeysuckles blossomed in the corner of the great dark hedges, the lilies opened, and the grapes ripened and dropped on the sunny terraces of the garden as the unmarked years went by. I think that Delia's life was one of untroubled serenity. Warren was a grave man, and his trouble with his wife underlay all his days, but with Delia he found a rare companionship and understanding. Their sitting-room in the ell of the big house was a gathering place for the farm neighbors. There was a deep fireplace, a table with a big lamp, a sofa, high-backed arm-chairs with worsted-work cushions and tidies, and windows filled with blossoming plants.

Warren died after a lingering illness, which he met with his usual grave cheerfulness, and Delia went back to Ephraim on the Acushticook road. Whatever she thought of the difference between 59
the Homestead and the bare little farm, between Warren and Ephraim, she met the change with the charming, half-whimsical philosophy that was hers through life. She had pretty ways, and an unconquerable sense of fun. She lived to be nearly eighty. She was a fine, fine woman; delicately organized, but of such vigorous fibre that she struck her roots deep into life, and gave out good to everyone who came near her. She was a magnet, drawing people by her warmth and sweetness.

It was to poor, good, hard-working John Dunnack that actual tragedy came. He was a plain dull man, of a far humbler stripe than his brothers. Misfortune came to his only child, a young adopted daughter. He lost his place at the mill not long after, from age. He was eighty years old. It was too much. His mind failed, and he took his own life.

A cheerful family, the Greenleafs, live next beyond the Dunnacks. They keep bees on a large scale, and "Greenleaf Honey," in pretty-shaped glass jars, with a green beech leaf on the label, has had its established market for two generations. They also grew cherries for market, nearly as 60
large as damsons.

Harvey Greenleaf had luck, and has what our people know as "gumption," and "git-up-and-git," and Mrs. Greenleaf, a fair, ample person, is a born woman of business. Once a neighbor, a farm hand, who had been discharged for slackness, planted buckwheat in a small clearing next the Greenleafs', out of spite. (Buckwheat honey is unmarketable, because of its marked peculiar flavor, and its dark color.) Harvey was away at the County Grange Meeting—he was Master of his Grange that year—at the time it flowered. Two little girls, out picking wild raspberries, brought word of the trouble.

"Mis' Greenleaf! Mis' Greenleaf! There's buckwheat in blow at Jasper Derry's clearing, an' it's full of your bees!"

Mrs. Greenleaf harnessed up the old white mare herself, and drove over to the offender's house. No one knows how she dealt with him, but the buckwheat was cut before night. Harvey chuckles, and says she swung the scythe herself. Not much harm was done, and only a little of the yield 61
turned out to have been injured by the buckwheat.

There are no rules about the planting of buckwheat near bee-hives. It is a matter of good feeling and neighborliness, and buckwheat is seldom grown where a neighbor keeps bees for profit; but it is impossible to guard against the trouble entirely and I have known a whole season's yield to be discolored with honey brought from buckwheat, nine miles from the hives.

One early morning this June, as we were at breakfast on the piazza, a boy came round the corner of the house, and asked if we wanted "a quart of wild strawberries, a pint of cream, and a dozen of Mother's fresh rolls, for forty cents!" We certainly did; and in the driveway we saw "Mother" waiting in the wagon, an alert-looking woman with a friendly face. She told us that she was Harvey Greenleaf's daughter-in-law, and the boy her eldest son.

"I think there's lots of small extra business that folks can do on the farms, if they're spry, that sets things ahead a lot," she said, *à propos* of the strawberries. 62

The rolls were as light as feather, and the cream very thick. We arranged for the same bargain twice a week while the berry season lasted!

In the autumn the same couple came again, this time with vegetables and fruit, nicely arranged, and with small cakes of fresh cream cheese done up in waxed paper in neat packages, each package stamped with S. Greenleaf, Eagle Cliff Farm. This is a new venture in our part of the country.

A mile of beautiful pasture, on a big scale, as smooth as an English down, slopes down from the back of the Greenleafs' farm, rises in a noble ridge, and slopes again to where the Acushticook sparkles and dances over some thirty yards of rapids. The turf is close cropped and there are boulders and groups of half-sized firs and spruces scattered over the slope. There is a little wood in the upper corner, cool and shadowy, with a brooklet set deep in mosses, trickling through the midst. The pasture road leads through the firs and hemlocks, growing closer and more feathery, then through this wood, where Lady's Slippers grow.

CHAPTER VI—SPRING

April 3. Last night the river “went out.” We were so used, all winter, to its sleeping whiteness, that it seemed as unlikely to change as the outlines of the hills; then came a tumultuous week, and now it is a brown, strong, full-running stream, with swirls and whirlpools of hastening current all over its wide surface. These are indescribable days. The air is sweet with wet bark and melting snow and newly-uncovered earth. The lesser streams are rushing and roaring through the woods. There are little clear dark foam-topped pools under all the spouts, and bright drops falling from rocks and roofs, where there were icicles so lately; and the roads endure miniature floods, from the torrents of snow-water that gush down their gutters and spread the mud in fan-shapes over them. Wherever you stand, you cannot get away from the rushing and trickling and rilling. The whole frozen strength of winter is breaking up in a wealth of life-giving waters.

There is a neglected-looking time for the fields just after the snow goes. The snow-patches recede and leave the soaked grass covered with odds and ends of loose sticks and roots and with untidy wefts of cobweb. The dead leaves lie limp and dank, and are of lovely but sad colors, soft browns and umbers, ash-grays and ash-purples; but in the midst of this waste the ponds are all awake—dimpling, soft water, tender and alive—and their bright blue is a new wonder after our winter world of white and brown and gray.

Robins came yesterday. Their crisp voices woke us with a start, after the winter’s silence. They were busy all over the lawn, and nearly a week ago we heard the first blue-birds and meadow-larks.

The fir boughs that were banked about the houses last fall, for warmth, must be burnt, and bonfires are being lighted all about the fields and gardens. They blaze up into a crackling roar of burning brush, and the smoke comes pouring and creaming out in thick white torrents. The clean, hilarious smell spreads everywhere, the touch of it clings to our hair and clothing. This is a wonderful, Indian time for children, when all sorts of strange inherited knowledge stirs in them. Look at their eyes, as they play and plan round their fires!

 From a Wentworth Photograph

THE SOUTH WIND IN MARCH

Cumulus clouds came back, as always, with late winter. Through the autumn, and early winter, clear days are practically cloudless; and cloud-masses, cirrus, not cumulus, herald and follow storms; but with February, the clear-weather summer clouds return. They begin to be trim again, and marshaled, and take up the ordered leisurely sailing of their pretty squadrons.

April 10.

There is already a general warming and yellowing of twigs. The elm tops are growing feathery and show a warm brown, and a crimson-coral mist begins to flush over the low-lying woods, where the swamp maples are in flower. Pussy-willows are as thick on their twigs as drops after a

rain, and as silvery. You would say at first that nothing had changed yet in the main forest. The brown aisles and misty dark hollows seem the same, but no; fringed about the openings and coverts along their borders the birch and alder catkins are in flower. They are powdery and gold-colored, and overhead they dangle like the tails of little fairy sheep against the sky.

The wild geese woke us in the dark, just before dawn, this morning. Last year there was a violent snow-storm, a perfect smothering whirl of flakes, the night they flew over, and the great birds were beaten down among the house-tops, creakling and honkling in dismay and confusion, but holding on their way.

Now at dusk comes the first silvery evening whistling of the frogs, the peepers. If a cloud passes over the sun, even as early as three in the afternoon, they start up as if at a signal, all together, and as the sun shines out again fall instantly silent.

May 3.

All this time the green has been spreading and spreading through the pastures till now it clothes them, and the dandelions are scattered over them like a king's largesse. Dew falls all winter, but it is in star and fern shapes of frost; now every morning and evening the thick grass is pearled again with a million nourishing drops.

Now rainbow colors begin to show over the hillsides. It is as if a thousand and a thousand tiny butterflies, pink and cream color and living green and crimson, had alighted in the woods. Light comes through them, and they give back light, from the shining, fine down that covers them. The little leaves are almost like clear jewels against the sun, beaded all over the twigs. They only make a slightly dotted veil as yet, they do not hide or screen. You can see as far into the wood-openings as in winter. The brown stems and branches are as delicate and distinct as those of a bed of maiden-hair fern.

The roadside willows are puffs of gold-green smoke, the sapling birches and quaking aspens like green mounting flames up the hillsides, and the catkins of the canoe birches shine like the mist of gold sparks from a rocket.

The different trees develop by different stages, and each stands out in turn against its fellows, as if illuminated, before it loses itself in the growing sea of green. You see its full leafy shape, the mass of each round top, as at no other time of year; yet the individual habit of branching is still manifest, as in winter: the long springing sprays of the swamp maples, the more compact strong branches of the oaks, the maze-like firm twigs of the hop-hornbeams, lying in whorls and layers. The branchlets of the beeches are like thorns. The elms are soft brown spirits of trees throughout the woods; their entire fern-like outline is silhouetted, and the swamp maples stand like delicate living shapes of bronze.

Innocents are out in patches in the pastures, looking as if white powder had been spilt. Purple and white hepaticas are clustered in crannies of the rocks, and after a rain mayflowers stand up thick, thick in the fields, in masses of pink and white fragrance. Blood-root covers whole banks with snow-white, and dog-tooth violets, littlest of lilies, nod their yellow-and-brown prettiness over the slopes carpeted with their strange mottled leaves.

Shad-bush is out now in fairy white, tasseled over knolls and hillsides and overhanging wooded banks along the streams. Its opening leaves are reddish, delicately serrate, and finely downy. The pure white flowers are loosely starred all over it. They are long-petaled and lightly hung, and the tree is slender and very pliable, the whole thing suggesting a delicate raggedness, as if young Spring went lightly on bare feet with fluttering clothes.

This is the most fairy-scented time of the whole year. "The wood-bine spices are wafted abroad," indeed. The willows perfume the lanes with their intoxicating sweetness; and there is a cool pure dawn-like fragrance everywhere, from the countless millions of opening leaves, steeped every night with dew.

Last week we saw the first swallows. There they skimmed and flew, as if they had never gone to other skies at all. Their flight is so effortless, they seem to pour and stream down unseen cataracts of air. To-day chimney-swallows came, and we watched their endless rippling and circling. They sailed and wheeled, in little companies or singly, now twittering and now silent, and from now on all summer the sky will never be empty of their beautiful activities.

May 26.

At last the woods are like a garden of delicate flowers, clothing the hills as far as eye can see with colors of sunrise. The red-oaks are gold color, with strong brown stems; ash and lindens are golden green; maples soft copper and bronze, or deep flesh-color.

The flower-like delicacy of leafing out is wonderfully prolonged. The willows come first, then elms, in brown flower, then quaking-asps and birches, and then maples. Later, lindens and ash-trees catch the light, and the ash leaves (which grow far apart, and in bunches, with the flower-buds) are indeed like just-alighted butterflies. The small leaves are so bright that even in the rain they shine as if a shaft of sunlight from some unseen break in the clouds were lighting the woods.

Now long shining leaf buds show among the elm flowers and on the beeches. The later poplars are cream-white and as downy as velvet. A wood of maples and poplars is almost a pink-and-white wood; shell-pink, and palest, most silvery-and-creamy gray.

The tall gold-colored red-oaks make masses of strong color; and later, when we think the shimmering of the fairy rainbow is fading, the white oaks come out in a mist of pale carnation—

pink and gray and cream.

In June, after all the hardwoods have merged into uniform light green, firs and spruces become jeweled at every point with tips of light, the new growth for the year. Red pines and white pines are set all over with candelabra of lighter green, until high on the tops of the seeding white pines little clusters of finger-slender pale green cones begin to show.

By this time the forest-flowers have faded through the woods. The brighter colors of the field-flowers are gay along the roadsides and over meadows and pastures, and with them Summer has come.

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CHAPTER VII—THE EASTMAN HILL CROSS-ROAD

The cross-road under the great leafy ridge of Eastman Hill has pretty farms along it, and half-way across there is a country burying ground, where wild plums blossom, and the grave-stones are half hidden all summer in a green thicket.

One name in the graveyard we all hold in special honor, that of Serena Eastman. I never knew her myself, and it is only from her granddaughter and from the neighbors that I learned of her beautiful life.

She was a mother in Israel; one of

> “All-Saints—the unknown good that rest
> In God’s still memory folded deep.”

She brought up eleven children to upright manhood and womanhood, and beside this a whole neighborhood was nourished from the wells of her deep nature. She lived and died before the days of trained nurses, and in addition to her own cares she was the principal nurse of her countryside. Those were the days when nursing was not and could not be paid for, but was a priceless gift from neighbor to neighbor. She stood ready to be up all night, and night after night, to ease pain by her ministering, or to help to bring a new life into the world; her faith lifted the spirits of the dying, and of those about to be bereaved, as if on strong pinions.

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Small-pox was still a terrible scourge in those times, and she was the only woman in the district who would nurse it. Her granddaughter has told me how she kept a change of clothes in an out-house, and how she bathed and dressed there (the only precautions against infection known to the times), whether in winter or summer, before rejoining her family. She always drove to and from such cases at night, to run as little danger as possible of coming in contact with people. Her husband took the same risks that she did. He drove back and forth, and lent his strength in lifting and carrying patients.

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They had a large farm, which meant cooking for hired men in the busy seasons, and beside Serena’s eleven children there were older relations to do for, her husband’s father and mother, and one or two unmarried sisters. She was active in Dorcas society and in meeting. Her granddaughter feels that only the completeness of her religious life could have carried her through the fatigues which she underwent. She lived in that conscious obedience to duty which eliminates friction, and her view of duty was one taken through wide-opened windows. She walked with God daily.

The house of this dear woman burned, not long after she and her husband died, and only the blossoming lilacs mark its empty cellar-hole, but the next farm, which belonged to Mr. Eastman’s brother, and is now his nephew’s, is a fine one. You drive on to a wide green, as smoothly kept as a lawn, where three huge trees, a willow and two elms, overhang the house. There are big comfortable barns and outhouses, a corn-crib and well-sweep, and the house is square and ample, with two big chimneys.

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Next to the Eastmans’, beyond their orchard, comes a neat small farm, with a long wide stone wall, where grapes are trained, owned once by two queer old sisters, the Misses Pushard, or as we have it, the Miss Pushhards. (A Huguenot name, pronounced *Pushaw* by the older generation.) They went to Lyceum in their young days, and, a rare thing then so far in the country, they had a piano. This gave them “a great shape.” Poor ladies, with their piano! Years later they were in straitened circumstances, and anxious to sell it, but to their indignation nobody wanted it, or not at the price they thought fitting; so, one night, they *chopped it up*, and hid the pieces. Thus they were not left with the instrument on their hands; and they had not accepted an unworthy price for their treasure. All this was learned years afterwards from some old papers. The fragments of the piano were found in the cistern.

The last farm on the road is owned by Sam Marston and his dear wife, Susan; who, though you never would think it (except for a little remaining crispness of speech), was born in England, in Essex, and came as a young English housemaid—dear me, how long ago now!—to the Homestead, eight miles away, by the River. Sam Marston worked there in the stables, and lost his heart promptly, and after four or five years of characteristic Yankee courting, leisurely, but humorously determined, Susan made up her mind, and said “yes,” and came out to the farm, with

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her fresh print gowns, her trimness and stanchness, and her abiding religion.

Susan keeps also her fixed ideas of the “quality.” She is now a power in her whole neighborhood. She and Sam, alas, have no children, a great sorrow, but the young people growing up near her show the reflection of her uprightness and that of her Sam. But after all these years she is still an exotic. The Sunday-school which she has gathered about her is strictly Church of England. The children learn their catechism, and “to do their duty in life in that station into which it shall please God to call them”; and they are instructed perfectly clearly as to their betters!

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The other day we drove out to her farm. We were going to climb Eastman Hill, after Lady’s Slippers, and then were to have supper with Susan.

The sky was very deep blue, with flocks of little white clouds sailing. The woods were still all different shades of light and bright green, and the apple trees were in full blossom. The barn swallows were skimming and pouring low about the green fields in their effortless flight. I think I never drove through so smiling a country.

The house is a long low brick one, with dormer windows, in the midst of an old orchard. There is a fence and a hedge, and a brick path leads to the door. There are lilac bushes at the corner of the house, and cinnamon roses and yellow lilies on each side of the doorway.

Susan came out, laughing, and nearly crying, with pleasure, to welcome us. She “jumped” us down with her kind hands, and took all our wraps. We went as far as the house, asking questions and chattering, and then Susan showed us our way, an opening in the screen of the woods reached by a path through the orchard, and stood shading her eyes with her hand to look after us.

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We followed a bit of mossy old corduroy road, through moist rich woods, and then began to climb among a wood of beeches. Soon the rock began to crop out in small cliffs, and we found different treasures, the little pale pink *corydalis*, a black-and-white creeper’s nest in a ferny cleft between two rocks, quantities of twin-flower, and then, rising a beech-covered knoll, we came on our first Lady’s Slippers. The glade ahead was thronged with them. They spread their broad light-green leaves like wings, and their beautiful heads bent proudly. They grew sometimes singly, sometimes in clumps of fifteen or twenty blossoms, and were scattered over the whole glade as if a flight of rose-colored butterflies had just alighted.

We came on this same sight seven different times; this lovely company scattered over the slope among the rocks, where the ridge broke out into low gray pinnacles among the beeches.

When at last we could make up our minds to climb down, following the white thread of a waterfall, into the deeper woods, we found Painted Trilliums, bright white and painted with crimson, with Jack-in-the-pulpits, both grown to a great size in the rich mould, amongst a green mist of uncurling ferns.

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The brook which we followed came out at last in an open pasture above the farm. It was as refreshing as a bath in running water to come out into the cool, sweet evening air, for the heavy woods were warm, and there had been quantities of black flies and mosquitoes, which our hands were too full to fight. Beside all our baskets, our handkerchiefs and hats were full of flowers. One of our number carried a young cherry tree, with roots and sod, over his shoulder, and mosses in his pockets, and the girls had Lady’s Slippers and fern roots in their caught-up skirts.

The turf was powdered white as snow with Innocents, and there were violets. The pasture slopes down through dark needle-pointed clumps of balsam fir, and scattered hawthorn and cherry trees, which were in flower. A hermit thrush sang from one of the firs as we came down. The heavenly, pure carillon rang out again and again, as dusk fell deeper, the singer altering the pitch with each repetition of the song, ringing one lovely change after another.

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Such a supper was set out on the porch! Fresh rolls and butter, cream cheese and chicken, jugs of milk and cream, fresh hot gingerbread, and bowls of wild strawberries. The porch runs out into the orchard, and the white petals of the apple-blossoms drifted down as we sat laughing and talking. Susan placed her chair near us, but nothing would induce her to eat with us, and she jumped up every minute and fluttered into the house, to press more good things on us. Presently, Sam came in from milking, and was a fellow-Yankee and a brother at once.

We could hardly bear to go home, and almost took Sam’s offer (which so scandalized Susan) of a night in the hay in the new barn. It would be so pretty to lie watching the swallows darting in and out after sunrise.

We went all through Susan’s trim farmhouse, and saw her dairy, with its airy and spotless arrangements. The milk, thick and yellow with cream, was in curious blue glass pans, which Susan said came long ago from the Homestead. We saw all the chickens, the calves, and the black pigs. The Jerseys blew long breaths at us from their mangers, and the horses put out their soft noses for sugar. The ducks were quacking and waddling all over the yard, and the pigeons fluttered about.

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The late veeries and robins were singing, and the warm fragrance of the apple-blossoms was all about us, as we gathered our treasures together and drove home in the dusk.

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CHAPTER VIII—RIDGEFIELD, AND WEIR'S MILLS

The two adjoining districts of Ridgefield and Weir's Mills lie about ten miles to the east of us, in level and fertile farm country, between two ridges of hills. Ridgefield is an old Roman Catholic settlement. Twenty-five years ago it still had a prosperous convent, and children educated in the convent school have gone out all over the country; but the centre of the farming population shifted, and at last the convent was closed. The cheerful-faced, black-gowned sisters are all gone. The bell has been silent for years now, and its tower stands up with blank windows, nothing more than a strange landmark in the open farming landscape.

The Ridgefield Irish were a noted community. They all came from one county, and were marked to a surprising degree by their personal beauty. There were Esmonds and Desmonds, Considines, 83
Burkes, and McCanns, and two names now gone (except for one old representative) Guilfoyles and Guilshannons. Four lovely Esmond girls of one family are now growing up, bearing four saints' names—Agatha, Ursula, Patricia, Cecily.

Honoria Considine walks down our street, beautiful creature that she is, with a port and carriage that a princess might envy. She has brought up an orphaned nephew and niece to capability and prosperity, supporting them entirely by her sewing. The Considines have possessions which show that they came to this country as something more than farmers. They have a little old silver, two finely inlaid card-tables in the farm "best-room," and two larger mahogany tables. They are great prohibitionists, and would be shocked, good souls, to know that what they call the "old refrigerator" is a beautifully carved wine-cooler!

Lawrence McCann and Joe Fitzgerald were two as handsome creatures as ever were seen, with great dark blue eyes, delicate brows, dark curls, and mantling Irish color. 84

Lawrence died of consumption at twenty-four, as did his cousin, delightful Con Guilshannon, but Joe did well and married. The other day I saw him out walking with three little rosy children, all with penciled eyebrows and very dark blue eyes.

There lives an old lady in a great western city (I don't give its name) who ought to wear a crown instead of a bonnet. The town trembles before her masterful benevolence. Her magnificent house dominates the "best community," and her six middle-aged married children, established near-by in houses of equal magnificence, do not dare call their souls their own.

A neighbor of mine was in her city last year, and was taken to see her. The old lady seemed to know an amazing amount, not only about our far-away eastern State, but about our actual county. She finally showed such an absorbing interest in particular households that my friend said:

"But how can you know? How *can* you have heard about so-and-so?"

"Child," said the old chieftainess, her fine eyes twinkling and filling, "My name is no guide to you 85
now, except that it's Irish, but I was born and brought up in your county. I was an Esmond from Ridgefield, and had my schooling at the convent, not six miles from your door."

After Ridgefield, with its deserted convent, you come presently to where the rolling country is suddenly flung amazingly apart in the chasm-like valley of the Winding River. Weir's Mills, the village at the head of navigation, is a pleasant peaceful little place, a very old settlement, with a noted old church.

A neighbor of ours, a man now of eighty, has told me that in his childhood at Weir's Mills, the school had neither paper nor blackboard nor slates for the children to write on. The teacher smoothed the ashes of the hearthstone out flat with a shingle, and the children did their figuring on that. Farmers going into town chalked the figures of their sales on their beaver hats, and the assessor chalked the taxes up on the doors.

The school-teachers were taken to board in turn, two weeks at a time, by different families; and a friend, now an elderly woman, has told me that when teaching, as a young girl, she had as a rule 86
to share her bed with three or four children of the family. In several places the hens slept in the room too. The schools of course were ungraded. After her teaching hours she helped in the housework, but she liked it, and made warm friends. She found the life vigorous and hardy—"It was life that was every bit of it alive," she has told me.

It is sometimes said that marriage and divorce are taken lightly in the country districts, and certainly the Jingroes and their like, of whom more later, make their gipsy marriages, which bind only at will; but even among some of our outlying communities of far higher standing than the forest settlements, it is true that a curious, primitive view of wedlock often obtains. Marriages in the country are deep as the rock, enduring as the hills, *once the real mate is found*. The fine, toil-worn faces of man and wife, in Golden-Wedding and Four-generations groups in local newspapers, show a thing before which one puts off the shoes from off one's feet. But, when husband and wife find only misery in their marriage, find themselves fundamentally at variance, 87
they quietly "get a bill," (*i. e.* of divorce,) and each is considered free to marry again. The adjustment, according to their lights, is made decently and in order; and all cases come quickly before the final court of public opinion, which in these clear-eyed country districts metes out an inexorable judgment to lightness, to cowardice or selfishness.

It is difficult not to mis-state, about so subtle a matter; but the attitude of these neighborhoods is not a lax one. It is rather as if, in places so small, where the margin of everything is so narrow, the tremendous exigencies of life enforce a tolerance which is no conscious action of men's

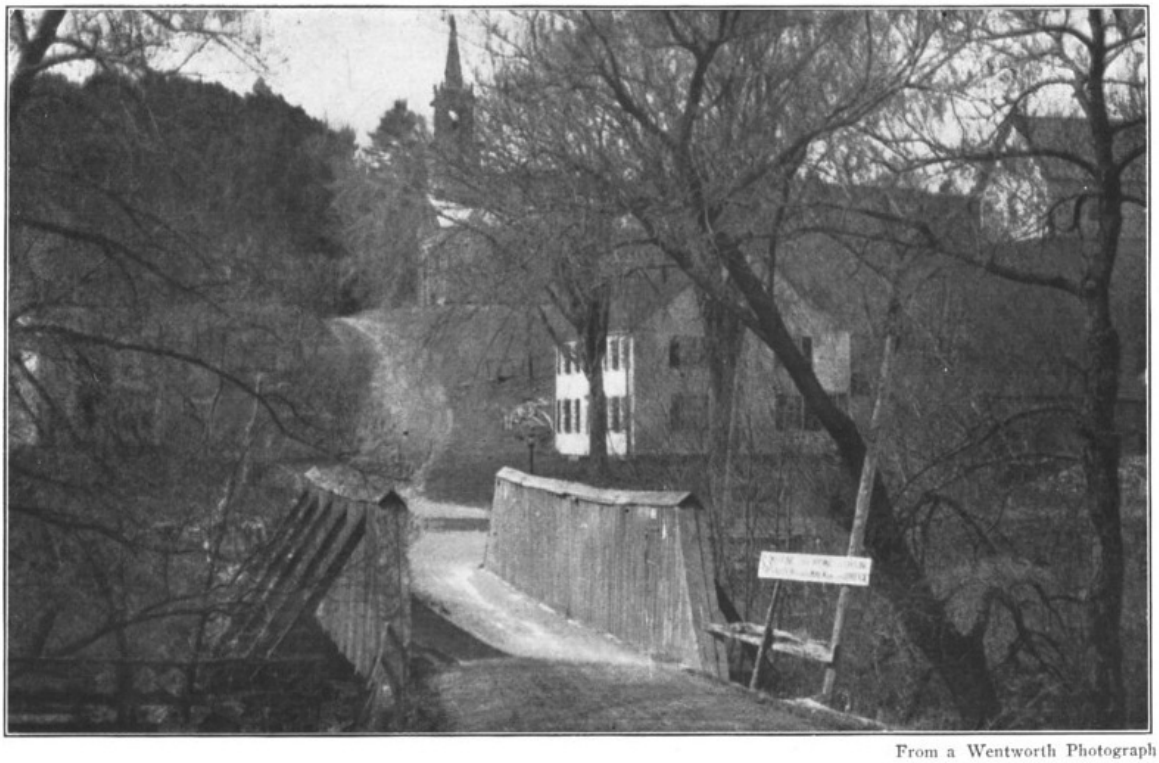
minds, but a thing larger than themselves, before which they must bow. Life is so simple and vital, so cleared by necessity of a million extraneous complexities, that people are able, as one of the Saints says, to judge the action by the person, not the person by the action.

Long ago there was plenty of shipping direct from Weir's Mills to Boston, and even to-day scows, and a few small schooners, come up between the hills for hay and wood, up all the windings of the Winding River, slipping through the draws at the peaceful, pretty hamlets of Upper, Middle, and Lower Bridge.

The country about Weir's Mills shows in indefinable ways that you are approaching the sea. You get the taste of salt, with a south wind, more often than with us. The roads show sandy, and you see an occasional clump of sweet bay in the pastures. The pines grow more and more dwarfed, and so maritime in look that you expect to see blue water and the masts of ships ten miles before you come to them. We came on another indication one day, in asking our way of a young girl at a farm door.

"The second turn to the *west*," she told us. In our part of the county we do not often think of the points of the compass. "The second turn on your left," it would have been.

This is one of our older districts, and a certain amount of old-fashioned speech remains. Many persons still speak of *ninepence* (twelve and a half cents) and a *shilling* (sixteen and two-thirds cents). A High School pupil (one of the many boys who walk three or four miles in to our Town, in all weathers, to get their schooling) brought in some Mountain Ash berries to the botanical class. *Round-Tree berries*, he called them, and the master was puzzled, until he realized that this meant *Rowan Tree*, and that the name had come down straight from the boy's English forefathers, who picked the rowan berries by their home streams.



From a Wentworth Photograph

THE PEACEFUL, PRETTY HAMLET OF UPPER BRIDGE

All through our county, and in our Town itself, among the homelier neighbors, many of the old strong preterites, which have become obsolete elsewhere, are still in use. "I *wed* the garden," for "I *weeded*," "I *bet* the carpet"; *riz* for *raised*, *hove* for *heaved*; and among our old established families of substance you may still hear *shew* for *showed* and *clim* for *climbed*.

"I *clim* a little ways up into the rigging," one of our magnates said to me this very week, speaking of an adventure of his seafaring youth.

After the Revolution certain of the unfortunate Hessians drifted to the southern part of our county, and being stranded, poor souls, they made the best of it, settled and married. They named our town of Dresden. The Theobalds come from this Hessian stock, the Vannahs, who started as Werners, the Dockendorffs, and we have a precious although extremely local seashore name, *Winkiepaw*, which began life as Wenckebach. But the adaptation of surnames is in process all around us. Uriah Briery's people used to be *Brieryhurst*; and Samuel Powers has told me that his grandfather wrote his name in "a queer Frenchy sort of way, he spelled it *de la Poer*"(!) The Goslines, of whom we have a good sized family, were *du Gueslins*, not long since, and Alec Duffy, who sounds entirely Irish, was born *Alexis D'Urfeé*.

A queer old person lived on the Weir's Mills road when we were children. He had prospered in farming and trade, and was quite a rich man for those parts. He wanted to be richer still, and all his last years he was ridden by two chimerical dreams; one, that a piece of his land was to be bought for a monster hotel, at a fabulous price, and the other that Captain Kidd's treasure was buried in a small island he owned in the river. He dug and he dug for it. He had absolute faith in

the superstition that a fork of green wood—perhaps of witch-hazel only, but I am not sure about this—held firmly in both hands, will point straight to buried water or buried treasure. He has led us all over his island, holding the forked stick.

“There! See him! See him turn!” he would cry out excitedly. “Wild oxen won’t hold him!” The stick certainly turned in his hands, and in ours, when he placed it right for us. I suppose the wood is so elastic and springy that, holding it in a certain way you unconsciously turn it yourself; but it gave a queer feeling.

This whole district is fragrant with the memory of a saint, Mary Scott. She was a cripple her whole life. Her shoulders and the upper part of her body were those of a powerful woman, but her feet and legs were those of a child, and were withered and useless. She lived all alone when I knew her, in a tiny neat house. She spent her days in a child’s cart, which she could move about by the wheels with her hands, and she was most active and busy.

No one could go through a life of such affliction without untellable suffering; but Mary’s sweet faith never seemed to know that she had a self at all, still less a crippled self. She had quick skillful hands, and her absorbing pleasure all through the year was her work for her Christmas tree. She saved, and her neighbors saved for her, every bit of tinfoil and silver or gold paper that could be found, and fashioned out of it bright stars and spangles for trimming. She knitted and knitted, mittens and stockings and comforters, and when the time came near she made candy, and corn-balls, and strung popcorn into garlands. The neighbors all helped her, and good Jacob Damren, at Tresumpscott, always cut her a tree from his woods and set it up for her; and then on Christmas Eve the door of her cottage stood open, and the light streamed out from the bright lighted tree, and the children of the whole district came thronging in with their parents.

The tributary streams from this eastern side of our river come in very quietly. Worromontogus, the largest, is dammed just as it emerges from its hills, to turn the Wilsons’ saw-mill, which was once owned and run by Mary Scott’s father. The mill and mill-pond are in an open, sunny pocket of the woods. The winding lane which leads in to them is bordered with elms and willows, and the road is soft underfoot with bark and sawdust. Feathery elms stand all about the stream’s basin, and after you have followed the road in you reach the weather-stained mill, the logs, the new-cut lumber, as fragrant as can be, and the great heap of bright-colored sawdust. Worromontogus drains the pond of the same name, five miles long, some distance back in the country.

CHAPTER IX—MARY GUILFOYLE

The sun had come out bright after a rain, and every leaf was shining, the June day when we drove over to Ridgefield to fetch Mary Guilfoyle. We started early in the morning, but it was already like noon in that midsummer season. Daisies were powdering the fields, as white as snow, and yellow and orange hawkweeds were growing in among them, so that whole fields showed yellow, orange, and white. The orange hawkweed is very fragrant, and its sweetness mixed with the spicy bitterness of the daisies. Then, on a knoll as the road rose above the river, we found patches of bright blue lupins in the yellow and orange and white, making such a blaze of color as I have never seen before in our northern fields.

There were streaks of crimson sorrel in the fields where there were no daisies, among the ripening June-grass and red-top; all the grasses, and the fields of grain, were beginning to turn a little tawny, and quick waves chased each other across them with the light summer wind.

Mary lives in a scrap of a new house, in a thick wood of young firs and spruces. The last mile of our road led through these sweet-smelling trees, which were set all over with light green jewels of new growth. Grass grew in the ruts, and the moist earth of the wood road was thronged with yellow butterflies; and tiny “blues,” like bits of the sky come to life, fluttered among the ferns. Breath after breath of sweetness came from the warm woods in the sunshine.

Mary was waiting for us at the door, with her knitting in her hand, and her cat at her skirts. Her small rough fields across the road were ploughed and planted, and she was ready to come to us. She is a strongly built old woman with bright blue eyes and yellowish gray hair, sturdy as a weather-beaten piece of white-oak timber. Many is the time that she has left our house of an afternoon (in our impossible spring going, too, with the frost coming out of the ground and the mud a foot deep); walked out to her farm, six full miles, seen to some detail of farm-work that worried her, and walked back, arriving before seven the next morning, to cook our breakfast.

She works on her farm all summer, planting and hoeing her corn and beans and potatoes. She has help from the men of the neighborhood when she can get it, but I believe she follows the plough herself when she is put to it. In winter she comes into town, and works for households in difficulties. If the cook deserts us, or we have a sudden influx of guests or everyone has grippe, we send for Mary Guilfoyle and she sees us through. She comes into a house like a blast of clear air. Nothing ruffles her, and her mere presence seems to return its right proportions and gayety to life. She knows how to work as few people do nowadays, and she is so sound-hearted and unafraid that there is something royal and powerful about her.

Mary's mother was French, and it is from her she gets her gestures. Her hands move finely, with a dignity and control a duchess might envy, and they say more than mere words could. And then, her funny expressions! She is a Roman Catholic, but so far from being a church-goer that I was surprised, last Easter morning, at seeing her ready for church; and my surprise was rebuked with,

 From a Wentworth Photograph

PLOUGHING MARY'S FIELD

"Child, the heretic and the hangman go to church on this morning!"

Her speech is unlike anybody else's. Every sentence is vivid, but they lose their quaint flavor in telling. She is delighted (she is a fine cook), but excited, too, at getting a "company meal," and loses her appetite.

"The cook cannot eat, not if she were at the gates of heaven, at these times," she puts it.

She was telling one day of an unfortunate young farm neighbor—

"He knelt on a nail, and took lock-jaw. They hoisted him to Portland, but it warn't of no use. He died in four days. He was a beautiful young man. Warn't it terrible?"

Somehow I never fail to see the poor youth caught up in a sheet and swung through the air the whole journey.

Mary was born and brought up in the Catholic community at Ridgefield; but she has spent little time there. Fifty-five years ago, when she was sixteen, she learned fine sewing and clear-starching at the Great House of our neighborhood, and then nothing would do but she must seek her fortune in Boston, where she already had two sisters in service. She made the voyage in a sailing vessel, a small brig laden with hay. She found out the name of a first-rate dressmaker, in Temple Place; next she bought a piece of fine gray cashmere, and cut and made herself a jacket and dress. Then she presented herself.

"How do I know you are a seamstress at all?" the dressmaker asked.

"I cut and made every stitch I have on me."

"You may go right upstairs, at seven dollars a week, with the others."

A sweep of the hand illustrated the triumph; seven dollars was fine pay in those days.

One of her sisters was cook for many years for Oliver Wendell Holmes.

("A little man, the face wrinkled"—and Mary's eloquent hands made me see the Doctor again in person.) He took care of her money for her; and Mary has often told me how one day, after many years, he said,

"Now, Anna, you are a rich woman; you need never work again, and can do what you like."

She bought a nice little house in one of the suburbs.

"But a year was all she could stand of it. She couldn't make out to live, away from the Holmeses, and back she goes to them."

Mary married at twenty, and lived quietly in Chelsea for five and twenty years. Then her husband died, and instead of going home to the farm, or staying on where she was, to take boarders, this born adventurer was off to see the world.

“I hadn’t seen, not one thing, cooped up there in Chelsea. I wanted to find out about new things, and new places, whilst I was strong.”

She took a part of her savings, sewed up in the front of her gown, to fall back on, but her capable hands were the real funds on which she depended. She traveled to Denver, and there went out to service, and afterwards worked in a restaurant. She found light work in plenty, and in between 100
jobs took her heart’s fill of sight-seeing. She saw Pike’s Peak and the Grand Canyon. By the end of the winter she had earned enough to take her to San Francisco. Here she had a sister- and brother-in-law who ran a good restaurant, and Mary joined forces with them. A year brim-full of life followed, but after this her two own sisters, her only surviving near relations, fell ill, and she came home to nurse them. It was then that she bought her farm, near her old home in Ridgefield, planning that the three should spend their old age together. Both sisters, though, died; but my indomitable Mary keeps the farm almost as well as a man could, and her strong nature, tremendously intent on the present moment, never feels loneliness.

As I said, she is not much of a church-goer, but she is devout in her own way, and plans to go back to San Francisco, to the convent where a cousin of hers is now Abbess, and there

“Get ready to die; and a good thing to do, too, first-rate!” 101

I never knew anyone so indifferent about dress as Mary; she is quite pretty in her way, and must always have been so, but she puts on whatever is nearest at hand, and will hamper her least. It is a fact that I saw her out in the rain the other day, taking in clothes from the line, with a length of brown oil-cloth tied about her stout person, by way of an apron, with marline, and an empty shredded-wheat box, split up on one side, on her head for a hat.

The lower meadows were still yellow with the gold of buttercups as we drove home, and where the swales ran lower and richer we saw tall Canada Lilies, Loose-strife, and purple and white fringed orchids, in among the Meadow-rue, and light green ferns and ripening grasses. There was Blue-eyed Grass, too, and Iris. It was all rich and fragrant, and butterflies were hovering about the lilies; and as if this were not enough, a breath of woodsy sweetness, much like the fragrance of Lady’s Slippers, met us from a mixed meadow and cranberry bog, and there were flocks of rose-pink Arethusas all delicately poised among the grasses. 102

Meadow-larks were rising all about, singing their piercingly sweet notes. The children were picking wild strawberries, and the blackberries flung out long springing sprays down the perfected June roadways. Their blossoms are very like small single sweet-briar roses.

From a Wentworth Photograph

ON TRESUMPSCOTT POND

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CHAPTER X—TRESUMPSCOTT POND

Tresumpscott Pond lies three miles eastward from our river, set deep between the folds of wooded and rocky hills, and the woods frame it close.

You climb the rise of a long slow-mounting hill which at its southern extremity breaks sharply down in granite ledges, mostly pine-covered, and there right below you lies this little lonely, perfectly guarded lake. There is only one opening in the woods, a farm which slopes down to the shore in two wide fields, with a low rambling farmhouse. There is no other roof in sight.

The pond is about a mile long and half as wide. It has the attributes of a big lake, in little; deep bays up which loons nest, and wooded headlands, ending in smooth abrupt rocks which enclose small curved beaches of white sand, as firm and fine as sea sand. The western bay ends in a river of swamp, and all along the north side the wood screens a broken wall of fern-grown cliffs, with 104
quantities of columbines among their crannies. The long slope above the woods is a sheep pasture, partly under pines and partly open, with ledge and cinquefoil-covered boulders cropping out in the close turf, and tall mulleins standing all about like candlesticks.

The whole locality is rich in treasures, and here on the north side of the pond is a stretch of mossy glades and openings in the underwood which are covered with the fairy elegance of maiden-hair fern, the delicate black stems standing out against the rocks and moss. They grow under cool rich woods, with pink Lady's Slippers scattered in clumps among them.

The farm at Tresumpscott is an ample one, and Jacob Damren, who farms it, comes of fine stock, and is a big, hearty figure of a man. The Pond was his father's before him. His wife is a plain little woman, always clean and trim in fresh cotton print. They say her habitual sadness is because she has never liked the Pond. She was town-bred, and finds it utterly lonely, while to Jacob it holds 105
everything that earth can give.

The land is very fertile and they prospered till well past middle life, when Jacob met with an accident that was hard to bear. A neglected cut on his thumb became infected, and soon there was swelling and pain in the whole hand. No one did the right thing, no one knew what to do beyond the old-fashioned farm treatments, and after a week of fever the arm had to go. They said it was only his wife's despairing weeping which brought him at last to consent to amputation. At first he begged to be allowed to die sooner than face life again thus maimed.

He met the blow, once it fell, in a steady manly way, and now has come well out from under its shadow. A month ago I saw him out with his horse and drag, getting out stumps, and he was managing this troublesome business successfully. He smiled a patient, slow smile, as we came up.

"This comes kind of awkward for a one-armed man!" he called out, but spoke cheerily, and seemed delighted at the way he was achieving his stumping. 106

They have had other troubles. A son who lived at home and shared the farm, married a shallow, heartless girl, who left him, and so broke his heart and his whole hold on life that he could not bear the place without her, and has led a wandering, broken sort of existence since. Their other boy, though, is a good son indeed. He is part owner in a small cooperage and he drives over from week to week, puts in solid help on the farm, and brings his wife and babies to make cheerful Sundays for the old people.

Jacob and his wife love animals. The last time I was over there the cosset lamb came into the kitchen to ask for milk. Mrs. Damren was caressing two new red calves as if they were kittens, while Flora, Jacob's foxhound, and her two velvet-skinned, soft-eyed puppies played round them.

We drive over to the pond from time to time for swamp treasures of different kinds. Jacob has a tumble-down, lichen-covered boathouse where water-pewees and white-bellied swallows nest, in which he keeps a few of the worst boats in the world (with ash oars shaped like flattened poles and heavy as lead), and lets them out to people who come for pickerel or water-lilies. The whole 107
western end of the pond is a laughing expanse of water-lilies and yellow Beaver Lilies, with the bright yellow butterfly-shaped blossoms of bladderwort in among them. Beyond these you come to a mixture of floating islands, tussocks, intricate channels of black water, and stretches of shaking cotton grass, which in June and July hide a host of slim-stemmed rose-colored swamp orchids, *Arethusa*, *calopogon*, and *pogonia*. You pole and shove your boat between the floating islands, submerging orchids and cotton-grasses alike in the black peat water, and beyond them reach the parti-colored velvet of the peat bog itself.

Balsam fir grows here, sweet rush and sweet gale, and quantities of Labrador Tea, with shining dark leaves (of which Thoreau made tea when camping on Chesuncook) and masses of delicate-stamened white flowers, which give out a warm resinous sweetness. All around there is the general bog fragrance of sphagnum and water-lilies, and the woodsy perfume of the rose-colored orchids.

Farther in shore, among the balsam firs, the growth dwindles to a general velvety richness of 108
gem-like green and crimson mosses, blueberries, and cranberries and huckleberries, the large handsome maroon-crimson flowers of the Pitcher-Plant, and the little bright-yellow-flowered Sundew, getting its nourishment from the insects caught in its sticky crimson filaments.

The pond is alive all summer with butterflies and birds. We spent a day there in June, and tried to follow a pair of Carolina rails, which ran and hid among the cotton-grasses, and ran again, and suddenly vanished as completely as if they had melted in air. We put up a bittern, but did not find her nest. Scores of red-wing black-birds had nested in the clustered bushes of the floating islands. We laid our oars down on the shaking cotton grass as a sort of bridge and worked our way from island to island, while a perfect cloud of birds chuckled and wheeled round us, uttering their guttural warning cries and their fresh "Hock-a-lees!" We looked into three red-wings' nests, and one king-bird's, all with eggs. The red-wing's eggs were pale blue, scratched and blotched

with black as if by a child playing with ink and pen, while the king-bird's were a beautiful cream-color, marked in a circle round the large end with rich brown blotches.

As we went on to gather Pitcher-Plants and Sundew, we saw an eagle fishing over the lonely little lake; saw, too, a thing I have never seen before or since, for he caught a fish so big it pulled him under. He vanished out of sight completely, came up with a great flap, and, making heavy work of it, and flying so low he almost touched the water, he made off and gained the woods with his prize.

Besides our orchids and pitcher-plants (we washed the pitchers clear of insects, and drank from them), we had come for stickle-backs, which are found in the clear shallows by one of the small beaches. We had a net, and glass jars. They are such quick darting creatures that it is hard to get them. They are the liveliest of all pets for an aquarium, and prosper very fairly in captivity.

Early in the morning, when we first reached the pond, the bobolinks were rising and singing all over the lower water meadows, and the mists were turning to silver in the early sunlight. When we came up from the bog in the late afternoon the bobolinks were silent, but a mother sand-peep wheeled and cried about the field, afraid that we would find her chickens.

We cooled our hands and faces in the clear water and washed off the black peat mold, and went up to the farm. Mrs. Damren had fresh gingerbread for us, and creamy milk, and we sat round a table with a cheerful red cloth. The room was very homelike, with a good deal of dark wood, and bright pots and pans. A shot-gun and a rifle hung over the mantel, the guns poor Jacob will never use again. His hunting dog sat close to his chair.

The wife's sorrowful eyes turned always to her husband, but seemed at the same time to try to guard his empty sleeve from our glances. He, with a larger patience, was unconscious of it.

They told us a good thing; that two lads, sons of a minister in a neighboring town, have built a little camp in Jacob's woods. They come over often to spend the night, and sometimes stay a week, and are great company. They come to Jacob for milk, butter, and eggs, and often spend the evening. The week before they had shot two coons, and they are busy mounting them, under his directions.

Jacob's face has a great peace in it, that of a man who has given everything in him to the place he lives in, and held nothing back. His beautiful, lonely little holding of wood and field and lake is better, for the work he has put into it, than when his father left it to him. He has cleared more fields, enriched the land, and drained the lower meadows. His son will have it after him. I have seldom seen a place which seemed more entirely home.

Jacob had cut the hay in his upper meadow early (he has to take his son's or a neighbor's help when he can get it), and it was already piled in sweet-smelling haycocks as we drove by, but the water meadows, where the purple fringed orchids and loosestrife grow in among the grasses, were still uncut. It was dusk, and the fireflies were out. Thousands of them flashed their soft radiance low over the perfumed meadow, and the fragrance of sweet rush and of the open water came to us from the lake.

CHAPTER XI—IN THE TRESUMPSCOTT WOODS

The population of a district can never be classified. Once again, "folks are folks," and the smallest hamlet shows infinite variety. Yet here and there the individual quality of a neighborhood seems as marked as that of the different belts and communities of trees which clothe the land about it.

Watson's Hill, Ridgefield, and Weir's Mills are fine up-standing neighborhoods, with good houses, big barns, fresh paint, and bright milk cans catching the sun; but in near-by folds of the hills, where the ridges slope up into higher country, there are poor and scattered farms and farmhouses which are no more than shanties. A neighborhood six miles from a big town may be more rustic than another twice as far. It is partly the soil, partly inheritance, and surely it is a third part influence. The land of our Silvester's Mills Quakers is not specially good, but the impulse imparted by three or four industrious good families is the foundation of its marked prosperity.

A Swede and an Italian have lately taken up two farms which were considered quite run out, one in North Ridgefield, six miles from us, and the other at the top of a long hill on the Tresumpscott Road.

The Swede asked William Pender, a thin, vague, grumbling man, of whom he hired the land,

"How long time to clear these fields of stones?"

"Ninety-nine years!" said William solemnly. But the Swede, a fair, strong-built man named Jansen, went to work, with his wife and his three children. They put on leather aprons, and worked early and late, in every spare minute that could be taken from planting and cultivating. (William looked on, from his brother's farm, whither he had retreated, in a mixture of incredulity, disapprobation and envy.) *They worked in the rain*; and now, after three years, the farm is clear

of stones, and Jansen owns it clear. He has a thousand hens, and sells his eggs and broilers at fancy prices in New York; and Mrs. Jansen's lawn and flower-beds are as gay as those of a neat farm in Holland.

The Italian farmer is a larger pattern of man. He came here as a young fellow with no better start than a push-cart, but he came of good intelligent Tuscan people, and has not only endless industry, but wits to see, and enterprise to take, all sorts of chances. He did not take any chances, though, when he married Alice Farrell, the daughter of one of our best farmers, a strong pretty girl, as industrious as her husband, and even more intelligent, with a free sort of outlook, and something kindling about her. Her husband is now the big man of his neighborhood. The district goes by his name, and he has represented it in the Legislature. He owns a fine herd of registered Guernseys, and his apples bring fancy prices.

A friend of mine, a farmer, once asked one of the great Connecticut nurserymen to what he attributed the success of the Italians in nursery work and truck farming. The older man's eyes twinkled.

"I'll tell you," he said. "They're willing to work in the rain!"

Our farm conditions are improving, almost while you watch them. The Agricultural Department of the State University is doing yeoman service. People are beginning to realize what science is bringing to agriculture, and the young men are fired by it. They are especially beginning to realize what ignorance it was to leave so many farms deserted, and to condemn so much of the land as hopeless and used up. The friend who asked the question about the Italians said of our own farmers:

"They stick to their grandfathers' ways, and not to their grandfathers' enterprise and ambition for improvement." But this statement is fast coming to be untrue.

Interspersed, however, among the prosperous districts there are curious, backward hamlets, where the woods seem to encroach. Their hills shut them about too closely. Some set of the tide of human affairs, some change of transportation or of market, cuts off the wholesome currents of life from them, and they stagnate like cut-off water and become degenerate.

There is a sad combination of receding prosperity and a run-out population in a town a long day's drive from us. Poor place, it has become bankrupt. Its timber was cut off, and the cooperages, on which its tiny livelihood depended, moved away. Its farms straggle up the flanks of a round-topped mountain. Apple-raising might perhaps have saved it, but either such of its people as had the enterprise for this moved away, or it possessed none such. The people I saw there looked as different as possible from our hearty sun-and-air neighbors. Unkempt faces thronged the dirty windows of farms that were mere shacks. They looked at once ambitionless and sinister. "Merricktown folks," people of the neighboring districts say, when tools disappear or robes are stolen from the sleighs at a Grange supper.

No Indians are left in our part of the world; but here and there a family shows marked traces of Indian blood, as old Sile Taylor, beyond Watson's Hill, a frowsy and hospitable patriarch, whose little black eyes twinkle with a kind of foxy kindliness. Though none dwell here, Indians come two or three times a year from the State Reservation, with snow-shoes, moccasins, and sweet-grass baskets to sell. They make a yearly pilgrimage to the seashore for the sweet-grass, which grows in the salt meadows at the mouths of a few rivers. They cut and dry it, and carry home many hundred pounds for the winter's weaving. The Gabriel brothers, Joe and Bill, are regular visitors among us, enormous dark men, with that Indian habit of silence which implies not so much taciturnity, as a certain tranquil quality. Tranquillity and kindness seem to flow from the big brothers. They seem untroubled by any need of speech.

Then beyond Rattlesnake Hill there are the "Jingroes." They are credited with being pure-blooded gipsies, and they certainly look it. I do not know whether they started with a definite Mr. and Mrs. Jingroe or not. The name is applied to the whole tribe. They live "over back," in clearings in a wide belt of forest. They are perfectly indolent, but cheerful, and content with the most primitive farming.

Once in a while, when things go hard with them, they all set to work, and weave very good baskets, which they bring in town to sell. You are met at every street corner by handsome, dark-eyed Mrs. Jingroes, in kerchief and bright earrings, importuning every passer-by to buy a basket.

About once a year a gipsy caravan drives through our town, and stops in the street on its way. The slim, handsome barefooted children and their dark square-built mothers are all about. The women bustle from shop to shop, making small purchases, and pick up a little money by telling fortunes.

Once, when the gipsies camped in a rough pasture near town, one of the children died, and a touching deputation came, to ask permission (which was of course given) to bury it in the town cemetery.

Another time, as a caravan drove through the town, I noticed a girl lying at the back of one of the flimsy, covered wagons, so ill she seemed to be unconscious. She was a lovely creature, dark and pale, and her slim body swayed and shook with the shaking of the wheels. I wanted to call out to the drivers to stop, but the crazy caravan rattled away at a half-canter, and paid no attention.

Tresumpscott Pond lies in the midst of our most heavily forested district. There is no village or hamlet near it, but a handful of little farms, on tiny clearings or no clearings at all, are scattered through the woods.

The dwellers in these forest farms are not people of substance, like the farmers of the open country near them, but they are intelligent folk, and are rich in the treasure of a varied and interesting life. The men of the family are sure to have hunting coats and gaiters,—leather or canvas; good guns, which they keep well oiled and bright; and most of them keep a good fox hound or two, whose jubilant music may be heard as they range through the winter woods with their masters, or on independent hunting excursions. The boys begin by seven years old to have trapping enterprises of their own up the little quick forest brooks, and what looks to the ordinary person like the merest mossy runnel, hardly a brook at all, may be well known as a drinking-place of coons, or a haunt where sharp eyes may see a mink. They are sent out to gather thoroughwort, dill, dock, and other simples, and mosses and roots for the farm dyeing. (*Cruttles*, or *crottles*, the 120
farm name for the dark moss growing on ash-trees, makes a fine yellow dye.) They know where to lie hidden at half past three in the morning on the chance of seeing a deer, and under which stretch of lily-pads is the best chance for a pickerel. And not only the boys: I know a girl on a farm, whose grown-up brother has such confidence in her marksmanship, that he will shake an apple-tree, while she nicks the falling apples with her rifle. They make use of a far greater number of wild plants than are known to the farmers of the more open country, as “greens,” cooking and eating young milk-weed stalks, shepherd’s purse, and the uncurling fronds of the *Osmundas* and other great ferns, which they call “fiddle-heads.”

They grow up sinewy and alert, under this eager life, and the best of them attain, beside their farm knowledge, to the undefinable huntsman’s knowledge, which sets its mark on a man. Their bearing is confident and fearless, and with it they have a certain forest quality on which it is hard to lay a finger. It is noticeable that the greater part of the families who cleave to this forest way of life are apt to be of dark complexion. It is a great pity that most of them can get so little schooling, but they have all been educated, since they were little, in a training which certainly develops and intensifies some of man’s best powers.

From a Wentworth Photograph

THE TRANQUIL WOODS COVER THE RISE AND FALL OF THE RIDGES

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The deep tranquil woods cover the rise and fall of the ridges for a good stretch of miles, and a good deal of hunting and trapping is to be had in them. Last month we came on fresh raccoon tracks, like prints of little hands, in the leaf mould of the wood road, and coons are often shot here. One day, as we were walking, there was a great growling and barking from our dogs, and we found that they had treed a porcupine.

In my Grandfather’s time, sheep had to be driven at night to the tops of the hills, because of the bears in the Tresumpscott woods; and only two years ago there was an outcry among the farmers because sheep were being killed. Everybody watched his neighbor’s dog, but Oliver Newcomb, who lives on a little farm in the heart of the forest tract, coming home at dusk up the wood road, 122
heard a growling and snarling, and came on a great Bay Lynx, the only one seen in this part of the country for many years. Oliver is a man who is almost never seen without his gun, and he shot the marauder, and got twenty-five dollars for the skin, a real windfall for a young man on a small forest farm, with wife to keep and five children. The skin was mounted, and set up in the library of the Soldiers’ Home.

The Bay Lynx is a much longer, more panther-like creature than our common Canada Lynx (the *Loup Cervier* or Bob-cat), and is of a general bay color, not unlike that of the Mountain Lion of the West. I have wondered if this might not be the panther or “painter” which was the terror of our Northern woods to early settlers.

“Big Game” has increased greatly in our State of late years, partly from the enforcement of strict game laws, partly because the wolves have nearly all been killed off. Deer are so common as to be a menace to crops in some places, and there are at least three thriving beaver colonies in our part of the State.

In 1868 my father, driving on a fishing trip through a town sixty-five miles north of us, was shown a pair of blanched moose antlers, set up over the sign-post at the cross-roads.

“Look at that well,” the stage driver said. “That’s a sight you’ll never see again, not in this State!”

To-day, as every hunter knows, moose are plentiful, all through the two-thirds of the State that lies under forest; and not only there, for this very autumn three have been seen in the Tresumpscott woods, while both last year and this, a black bear has spent several weeks in our neighborhood.

Muskrat are found in Tresumpscott Pond and its small tributary streams, hares and partridges and foxes all through its woods. Black duck, and sometimes wood duck, breed about the Pond, and Carolina rails; and where the brooks that feed the Pond spread out into broad estuaries of alder covert, you may see the marked flight of snipe or woodcock.

It was in these woods that Jerome Mitchell, our local authority on game and fur (a very fair naturalist, also), grew up. He is a slender, well-knit fellow, whose mother had great ambitions for him. He walked into town, five miles and back, every day, to get one year in the High School, after his country schooling. He could not afford any more, but when he was seventeen, having picked up a knowledge of taxidermy and simple mechanics, he moved into town. He worked early and late with dogged patience, taking every smallest job that offered, till at last he realized his ambition, and opened a small, but good sportsmen’s and general repair shop. Gradually he picked up the fur trade of the neighborhood. He is anxiously fair, and boys from the farms soon began to bring in skunk, squirrel, and muskrat skins, and every little while a fox or a coon.

Last year Jerome ran into hard luck. A stranger, a good-looking man, brought in an extra fine looking lot of muskrat skins. There were $600 worth, and this was a low figure for them. It was a serious venture, still Jerome took them; they turned out, however, to be stolen goods, and he had to pay the rightful owner, as the stranger was nowhere to be found. Poor Jerome! he was near tears when he told my father about it. Then, when he just had his store new painted and set in order for the summer’s trade, someone dropped a lighted match among the shavings, and the whole stock and fixtures were in a blaze.

This loss turned out to be not so serious. Jerome worked nearly all night for a week, and made better fittings than he had had before. The wholesale dealers were generous, and the shop re-opened with the best outfit of goods that it has had at all.

Now a good windfall has come to him. A rural mail-carrier brought word of a silver fox which had been trapped on a farm fifteen miles out in the country. Jerome only waited to telegraph to a big fur dealer for whom he works, who has lately established a fox farm, and started off at once. He found even better than he had hoped. The fox was a perfect young male, coal black, and hardly scratched by the trap.

In the recent craze over fox-raising, as much as ten thousand dollars has been paid, in our State, for a first-rate black fox. Of course Jerome would only get a commission, but this was the first big chance that had come to him and he was beside himself with anxiety lest it miscarry. It was a sharp February night, but he slept in the barn beside his prize, and the next morning drove home, dreading every drift and thank-you-ma’am, for fear they might upset, and the slight crate that held the fox might break.

That night he slept on the floor of his shop, wrapping himself in the sleigh robes. The fox ate the meat given him with a good appetite, and curled up contentedly enough to sleep; but as the first grayness began to show before dawn, he stood up, bristling a little, and barked, a far-away, lonely sound, Jerome said. The next day he was forwarded to the dealer in safety.

My father has shot and hunted all about this region, going on snow-shoes after foxes and hares in winter, with one of the forest farmers—generally one of the Huntingtons—as guide or companion; coming into the warm dark farm kitchen for a warm-up before the long ride or drive home. The Huntingtons always had good dogs. Bugle, a fox-hound famous through the countryside, belonged to them.

John Huntington is the man whom neither bee nor wasp will sting. He is sent for all about to take away troublesome hornets’ nests, which he simply tears down and pulls to pieces with his bare hands. Some hornets built a huge nest over the door of the stable at the Homestead not long ago, just where the men come and go for milking. One of the farm men wanted to take a torch and smoke it out, but Thomas Burnham, the farmer in charge, sent all the way over to Tresumpscott for John Huntington. He came, a silent, dark, shambling man; looked at the nest, nodded, asked for a ladder, climbed up, and unconcernedly pulled the whole thing down, while the furious hornets swarmed over his uncovered face and hands. He reached a finger down his neck, first on one side, then the other, and took out handfuls of them, and scraped them off where they had crawled up his sleeves. He tore the nest up, threw it on the ground, and stamped on it, and with few words went back to his farm.

I have never heard any adequate explanation of this phenomenon. Some people say that persons having this power have a distinctive odor about them, which wasps and bees dislike, and others ascribe it only to an entire fearlessness and unconcern.

Sam Huntington, John's younger brother, is a handsome, strong, slender-built fellow, taller than John and even darker. It was Sam who showed my father, one day out snipe shooting, what a *bee line* really means, and how to take one, and find the bee-tree. You catch two wild bees, and attach a bit of cotton wool, big enough to mark the bee's flight, to each; let the first bee go, getting the line of his flight well, then walk on two or three hundred yards, and let the second go, taking note equally carefully. Where the two lines intersect is the bee-tree and the hidden treasure of wild honey.

Sitting in Jacob Damren's clover field one day, my father showed me how to find bumble-bee honey. We sat still, and watched the fat bee go his buzzing way from head to head of red clover. At last he had honey enough, and off he started on a swifter, straighter flight, but he was heavy with honey, and we could easily follow. He did not go far, but swung on a long slant to his hole in 129
the ground. We dug where he entered (he emerged, part way through the process, very angry and buzzing) and about six inches down we found the honey cells. There was a lump or cluster of them, perhaps half as big as your hand. They were longer than the cells of honey bees; not hexagonal like these, but roughly cylindrical, dark brown, and full of very good, clear, dark brown honey.

Tresumpscott Pond is a great haunt of whippoorwills. As dusk begins to fringe the coverts of the wood, they begin their strange, almost ghostly chorus, like the swift whistling of a rod through the air, powerful and regular, "whip," and "whip," and "whip" again, answering each other all night. I noticed the time of their first notes, one night in early July. The voices of the veeries fell away, and then stopped, at quarter past eight, and at quarter of nine the first whippoorwill struck up, and was instantly answered. (I have known them to begin sharp at eight o'clock, or even earlier.) 130

It is extremely hard to see the birds themselves, for they lie hid all day in the deep woods, sleeping. Like owls, they seem unable to see well if roused by daylight. At night they gather close about the farms, one perhaps on the roof of the barn, and one or two on a fence (sitting always *lengthwise* to their perch, never across), and sometimes you can see their shape silhouetted against the sky. Last May, a whippoorwill was bewildered in a sudden gale, and did not get back to the woods, but spent the day sound asleep in broad sunlight on the railing of a balcony, right in the midst of our town. I stood within four feet of him. He is a strange-shaped bird, with whiskers like a cat's, and a flat head; about the size of a small hawk, and mottled, like his cousin the night-hawk, with gray and white markings like those of rocks and lichens, or of some of the larger moths.

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CHAPTER XII—HARVEST

In late September an errand took us out to Sam Marston's again. We wanted a quantity of early farm things, sweet cider, Porter apples, and honey.

The woods were in a flame of fiery color as we drove out through the intricacies of the river hills. They glowed like beds of tulips, with only the dark evergreens to set them off, and turned our whole country into a huge flower garden.

The crops had all been very good this season. Hay and grain were both heavy, and the apple trees had to be propped, the branches were so loaded with fruit. Our own grapes bore heavily.

The early apples were just gathering when we reached the farm, amongst all sorts of pleasant orchard sounds, the rumble of apples poured from bushel baskets into barrels, the squeak of the cider mill, and the men talking at work. The large new orchard of Bellefleurs is hand-picked, in 132
the modern method; each apple is wrapped in paper, and the fruit has its special first-rate market; but Sam is not going to take his father's old miscellaneous orchard in hand until next year, and here he and his men were picking and piling in the old wholesale fashion. The sweet-smelling pyramids stood waist-high under the trees.

Sam scrambled down his ladder, and shouted to Susan, who came out from her baking with her hands white with flour. The last time we came, we had seen only the house and dairy; now we must see the farm, and we strolled together through the sunny orchard and then were taken to the apple cellar, where the filled barrels stood in close ranks already. The cellar was fragrant with them. Susan's own special apples, Snows, Strawberries, and Porters, were at one side.

"Has to have 'em!" Sam said. "Every farm book tells you how mixed apples can't pay, and hinder the farm, but come Grange suppers and church suppers, and young folks happening in, and Fair times, if Susan couldn't have her mixed fruit, she'd think we might full as well be at the Town-Farm." 133

The root cellar, smelling earthy, was next the apple cellar, and here Sam had a few beets and carrots, in neat bins, but the greater part of the roots were still undug.

The cider-mill was at the edge of the orchard, with piles of windfall apples beside it; Sam turned a fresh jug-full for us to drink, and then filled our cans.

After this we had to see all Susan's pets. There were two handsome collies; and a yellow house cat, and a great black barn cat, on stiff terms with each other, came and rubbed against us with arched backs. There were the ducks and geese, and tumbler pigeons, fluttering down in great haste when Susan scattered corn. The newest pet was a raccoon. He was in the tool-room of the barn, nibbling corn. He steadied the ear as he ate, with little hands as careful as a child's. He looked sly and mischievous, and sidled away as we came in, looking up at us with bright eyes. He wore a little collar, and dragged a short length of chain, so that the pigeons could hear him coming; but he was not confined in any way, and seemed entirely happy and at home about the barn.

"Pretty fellow, then," said Susan, scratching his handsome fur. "But he's a scamp, he is. Only to think, what happened to my pies, last baking! I'd made a quantity, both mince and pumpkin, and if this rascal doesn't slip into the pantry, eat all he can hold, and mark the rest of the pies all over with his little hands, and throw them on the floor!"

She asked if we had ever seen a raccoon with a piece of meat. We had not, and she fetched a bit from the ice chest and gave it to her pet. He took it in his little hands, went to his water dish, and *washed* the meat thoroughly, sousing it up and down till it was almost a pulp, before he swallowed it. Susan said that raccoons, wild or tame, will always do this, with all animal food; mouse or mole or grasshopper, they will not touch it till they have washed it well, and will go hungry rather than eat unwashed food. Sam, who knows the woods like the back of his hand, confirmed this.

"Souse it in a brook, they will, till they have it soggy. They won't eat it till then."

While we were looking, a morose-looking old man drove into the yard. He checked his horse, and sat gazing straight before him with a wooden expression.

"Hullo, Uncle!" said Sam. "Come for apples?"

The old man shook his head, but said nothing.

"Cider?" said Sam.

He shook his head also at this, and at every other suggestion, and never opened his lips. After a while Sam, who seemed to know his ways, nodded cheerfully, said, "Well, tell us when you get ready to!" and turned towards the house.

The old man waited till he had gone twenty feet, and then said grudgingly:

"I come to see that there cow. You finish with your company! I'll wait."

"That's old Ammi Peaslee," Susan whispered. "He always acts odd. Oh, no, no relation; everyone on the road calls him Uncle: 'Uncle Batch' when he's not round."

"He didn't mean to be a batch" (bachelor), she went on reflectively; and then with some shamefacedness, she told us how Mr. Peaselee had once been engaged to be married to Miss Charity Jordan (who lived alone in the big brick Jordan house at the corner) for twenty-five long years. One day the lady's roof needed shingling, and she called on her suitor to shingle it. ("She never could bear to spend money, nor he either, and it's a fact that neither one of them had much to spend!")

He did it, and did a good job; but afterwards, thinking it but right and fair, he brought a set of shirts for his sweetheart to make.

"She made them, *and she sent him in a bill*; and he paid it, and never spoke to her again from that day to this, and that is fifteen years ago.

"Now hear me gossip! I am fairly ashamed!" Susan cried out.

The barn was sweet with hay. Part of the season's pumpkins were piled in the grain room, and lit up the dusk with their dark gold. Some of them still lay in golden piles in the barn-yard. The ears of corn, yellow and red, lay in separate heaps.

"I miss Mother!" Susan said (she spoke of Sam's mother, who had passed on the year before). "She saw to all the pretty things about the farm. She used to hang the corn in patterns on the ceiling-hooks, red and yellow. She'd place the onions in amongst the corn, in ropes or bunches, and contrive all kinds of pretty notions."

Susan sighed, and called the two collies to her, and patted and fondled their heads. As I said before, she and Sam have no children.

Sam went to get our honey, saying that he should be stung to death, and never mourned for, for nobody missed a left-handed fellar; and Susan took us into the house, and brought out doughnuts, a pumpkin pie, and cream so thick that it could hardly be skimmed.

When Sam came back with the honey there was a to-do, for Susan's Jersey calf, outside in the orchard, had tangled itself in its rope, and fallen and sprained its shoulder. The little creature was trembling all over. Susan rubbed in fresh goose-oil, while Sam asked if she "didn't want he should get him up a nice pair of crutches."

For our cranberries, we were to go on a mile further, to a farm on the slope of the next hill, the Pennys'.

"The old woman's deaf, but you can make her hear by shouting. Most likely she'll be the only one of the folks at home. They're odd folks," Susan called, shading her eyes to look after us, after

Sam had succeeded in packing our purchases in the wagon, laughing and talking about the way Noah filled the ark, and Susan had given my little sister a wistful kiss.

The Pennys' was an out-of-the-way place. The farm was on the northern slope of a hill, the house a tiny unpainted one, weathered almost to black. The corn was standing among the golden pumpkins in stacks that looked like huddled witches. A wild grapevine grew over the shed, but the grapes were already shriveled.

Old Mrs. Penny was shriveled too, and witch-like, and she was smoking a pipe. It was hard to make her understand what we wanted, but at last she came out, with a checked shawl held over her head, and pointed out a path which led through a thicket and across the flank of the hills, to the cranberry bog in the hollow.

 From a Wentworth Photograph

THE CORN WAS STANDING AMONG THE GOLDEN PUMPKINS IN STACKS THAT LOOKED LIKE HUDDLED WITCHES

Mrs. Penny, Jr., was squatted down among the swamp mosses, picking cranberries into sacks. She was a fat Indian-looking woman, and two dark little girls, pretty, and also like Indians, with black hair neatly parted, were at work with her. They were delighted to sell their berries.

The swamp glowed like a Turkey carpet. The cranberry vines and huckleberry bushes were pure crimson, the black alder berries scarlet, and the ferns burnt-orange. Just beyond us, in the velvet of the swamp, was a pond, across which the wind ruffled; living blue, with tawny rushes around it.

As we came back, a hunter, in a leather jacket, with his gun on his shoulder and partridges hanging out of his pockets, stepped out of the woods on the path just ahead of us. This was old Mrs. Penny's son Jason. The open season had not begun yet, but the farm looked a hard place for a living, and we saw no need of telling, in town, that the Penny family had partridge for supper.

We had a long quiet drive home. It had been so extraordinarily warm, all through early September, that we saw a fine second crop of hay being got in, in a low-lying meadow bordered by thick woods, part of which must have been an old lake-bottom. The grass was heavy, and a good many fresh haycocks were made and standing already, as if in July. The solitary mower rested on his scythe to watch us, and then went on, though the dusk was fast deepening.

We stopped when we came to Height of Land, to look out over the painted woods. They flamed round us to the horizon.

Later the moon rose, in the half-blue, half-dusk, and presently shone on a white mist-lake, over the low land through which we were then passing. The mist was rising, and wreathing the colored woods with white. Next came two more hills, and then another mist-lake in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XIII—WATSON'S HILL

By October of this year the fires of September had sunk to a rich smouldering glow. The rolling woods, as far as the eye could see, were masses of dusky gold and wine-color. There was actual smoke, too, pale blue in the hollows, from many forest fires.

Nearly all of October was Indian Summer. Every day there was a soft golden haze, just veiling the yellow of the woods, and the days were warm and still, like midsummer, but with a kind of mellow peacefulness.

We spent a whole day out on Watson's Hill, watching the distant smoke of forest fires, and listening to the different Autumn sounds, the ring of axes from the wooded part of the hill, an occasional shot, the tapping of woodpeckers, and the friendly chirruping of chickadees and juncos. The bare hill-top was steeped in sunshine. The checkerberries and beechnuts were just ripe, and very good. We built our fire on a flat-topped, lichened rock, and found water to drink in 142
a little tarn among the russet and tawny ferns and cotton-grasses, fed by a spring which stirred and dimpled the surface.

Driving home, at dusk, we passed field after field of Indian Warriors, corn-stacks, all looking the same way, with golden pumpkins among them; and suddenly, over the eastern ridge, the great round yellow Hunter's Moon rose.

It was strange, later, to see the oaks and sugar maples, towers of *gold*, instead of towers of green, in the moonlight.

A few days later we had a three days' storm of rain and heavy wind, and then the golden harvest lay on the ground. It was heaped and piled along the roadsides in winrows, through which the children scuffed and frolicked.

(The leaves in the town streets are burned, which is a waste, but if we were so thrifty as to keep them we should lose the autumn bonfires. I counted fourteen about the different streets, one evening, each with a glow lighting up the dusk, and giving out an indescribable sweet-and-acrid 143
smell as the smoke poured out in cream-white swirls, almost thick enough to be felt. The men in charge of them looked black against the blaze, and a flock of children were scampering about each fire.) The day after the rain the leaves lay all through the woods like a yellow carpet, and threw up actual light. In some places they had fallen in lines and patterns, and, wet with rain and autumn dew, they gave out fragrance which was as sweet as wine.

Late in October there was sudden illness at a friend's house. Every nurse in town was busy already, and we drove out to see if we could get Marcia Watson, at Watson's Hill. Marcia is not a graduate nurse, but she knows what a sick woman wants, and what a sick household, paralyzed by the illness of its head, must have, and can set the whole stricken machinery in order again. She is a tiny creature, as merry as a squirrel, with quick, tranquil ways.

The Watson's Hill district is six miles east of us. The Hill is a beech-wooded ridge, rocky through its whole length, and curving almost enough to suggest an amphitheatre. A good farming region 144
lies spread out below it, and there is a village nucleus, a store, the Grange Hall, and a meeting-house. The hall was burnt, two years ago, and the whole neighborhood set to work to rebuild it. They had fifteen-cent entertainments and peanut parties, and sales of aprons and cooked food. The men did the building, giving their time, and the women cooked for the men, and this fall the last shingle of the substantial new building was laid.

The only mill for many miles is the corn-cannery. Corn-husking always brings farm neighbors together; sweet corn, for canning, is husked in August, fodder corn in late October. Families come to husk for each other, and the wide barn floors where they sit are piled high with husks; but in the districts near a cannery, as here, the whole community gathers. In good weather the work is all done out of doors, and the laughing and chatting groups, men, women, and children, sit up to their waists in husks. The stoves and kitchens of neighbors are all pre-empted, and the 145
women bake and fry, and come bustling out to the workers with milk, bread and cheese, pies and doughnuts.

Here, at Watson's Hill, as at nearly every farm village in our part of the world, the neighbors meet for the weekly dance, which is as much a matter of course as church on Sundays. It would be hard to describe adequately the friendliness and complete sociableness of these neighborhood gatherings. Old and middle-aged and young are called by their first names, and everybody dances; not round dances, but the beautiful old country dances, which, transplanted over seas and carried down a century, still show their quality, and keep something of the courtly nature of the great houses in France and England where they had their stately beginnings: a quality that gives a certain true social training. Everyone in the hall is truly in company. Hands must be given and glances met, all round the dance, and awkwardness and shyness are quickly danced out of existence.

We have the Lancers, the Tempest, the Lady of the Lake, and various quadrilles. They cannot 146
now perhaps be called exactly stately.

"Balance to partners!" calls out old Abel Tarbox, master of ceremonies of the Grange Hall, as he fiddles.

"Balance to partner! Swing the same! All sashy!" And then comes the splendid romp of,

"Eight hands round!" and "Eight hands down the middle!"

Besides the old court dances, there are Pop Goes the Weasel, Money Musk, Hull's Victory, and others, pretty, intricate frolics, which in their day were the *dernier cri* of fashion, danced by

gilded youth in great cities, velvet coat and ruffles, flowered silk petticoat, and spangled fan.

The Chorus Jig is very difficult. It has “contra-corners,” and other mysteries impossible to uninitiated feet.

When money is to be raised for some neighborhood purpose partners for the evening are chosen in what I should think might be a trying, though a most practical fashion. On one Saturday evening the ladies, on the next the gentlemen, are put up for auction as partners, the price paid being in peanuts. A popular partner will sometimes bring as much as a hundred and twenty-five peanuts; and why little Alfred Stoddard, who never did anything in his life but get a musical degree at some tiny college (there are even those who say that he bought the degree), who reads catalogues and nurses his dignity while his wife works the farm, should regularly fetch this fancy price, I never could see.

“Oh, well!” says Sam Marston, “Alfred has them handsome, mournful dark eyes. The ladies can’t resist ’em.”

The three Watson farms lie to the east of the hill, right under its rocky ledges, and are sheltered by it; indeed the whole of the beautiful rounded valley which they occupy is rimmed entirely by low abrupt hills. It must be an old lake bottom, for the last remnant of the lake, a pond a hundred yards or so long, still sparkles bright blue in the midst of it.

Forty years ago Tristam Watson, with his wife and four children, three boys, and Marcia, the youngest, went north two hundred miles, to the Aroostook, when that region still lay under heavy forest. He built his cabin among the first-growth pines, and cleared and planted among the trees, burning and uprooting the stumps gradually, as he could. It was pioneer life, with no roads and almost no neighbors. Bear and moose were common, and deer more than common, and there were wolves in a hard winter; but he was a hardy, vigorous man with hardy children, and he did well.

He had no idea of cutting himself and his family off from their home ties. Nothing of the sort. The railroad ran only a short part of the way, and they could not afford that part, but every year they hitched up and *drove* home, the whole distance. It took them about five days. They had a little home-made tent, and they built their fire and set up their gipsy housekeeping each night beside the road. If it rained, “why then it rained,” Marcia says. The year was marked by this flight; it was their great adventure, and apparently a perfect frolic, at least for the children. They stayed two or three weeks, saw all the “folks,” and went back to their strenuous forest life.

Tristam died at about sixty, and the family came home, and took up the three beautiful farms left to the sons by their grandparents. The two elder sons married, the third stayed with his mother and sister.

Not long after they came back, Marcia fell ill. There was a badly aggravated strain, and she had measles and bronchitis, and after that, as we say in the country, she “commenced ailing.” She changed in a year from a blooming girl to the little thin, white-faced woman she is now (though her black eyes never stopped twinkling).

A long illness on an isolated farm is a bad thing for more than bodily health. The Rural Free Delivery and Rural Telephone, and the lengthening trolley lines, are bringing the most wholesome stir imaginable after the old colorless days; but in old times the outlying farms too often held pitiful brooding figures of women, sunk in depression. Marcia’s terror was lest she should fall under this shadow. She had seen only too many such cases, and the fear was beginning to realize itself, she often has told me; but from its very danger her mind, fundamentally sane and vigorous, plucked out its salvation. First absorbed in her own ailments, she began to question her doctor about the cure of other diseases. Soon she asked him for books on medicine. She read and studied, and then one day she asked him to take her to see a suffering neighbor. To humor her, he did, and almost at once, ill as she still was, she began to help nursing patients on the neighboring farms. Once her mind took hold of work, it cleared itself as the sky clears of clouds when the wind blows. It was like a slender but vigorous-fibred little tree reaching out and finding life-giving soil for itself. I do not believe she has an ounce of extra strength, even now, and she is by no means always free from pain, but she can do her work, and for five years she has been the most sought-after nurse in half the county.

She has an imp’s fun (and had, even when she was most ill) and can make a groaning patient laugh, as she lays on hot compresses. As we drove home that day in October, she told me how she had been outwitting her brother. (He is a handsome blond-bearded fellow, with what is rare on the farms, a carriage as erect as a soldier’s. He is far slower-natured than Marcia.)

“He’s been real tardy, this year, in getting the hams smoked, and he put off building a smoke-house. He was all for hauling his lumber. Nothing would do but that lumber must be hauled first, whether the pigs were smoked, or whether they flew; and there were Mother and I in want of our bacon.”

He started out with the lumber. The moment his back was turned Marcia pounced on his brand-new chicken coop (“he fusses like a woman buying a bonnet, over his chicken coops”), which was just finished and right, and smoked the meat for herself.

“That man was fairly annoyed!” she told me demurely.

Last spring the brother and sister shingled the barn roof together. Leonard, the brother, was deliberate and painstaking, and Marcia in triumph nailed his coat-tails to the roof, according to the time-honored privilege of the shingle-nailer, if the shingle-layer lets himself get caught up

with.

It was from Marcia and her brother that I first heard the expression “var,” for balsam fir. This is our general country term; but I do not know whether this is a survival of some older form, or a corruption. Here in the Watson Hill neighborhood I have also heard the old-fashioned word “suent,” meaning convenient, suitable, so familiar in dialect stories of Somersetshire and Devon. 152

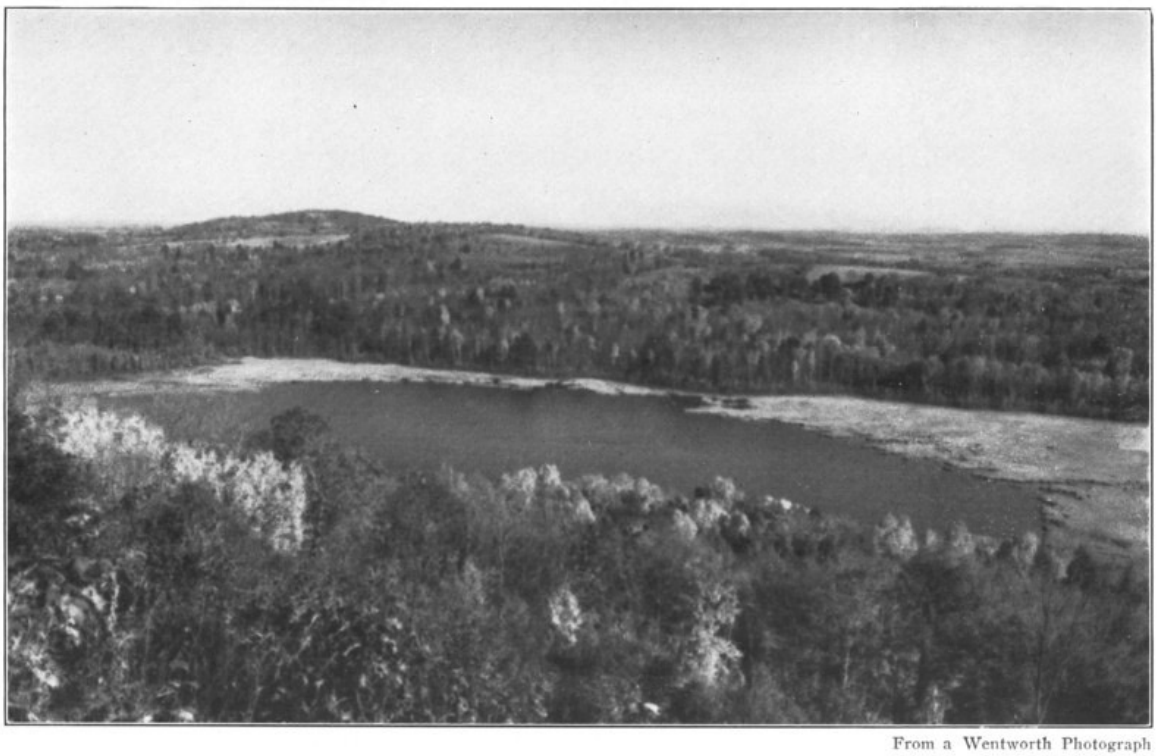
It was well past the fall of the year before we drove Marcia home again, and a wild autumn storm of wind and heavy rain had carried away all but the last of the hanging leaves. The shores of the ponds and rivers showed clear ashes-and-slate colors, and clear dark grays, but the fields were the pale russet which lasts all winter under the snow. Beech leaves were still hanging, a beautiful tender fawn color, and, of course, oak leaves, and the gray birches were like puffs of pale yellow smoke in among the purple and ashen woods. Crab-apples still hung, withered red, on the trees, and the hips of the wild roses and haws of the hawthorns, and the black alder berries, made little blurs of scarlet in the swamps. Here and there the road dipped through small copses, bare of leaves, where there were masses of clematis, carrying its tufts of soft gray fluff, entwined among the bushes, and milkweed pods, just letting out their shining silver-white silk. Witch-hazel was in flower all through the woods. 153

The evergreens showed up everywhere, in delicate vigorous beauty, and we counted unguessed masses of pine among the hills. I think we always expect a little sadness with the fall of the leaves, but instead there is a sense of elation, with the greater spread of light and the wider views opening everywhere. The wood roads showed more plainly than in summer, and paths stood out green across the fields. The tender unveiling of autumn had revealed the hidden topography of the forest, and countless small ravines and slopes were suddenly made plain. There were smaller, friendly revelations, too, for we came here and there, on large and small nests, and saw where the vireos and warblers had had their tiny housekeeping.

Late ploughing was over, and hauling had begun. We passed a good many loads of potatoes and apples, on their way to the railroad, and then a load of wood, and one of balsam fir boughs, for banking the houses. The wood was drawn by a pair of handsome black and cream-white oxen, and the boughs by a pair of “old natives,” plain red brown. The potatoes and fruit must all be hauled before the cold is too great. 154

For the last three miles before the land opens out into the Watson farms, the hills are covered with low woods, above which rises the pointed head of Rattlesnake Hill, the only high land in sight. The woods were like purplish fur over the hillsides, and nearer showed countless perfect rounded gray rods and wands, like fine strokes of a brush. There was a great shining of wet rocks and mossy places. It was one of those still late-autumn mornings, perfectly clear after the rain, when the air is as fragrant and full of life as in spring.

Longfellow Pond lies in a hollow of the woods, three miles from anywhere, a beautiful little wild wooded place, three-quarters of a mile long, where wild duck come. Alas! when we came near, a portable saw-mill was at work close to the shore! A high pile of warm-colored sawdust rose already in the beautiful green of the pine wood. They had just felled three big pines, and the new-cut butts showed white among the masses of lopped branches.



From a Wentworth Photograph

LONGFELLOW POND LIES IN THE HOLLOW OF THE WOODS

The stretch of wooded country about the pond lies in a belt or fold between two prosperous farming districts, and has its own population, a gipsy-looking set, living in the woods in little 155

shacks, half-farmhouse, half-shanty, with a few straggling chickens. The men of this place were working for the operator of the saw-mill. It was dinner-time when we came by, and half a dozen lithe dark young men were sitting about on the log ends, eating their dinner, which some little dusky children had brought them in pails and odd dishes.

We walked down between the stacks of fragrant new-cut lumber to the edge of the pond, which lay between its wooded shores, as blue as the sky, sparkling in the sunshine. We could make out three duck at the farther end of it. It is a pity to have the fine growth of pine cut, but it grows fast again with us. Nobody cares for the lesser hard wood growths in such an over-forested State as ours, and once the saw-mill is gone, the pond will probably stay its wild lonely self, perhaps for ages.

The last day that Marcia was with us she wanted to see the river, and we went down and found the flood tide making strongly, two or three gulls sailing peacefully about, and a late coal barge being towed down against the tide. We had three days of still deep frost after this, and the next day when I went down to a hill overlooking one of the most beautiful reaches of the river, there it lay, a transparent gray mirror, not to move again until April. All the colors of the banks were pearl and ashen. Though it lay so still, it whispered and talked to itself incessantly. There were little ringing gurgles, like the sound of a glass water-hammer; now tinklings, now the fall of a tiny crystal avalanche; with occasional deeper soft boomings and resoundings, and all the time a whispered swish-swish along the banks, the sound of the soft breaking and fall of the shell ice as the tide ebbed.

CHAPTER XIV—EARLY WINTER.

Like the inside of a pearl; like the inside of a star-sapphire; like a rainbow at twilight. We are in a white world, and save for the rich warmth of the pines and hemlocks there is no color stronger than the delicate penciling of the woods; but the whiteness is softened all day by a frost-haze which the sunlight turns into silver. The horizon is veiled with smoke-color and tender opal. It is as if the world retired for a little to a space of softened sunrise colors, never hard or sharp; lovely and unearthly as the clouds. We are so well to the north that in winter we enter the sub-arctic borderland, the shadowy-twilight regions of the two ends of the earth.

It is a very still time of year, there is a wonderful uplifting quiet. The sun burns low in the south, a mass of soft white fire, not blinding as in summer; its light plainly that of a great low-hanging star.

This is the dark season; but to make up for the shortness of the days we are given such glories of sunrise and sunset, and such a glittering brilliancy of stars, as come at no other time. All summer these belong to farmers, shepherds, and sailors; but now even slug-abeds can be out before first light, and watch the great stars fade, and dawn grow, and then come back to that cozy and exciting feast, breakfast by candle and fire light.

You step out into the frosty dark, with Venus pulsing and burning like a great lamp, and the snow luminous around you. The stars are like diamonds, and the sky black, and lo! there is the Dipper, straight overhead. It is night, yet not night, because of the whiteness of the snow, and because the air is already alive with the coming morning. The snow crunches sharply underfoot. The dry air tickles and tingles and makes you cough. The street lamps are still bright, and here and there the lighted windows of other early risers show a cheerful yellow in the snow. It is a friendly time of day. Neighbors call good-morning to each other in the dark, and sleigh-bells jingle past. Then you come home to the firelight and the gay-lighted breakfast table, with dawn stealing up fast, like lamplight spreading from the bright crack under a door.

As the first shafts of sunlight strike across, they light up a million frost-crystals. The air is alive with them, on all sides, delicate star and wheel shapes, flashing like diamonds. This beautiful phenomenon lasts only about half an hour. The fairy crystals, light as the air, floating about you, vanish, but the snow continues to flash softly, from countless tiny stars and facets, all day.

Frost mists hover all day about our valley, the breath of the sleeping river. They are drawn through our streets all day in veils and wisps of softness. Smoke and steam clouds hold their shape long in the winter temperatures. At night the smoke from the chimneys curls up in pale blue columns in the rarefied air, against the dark but clear blue of the winter night sky. By day the steam puffs from the locomotives rise pinky-buff, or almost gold-color, and keep their shape for a few moments as firm as thunderheads.

This year, mid-winter for the sun is the moon’s midsummer. The full moon rises and sets so far to the north that she completes full three-quarters of the circle. At night she rides at the zenith, high and small, and the snow fields seem illimitable and remote under her lonely light. The expanse of snow so increases both sun and moon light that she seems to rise while it is still broad day; and still to be shining with full silver, in her unwonted northern station, after broad day again, at dawn.

We share some of the phenomena of light of the polar regions. Moon rainbows are sometimes

seen at night; and as this is the season of most frequent mock suns—*par-helia*—so also mock moons—*par-selenes*—half-nebulous, massed effects of softly bright radiance, appear on the hovering frost mists; and sharply outlined lunar halos herald snowstorms.

Indeed the greatly increased extent of snow-expanse magnifies all effects of light extraordinarily.

At sunset, softened colors, “peach-blossom and dove-color,” like the bands of a wide and diffused rainbow, appear in the *east*; this is the sunset light, caught by the snowfields, and reflected on 161
the eastern clouds and mists. Not only this; the “old moon in the new moon’s arms,” instead of being a blank mass, as in summer, is darkly luminous, so greatly has the earth-shine on the moon been magnified.

A winter night is never really dark. Thanks to the rarefied air, the stars burn and blaze as at no other season; Sirius appearing to sparkle with an even bluer light than in summer. You can tell time by a small watch, easily, by starlight, with no other aid but the diffused glimmer of the snow fields.

The other morning an errand took my brother and me out early over the long hill that makes the Height of Land to the west. There must have been an amazing fall of frost-dew the night before, for we saw a sight which I shall never forget; not only the twigs and the branches, but the actual trunks of the trees, the stone-walls, and the roadside shrubberies and seed-vessels, frosted with crystals like fern-fronds, two inches or more long. There is a wood of pines at the crest of the hill, and here not a green needle showed, not one bit of bark; the trees rose pure white against the pure blue sky, over the white skyline of the hill. Looking out over the country, all the woods were 162
silver; silver-white where the light took them, silver-gray in shadow. Light flashed round us everywhere, so that it was almost dazzling, yet it was softened light; stars, not diamonds.

Once the snow comes, the neighborhood settles to a certain happy quiet. It is as if winter laid a strong arm about us, encircling and soothing. The dry air sparkles like wine. Dusk falls early; the wood fires on the hearths burn bright, and the evenings beside them are never too long. It is a neighborly time, and the long peaceful hours of work bring a sense of achievement.

Out on the farms, the year’s supply of wood is being cut. This, with hauling the hay, and ice-cutting, makes the chief winter work; and the men who are out chopping all day in the woods become hardy indeed.

From a Wentworth Photograph

ICE-CUTTING ON THE RIVER BEGINS IN JANUARY

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Ice-cutting on the river begins in January. The wide hollow of the river valley is so white that the men and horses moving up and down stand out in warm color; the strange snow silence makes an almost palpable background to the cheerful and sharp sounds of work, the ring of metal, the squeak of leather, the men’s shouts and talk, and the steady roar which goes up from the ice ploughs and cutters. There are small portable forges here and there for mending tools, at the fires of which the men heat their coffee. The ice-cakes are clear blue, and they are lifted out and started up the run in leisurely procession. Directly the first cutting is made you have the startling sight of a field of bright blue living water in the midst of the whiteness; while along the shore, the rising tide often overflows the shore ice, in pools and rivulets, the color of yellow-green jade.

The work is done with heavy steel tools. First the ice must be marked, then planed to a smooth surface, then grooved more deeply, and for the last few inches sawed by hand with long ice-saws. It is pleasant work on sunny days, and the men, who have mostly come in from the farms, like its sociableness; but often the wind sweeps down the valley bitterly cold, and then it is very severe,

especially the work of keeping the canals open at night. The ice generally runs to about two feet thick.

The ice-business in our valley has fallen off since the formation of the Ice Trust and the increased use of artificial ice. A great part of our ice fields are only held in reserve now, in case the more southern ice fails, but it still makes a winter harvest for us. The river towns must always have their own ice, and the farmers who cut it get good pay for their work and that of their horses. They speak of the work entirely in farm terms. They “cultivate” the ice, and “harvest” the “crop.”

Last week we made an expedition across country to where the beautiful little chain of the Assimasqua ponds and streams lies between the ranges of Maple Hill on the west, and Wrenn’s Mountain on the east; and there, on Upper Assimasqua, was the same phenomenon of frost-crystals which we saw on Dunnack Hill, only here it was on the ice. We thought at first the pond was covered with snow, but as we walked out on it, we saw it was frost, in such ice-flowers as I have never seen before. They were like clusters of crystal fern-fronds, each frond an inch and a half to two inches long. At first these flowers were scattered in clusters about six inches apart over the black ice, but farther on they ran together into a solid field of silver, a miniature forest of flashing fern or palm fronds, so delicate and light it seemed as if they must bend with the breeze. They outlined each crack in the ice with close garlands. We could hardly bear to crush them as we walked through them.

The four Assimasqua Ponds lie low between hills that are heavily wooded, mostly with beech and hemlock. The shores are high and irregular and jut out in narrow points, and these and the islands have small cliffs, of gnarled and twisted strata, which the hemlocks overhang, in masses of feathery green.

There was something appealing and endearing in the beauty of this little forest chain of lakes and streams, lying still and white between its wooded shores. We crossed its wide surface on foot, and followed up the course of the stream which whirled and tumbled so, only a month ago. Every tiny reach and channel was ours to explore. It was as quiet as a child lying asleep.

We built a fire on the south shore of a headland, where a curve of the gnarled cliffs enclosed a tiny beach, cooked bacon, and heated coffee. Twenty yards from the shore there was a round hole, some eight inches across, of black dimpling water. It had not been cut, but was natural, being, I suppose, over a warm spring. The ice was so strong around it that we could drink from it.

It was so warm in the sun that we sat about bareheaded and barehanded, yet not a frost-needle melted. The sunlight glinted on the hemlock needles, all the way up the hillsides, and a balsamy sweetness seemed to be all about us, mixed with the pungent smoke of our wood fire.

The chickadees were busy all round us, making little bright chirrupy sounds. We could hear blue-jays calling, deeper in the woods, and the occasional “crake, crake, crake,” of a blue nuthatch. The dry winter woods cracked and the pond rang and gurgled with pretty hollow noises. The hemlocks had fruited heavily, and were hung all over with little bright brown cones, like Christmas trees. They seem to give out fragrant sunny health all winter, a dry thrifty vigor.

We did not see a soul on all the Upper Ponds, and only fox tracks ran in and out of the marsh-grasses of the stream, but on Lower Assimasqua there were men cutting wood. They were cutting out beech and white and yellow birch for firewood, and leaving the hemlock, which grew very thick here. The cut wood stood about the slope in neatly piled bright-colored stacks, with colored chips among the fallen branches, and the axe blows rang sharp and musical in the winter silence. The men, who were good-looking fellows, wore woolen or corduroy, with high moccasins, and their sheepskin and mackinaw coats were thrown aside on the snow. There were five or six of them, mostly young men, and one handsome older man, with hawk features and a bright color, silver hair and beard, and bright warm brown eyes. They had bread, doughnuts, and pie for their dinner, and a jug of cider.

The Lower is the largest of the four ponds. It is, perhaps, three miles long by a mile wide, but it seemed almost limitless, under the snow, and we felt like pygmy creatures, walking in the midst, with the unbroken level stretching away around us.

The sky was deepening into indescribable colors, peacock blue, peacock gray, and in the middle of the expanse, over the woods, we saw the great full moon, just rising clear out of the violet and opal tenebrae, the fringes of the sky. She was as pale as a bubble, or as the palest pink summer cloud, but gathered color fast, then poured her floods of silver. The whiteness of the pond glimmered more and more strangely as dusk increased.

We came home, stiff and happy, to a great wood fire, piled in a wide and deep fireplace, and to a room of firelight and evergreen-scented shadows.

That night a light rain fell, then turned to a busy snow-storm, which fell for hours on the wet surfaces in thick soft-falling flakes, so that by the next morning the world was a fairy forest of white. The trees bent down under their feathery load. Wonderful low intricately crossed branches were everywhere. Each littlest grove and clump of shrubbery became a dense thicket of white. This fairy forest was close, close round us, so that each street seemed magical and unfamiliar, a place that we had never seen before. It was a perfectly hushed world. Our footsteps made no sound, and even the masses from the overladen branches came down silently. Everything but whiteness was obliterated; then at night the moon came out clear again, and lighted up this fairy world, and the white spirits of trees stood up against the gray-black sky.

Ten days after this there followed a great ice-storm, when for two days rain fell incessantly, and,

as it fell, covered the twigs and branches with crystal. It cleared on the third morning, and instead of white, we were in a world of diamond. The dazzling brilliancy was almost more than the eye could bear. Every blade of grass and seed-vessel was changed to a crystal jewel, and the breeze set them tinkling. The sky was fairy blue. The woods and all the fields flashed round us as we walked almost spell-bound through their strange beauty. The wonder was that the whole star-like world did not clash and ring as if with silver harp music. 170

As the sun rose higher, the country was veiled with frost haze, but through it, and beyond, we saw the shining of the crust on all the distant hills.

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CHAPTER XV—ASSIMASQUA, AND MARSTON

Assimasqua Mountain rises abruptly to the west of the four ponds, a noble hill or range, five miles in length.

The west shore of the Assimasqua lakes sweeps abruptly up to the high crest of the ridge, which is very irregular. It is partly wooded, partly half-grown-up pasture, partly ledge, and along the high grassy summit small chasms open and lead away into deep woods of hemlock. The steep east side is covered for most of its length with an amazing growth of juniper, hundreds and hundreds of close-massed bushes of great size and thickness. The ridge holds a number of little dark mountain tarns, and half a dozen good brooks tumble down its sides in small cascades. The folds of its forest skirts broaden out to the west into the bottom lands at its feet. To the east, the valleys of the brooks deepen and sharpen into ravines through the woods, as they draw near the lakes. 172

The shores all about the four lakes, as I said, are heavily wooded, and there are but one or two farms, and these only small clearings. A singular person lived in one of them, who worked for years over a great invention, a boat which was to utilize the wind by means of a windmill, which in turn worked a small paddle-wheel. No one now knows whether he had never heard of such a thing as a sail, or merely thought sails dangerous. He was absorbed in his project; and he did get his boat to go, in time, and at least a few times she trundled a clumsy course around the lake.

Near the south end of the Mountain is the old Hale place. Mr. Hale was a gentle-looking man, very neat, with a quiet voice and ways. He kept his wide fields finely cultivated, and had a large orchard, and twelve Jersey cows. The lane through which they filed home at night is enclosed between the two mightiest stump fences I have ever seen, fully ten feet high, and a perfect wilderness to climb over. They look like the brandished arms of witches, or like enormous antlers, against the sky, and are thickly fringed all along their base with delicate Dicksonia fern. Stump fences are fast becoming rare with us, and these must be the over-turned stumps of first-growth pine. 173

After Mr. and Mrs. Hale died, the farm passed to a sister, Mrs. Wrenn, and when her husband, too, died—he had been a slack man, with no hold on anything—she made the fatal mistake, too common among old people on the farms, of making over the property to a kinsman (in this case, a married step-niece and her husband) on condition of support. I never knew Mrs. Wrenn, but a young farmer’s wife, a friend of mine, was anxious about her troubles, and through her there came to our notice an incident which seemed to light up the whole gray region of the farm.

The neighbors began to hear rumors of neglect and abuse. Mrs. Wrenn was never seen, and those who knew the skinflint ways of her entertainers suspected trouble and presently confided their fears to the young doctor of the neighborhood. He came at once, and found the poor soul in a fatal illness, left alone in unspeakable dirt and squalor in a sort of out-house, with unwashed bed-clothes, no one to feed or tend her, and food which she could not touch put roughly beside her once a day. There were signs too of actual rough handling. 174

“Don’t try to make me live!” the old lady whispered, with command and entreaty. “Don’t ye dare to keep me living,” and he assured her solemnly that he would not, except in reason, and would only make her more comfortable. He rated the bad woman in charge till he had her well frightened, and then, though it was not only dark already, but raining fast (and though he was poor himself, with his way to make and no financial backing) he drove five miles to town and brought back and installed a nurse at his own expense.

“The tears were running down his cheeks,” the nurse herself told me, “when he assured that poor old creature that either he or I would be with her day and night, that we would never leave her, and she would be safe with us. He paid my charges, and all supplies and food, out of his own pocket. He saw her every day, and when her release came, he was close beside her, and had her hand in his. He couldn’t have been more tender to his own mother. And he gave that bad woman a part of what she deserved.” 175

I should like to say something more of this young physician. He started as a farm boy, with no capital beyond insight and purpose, and skilled hands, and was led to his career, or rather could not keep himself from his career, because of the fire of pity and tenderness that possessed him. He has come to honor and recognition now, but at the time of which I write, and for years, he was

known only to a thirty-mile circle of farm people, a good part of them too poor to pay for any services. He gave himself to them, without knowing that he was giving anything. He was a born citizen, too, served as overseer of the poor, and as selectman, and people consulted him about their quarrels and troubles.

I spoke of the incident about Mrs. Wrenn, which the nurse had told me a year or more after it happened, to the doctor's wife, some weeks since. He had never told her of it. Her eyes filled with tears.

"That is just like him," she said.

The Ridge slopes down to the west, to the rich plains through which the Marston communities are scattered—Marston Centre, North and West Marston, Marston Plains. The "Four Marstons" are a notable district, for Marston Academy had the luck to be founded, nearly a hundred years ago, by persons of liberal education, and the dwellers in the comfortable four-square brick houses of the neighborhood have more than kept up its intellectual traditions; though the town has no railroad communication, and only one mill, the shovel factory, since the old saw-mill which cut the first-growth pines on the slopes of Assimasqua has been given up.

The Marston saw-mill is chiefly remembered because of Hiram Andros, who worked there as sawyer for forty-five years, and had the name of the best judge of timber in the State. The *sawyer's* is a notable position. He himself does no actual work, but stands near the saw, and in the brief moment when each log is run on to the carriage, holds up the requisite number of fingers to show whether it is to be a three, a four, or five-inch timber, or cut into boards or planks; which cut will make the best use of the log, with the least waste. The sawyer gets high pay, six to ten dollars a day, and earns it, for on his single judgment, delivered in that fraction of a minute, the mill's prosperity hangs.

What is it that gives a town so distinct a color and fibre? Marston people have kept, generation after generation, a fine flavor and distinction. They are in touch with the world, in the best sense, and men of science and leaders of thought in university life, as well as business magnates, have gone out from Marston, yet still feel they belong there.

Eliphalet Marston, who built and owned the shovel factory, made it his study to produce the best shovel that could be made, the best wearing, the soundest. In later life his son tried to induce him to go about through the country, and look up his customers, to increase trade. The son was very emphatic; it was what everyone did, the only way to keep up-to-date and advertise the business, and Eliphalet must not become moss-grown. He shook his head, but after much hammering started off, though not really persuaded. He went to a big wholesale dealer in Chicago, but did not mention his name, merely said he was there to talk shovels.

"Don't mention shovels to me," said the dealer. "There's just one shovel that's worth having, just one that's honest, and that's the one that I'm handling. There it is," he said, producing it. "Look at it; that's the only *shovel* that's made in this country; made by a man named Marston, at Marston Plains, State of ——"

Eliphalet chuckled, and went home.

The Barnards were Marston people, a brilliant but strange family; and next door to the Barnards lived a remarkable woman, Miss Persis Wayland. She was a tall handsome person, of a large frame. She lived to a great age, passing all her later life alone, save for one attendant, in her father's large house, with its gardens and hedges around it. She was well-to-do, and dressed with old-fashioned stateliness in heavy black silk.

She was a woman of fine understanding, and a trained scholar. She read four languages easily, and at forty took up the study of Hebrew, that she might have her Bible free from the perversions of translation. She was about thirty when the religious temperament which was later to dominate her first manifested itself. She has told me herself of her experience.

She had been conscious for years of a vague dissatisfaction, and of life's seeming empty and purposeless. She threw herself, first into study, then into works of charity, in her effort to find peace. She rose early, and worked till she was utterly worn out and exhausted, at her Sunday School class, at missionary work, and till late hours at her Spanish and Latin, all to no purpose.

Then one day she found herself at a meeting at which a Methodist evangelist (she herself was a strict Episcopalian) was to speak. She went in without thought, from a chance impulse as she passed the door. After the speaking, those who felt moved to do so were asked to come forward and kneel; and as she knelt, she felt the breath of the Spirit upon her forehead.

"It was as plain as the touch of your hand and mine," she said, as she laid her handsome old hand on my fingers; and from that moment, all her life, the light never left her, she felt "held round by an unspeakable peace and sunshine."

She always held to her own church, but became more and more of a Spiritualist, till she saw her rooms constantly thronged with the faces of her childhood, father and mother, and the brothers and sisters and playmates who had passed on.

She gradually withdrew from active life, and for the last ten years, I think, never stepped outside her door. She had a fine presence always, rapt and stately. She was distantly glad to see friends who called upon her, but never showed much human warmth. She lived till her ninety-eighth year.

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THE WIND CARVES OUT WAVE-LIKE SHAPES OF DRIFT

In the farming country near Marston began the ministry of Clarissa Gray, the beloved evangelist. An unusual experience in illness led this grave, charming girl to thought apart upon the things of God, and as she grew up, persons vexed in spirit began to turn to her for comfort. Her personality was so tranquil and at rest that she seemed to diffuse a sense of musing peace about her; yet she was not dreamy; her nature was rather so limpidly clear that she was never pre-occupied, and she had clear practical good-sense. Hard-drinking, violent men would yield to her direct and fearless influence. Presently she was asked more and more widely to lead in meeting, and to her unquestioning nature this came as a clear call. Her voice, fervent and pure, led in prayer, her crystal judgement solved problems, till without her ever knowing it the community lay in the hollow of her small hands.

I was last at Marston on a day of deep winter. We were to make a visit in the town, and then explore the fields and woods of the west slopes of Assimasqua.

A marked change comes to us by the middle of January. We emerge from the softened twilight world of earlier winter into a brilliancy of white, with bright blue shadows. The deep snow is changed by the action of the wind and its own weight, to a wonderful smooth firmness. It takes on carved and graven shapes, and might be a sublimated building material, a fairy alabaster or marble, fit to built the palaces in the clouds. After each storm the snow-plough piles it, often above one’s head, on both sides of the roads and sidewalks; we walk between high walls built of blocks and masses of blue-shadowed white.

The brightness is almost too great, through the middle of the day; it is dazzling; but about sunset a curious opaque look falls on the landscape; a flattening, till they are like the hues of old pastels, of all the delicate colors. The country has an appearance of almost infinite space, under the snow, and the wind carves out pure sharp wave-like curves of drift about the fields and hills.

The still air, dry and fiery, is like champagne. It almost *burns*, it is so cold and pure. A great feeling of lightness comes to moccasined feet, in walking in this rarefied air through powdery snow; but fingers and toes quickly become numb without even feeling the cold.

Starting early out of Marston Plains village, we passed a tall rounded hill which had a grove of maples near its top, the countless fine lines of their stems like the strings of some harp-like instrument. The light breeze, hardly more than a stirring, made music through them. The sunrise was hidden behind this hill, but the delicate bare trees were lighted up as with a gold mist.

As we entered the forest on the skirts of Assimasqua, the wind rose outside. A fresh fall of snow the day before had weighted every branch of the evergreens with piled-up whiteness, which now came down in bright showers, the snow crystals glinting around us where stray sunbeams stole down among the trees: but in the shelter of the great pines and hemlocks not a breath of wind reached us, and the woods were held fast in the snow hush, against which any chance sound rings out sharply.

The bark of the different trees was like a set of fine etchings, the yellow birches shining as if burnished; the patches of handsome dark mosses on the ash-trees, and the fine-grained bark of lindens, ashes, and hop-hornbeams stood out brightly.

As we followed a wood road we heard chirruping and tweeting, and saw a flock of pine siskins among the pine-tops, and later we heard the vigorous tapping of a great pileated woodpecker.

All the northern woodpeckers winter with us; as do bluejays, and chickadees, (the “friendly birds” of the Indians); juncos and nuthatches; and partridges, which burrow under the snow for roots and berries, and are sometimes caught, poor things, by the foxes, when the crust freezes over them. Crows stay with us through a very mild winter, but more often are off to the sea, thirty miles distant, to grow fat on periwinkles; and very rarely indeed a winter wren or a song-sparrow remains with us. The beautiful cream-white snow-buntings, cross-bills, fat handsome pine-grosbeaks, golden-crowned kinglets, brown-creepers, and those pirates, the butcher birds, come for short winter visits. Evening grosbeaks, and Bohemian wax-wings, we see more rarely. By the end of February, when the cold may be deepest, the great owls are already building, deep in the woods.

Ever so many small sharp valleys and ravines were revealed among the woods, some winding deep into the darkness of the pines and hemlocks. Their perfect curves were made more perfect by the unbroken snow, and they were flecked all over with the feathery blue shadows of their trees. At the bottom of one we heard a musical tinkling, and found a brook partly open. We scrambled down to it, and knelt there, watching it, till we were half frozen. The ice was frosted deep with delicate lace-work, and looking up underneath we saw a perfect wonderland of organ-pipes and colonnades of crystal, through which the water tinkled melodiously.

We came out high on the north side of Assimasqua, in the sugaring grove that spreads up the steep slope to the crest. The tall maples were very beautiful in their winter bareness, and the slope about their feet was massed with a close feathery growth of young balsam firs and hemlocks, with openings between. The snow lay even with the eaves of the small bark sugaring-shanty. The sight of a roof made the silence seem almost palpable, but in March the hillside will have plenty of sound and stir, for fires will be lighted and the big kettles swung, while the men come and go on sledges. Sugaring goes on all through the countryside, and even in the town boys are out with “spiles,” drilling the maple “shade-trees,” as soon as the sap begins running. The bright drops fall slowly, one by one, into the pail hung to the end of the spile, and the sap is like the clearest spring water, with a refreshing woodsy sweetness.

The high rough crest of Assimasqua dominates a wide stretch of country. The long sweep of the fields, and the lakes, lying asleep, showed perfect, featureless white, as we stood looking down; but all about, and in among them, the low broken hills, the knolls and ridges, bore scarfs or mantles of smoke-colored bare woods, mixed with evergreens.

All day the sky had been of an aquamarine color, of the liquid and luminous clearness which comes only in mid-winter, and deep afternoon shadows were falling as we came down the hillside. We were on snow-shoes, and had brought a toboggan, as the last part of our way lay down hill. The country was open below the sugaring grove, and the unbroken snow masked all the contours and mouldings of the fields, so that we found ourselves suddenly dropping into totally unrealized hollows and skimming up unrealized hillocks.

When we reached the small dome-like hill where we were to take the cross-country trolley, the blue-green sky had changed to a pure primrose, and in this, as the marvelous dusk of the snow fields deepened about us, the thin golden sickle of the new moon, and then Venus, came out slowly till they blazed above the horizon; the primrose hue changed to a low band of burning orange beneath the fast-striding darkness, then to a blue-green color, a robin’s egg blue, which showed liquid-clear behind the pines; but long before we reached home the colors had deepened into the peacock blue darkness of the winter night.

Just before the distant whistle of the trolley broke the stillness, we had a tiny adventure; we strayed over the brow of the hill, and came on two baby foxes playing in the soft snow like kittens.

CHAPTER XVI—OUR TOWN

I

The farms become smaller, and string along nearer and nearer each other, the hills slope more and more sharply, till suddenly, there below them lies our Town, held round in their embrace, its factory chimneys sending up blossoms of steam, its host of scattered lights at night a company of low-dropped stars. There is no visible boundary; but with the first electric light pole there is a change, and something deeper-rooted than its convenience and compactness, its theatres and trolleys, makes the town’s life as different as possible from that of the farm districts. Yet an affectionate relationship maintains itself between the two. Farm neighbors bring in a little area of unhurried friendliness which clings around their Concord wagons or pungs; hurrying townsfolk, stopping to greet them, relax their tension and an exchange of jokes and chaff begins. Leisurely, ample farm women settle down in our Rest Room for friendly talk and laughter, and hot coffee or tea.

Our dearest Town! We have perhaps some of the faults of all northern places. We, at least we women, are sad *Marthas*, careful and troubled, including house-cleaning with seed-time and

harvest among the things ordained not to fail, no matter at what cost of peace of mind and health. We hug each our own fireside; but this is because, for eight months of the year, the great cold gives us a habit of tension. We enjoy too little the elixir of our still winter days, and hurry, hurry as we go, to pop back to our warm hearths as fast as ever we can.

Now and again through the year, the big cities call us with a Siren's voice.

"My wife and I put in ten days at the Waldorf-Astoria each year, and we count it good business," says one of our tradesmen, and he speaks for many. The clustered brilliancy at the entrances of the great theatres, the shop windows, the sense of being *carried* by the great current of life, sets our feet and our pulses dancing; but I think it is not quite so much the stir and gaiety which we 190
sometimes thirst for as the protecting insulation of the crowd, to draw breath in a little and let the mind relax. The wall that guards one's citadel of inner privacy needs, in a small town, to be built of strong stuff; it is subjected to hard wear. Indeed we share some of the privations of royalty, in that we lead our whole lives in the public eye. We see each other walk past every day, greet each other daily in shops and at street corners, and meet each other's good frocks and company manners at every church supper and afternoon tea. It takes a nature with Heaven's gift of unconsciousness to withstand this wear and tear; yet there are plenty of these among us, people of such quality and fibre that they keep a fine aloofness and privacy of life, like sanctuary gardens within guardian hedges.

But if our closeness to each other has these slight drawbacks, it has advantages that are unspeakably precious. Our neighbors' joys and troubles are of instant importance to us, each and all. In the city one can look on while one's neighbor dies or goes bankrupt. Too often, one cannot 191
help even where one would; here we *must* help, whether we will or no! We cannot get away from duties that are so imperative. Our neighbor's necessities are unescapable, and a certain soldierly quality comes to us in that we cannot *choose*.

An instinct, whether Puritan or Quaker, runs straight through us, which at social gatherings draws men and women to the two sides of a room, as a magnet draws needles. Perhaps it is merely the shyness inherent in towns of small compass; in all the annals of small places, in Cranford, in John Galt's villages, the ladies bridle and simper, the gentlemen "begin for to bash and to blush," in each other's society. Whatever it is, it narrows and pinches communities, and does sometimes more far-reaching harm than the mere stiffening-up of parties and gatherings; it narrows the women's habit of thought, so that children are deprived of some of the wider outlook of citizenship; and the woman's ministry of cheering and soothing, which pours itself out without stint to all *women* in old age or sorrow or sickness, is too often withheld from the men, who may be as lonely and troubled, and may be left forlorn and uncheered. However, this foolish thing 192
vanishes before rich and warm natures, like snow in a March sun.

I sometimes wish that our latch-strings hung a little more on the outside. It is easier for us to give a party, with great effort, and our ancestral china, than to have a friend drop in to share family supper; yet there is something that makes for strength in this fine privacy of each family's circle, and no doubt, as our social occasions are necessarily few, a certain formality is the more a real need. It "keeps up."

One grave trouble runs through our community, and leaves a black trail. Drink poisons the lives of too many of our working-men.

The drain to the cities, which robs all small places of part of their life's blood, touches us nearly; the young wings must be tried, the young feet take the road. The restless sand is in the shoes, and one out of perhaps every twenty pairs sold in our street is to take a boy or girl out to make a new home, far from father and mother.

But this, although it robs us, is also our pride and strength. Many of the boys and girls who have 193
gone out from among us have become torch-bearers, and their light shines back to us; and if the town's veins are drained, it is, by the very means which drain it, made part of the arterial system of the whole country, and throbs with its heart beats. The enormous variety of post-marks on our incoming mail tells its absorbing story.

There is no sameness, even in a small town. Here, as everywhere, the Creator lays here and there His finger of difference; as if He said, "Conformity is the law—and non-conformity." Why should one clear-eyed boy among us have been born with the voice and vision, and the sorrow-and-reward-full consecration, of high poetry, rather than his brothers? Why should another, of different bringing-up, among a din of voices crying down the town's possibilities, have had the wit and enterprise, yes, and the vision, too, to build up, here, a vigorous manufactory, whose wares, well planned and well made, now have their market many States away?

I think of a third boy, the child of a well-read, but not a studious household, who at ten was laying 194
hands on everything that he could find to study in the branch of science to which his life was later to be dedicated. He had the same surroundings as the rest of us, we went to school and played at Indians together; and now, for years, in a distant city, his life has led him daily upon voyages of thought, beyond the ken of those who played with him.

Another boy, our dear naturalist, also lives far away. His able, merry brothers were the most practical creatures; so was he, too, but in another way. He turned, a little grave-eyed child, to out-of-doors, as a duck takes to water, caring for birds and beasts with a pure passion, as absorbed in watching their ways as were the other boys in games and food. It was nothing to him to miss a meal, or two, if a turtle's eggs might be hatching. He had very little to help him, for his father, a very fine man, a master builder, failed in health early; but he helped himself. He found

countless little out-of-the-way jobs; he mounted trout or partridges for older friends, caught bait, exchanged specimens through magazines, etc., to keep himself out of doors, and to buy books and collecting materials. By the time he was twelve he had a little taxidermy business; and with the growth of technical skill, the finer part, the naturalist's seeing eye for infinite difference—the shading of the moth's wing, the marking of the wren's egg—grew faster yet; and with it the patient reverent absorption in the whole.

People come to him now for accurate and delicate knowledge. His word gives the authority which for so long he sought; and, at least once, he has been sent by his Government to bring back a report of birds and fishes, and to plant his country's flag on a lone coral island.

The other night we went to a play given by some of the school children. Their orchestra played with spirit; and from the first we grew absorbed in watching a little boy who played the bass drum. The bass drum! He played the snare-drum, the triangle, the cymbals, a set of musical rattles, and I do not know how many extraordinary things attached to hand or feet, as well. Our northern music is choked in the sand of over-business, prisoned by northern stiffness, but shy, stiff, awkward though it may be, the divine thing is there, as groundwater is present where there is land; and nothing can keep our children from buying (generally with their own earnings) instruments of one sort or another, and picking up lessons.

I know this little boy. His father is a laborer, a slack man, down at heels, but kind and indulgent. The boy is a chubby little soul, and he accompanied the showy rag-time as Bach's son might have played his father's masses, with a serious, reverent absorption, his little unconscious face lighting up at any prettier change in the rag-time. They live in a tiny cottage, and are well-fed, but very untidy. As the humming bird finds honey, this child had somehow picked up odd pennies to buy, and found time to master, his extraordinary collection of instruments, and he sat playing as if in Heaven. Surely we had seen yet another manifestation of the Power, which, together with the bright fields of golden-rod and daisies, plants also the hidden lily in the woods.

II

Of the town's politics, the less said the better, but in every matter outside of their withering realm, I wonder how many other communities there are in which public spirit is as much a matter of course as drawing breath, where heart and soul are poured into the town's needs so royally. Our churches, our Library, our Rest Room, Board of Trade, and Merchants' Association have been earned by the hardest of hard work, shoulder to shoulder. Most of our women do their own household work, all of our men work long hours; but when there is question of a public work to be done, people will pledge, gravely and with their eyes open, an amount of work that would fairly stagger persons whose easier lives have trained their fibres less hardily. I wonder what would be the equivalent, in dollars and cents, of the gift to one of the town's undertakings, by a stalwart house-wife (who does all the work for a family of five) of *every afternoon for three weeks*, and this in December, when our Town loses its head in a perfect riot of Christmas present-giving.

What is it in politics, what can it be, which so poisons human initiative at its well-springs? Here is public work which, we are told, we must accept (must we?) as a corrupting and corrupt thing; it deadens and poisons; and almost interlocking with it is work for the same town's good, done by the same people, which invigorates as if with new breath and kindles a living fire among us.

The peculiar problem of our town, the bitter, fighting quality of our politics, is a mystery to ourselves. One condition which presses equally hard on the whole State: the constant friction, and consequent moral undermining, of a law constantly evaded: may be in part responsible. But no doubt our intense, flint-and-steel individualism is the chief factor; yet this individualism is also the sap, the very life-blood, of the tree!

(Surely things will be better when the ethics of citizenship is taught to children as unequivocally as the duty of telling the truth.)

With this citizen's work, goes on a private kindness so beautiful that one finds one's self without words, uplifted and humbled before it; it is as if, below the obstructions of our busy lives, there ran a river of friendship, so strong, so single-purposed, that when the rock above it is struck by need or adversity, its pure current wells forth and carries everything before it.

How many times have this or that old person's last days been made peaceful and tranquil, instead of torn with anxiety, by the hidden action of "a few friends": (ah, the fine and sweet reticence!); and these not persons of means, but of slender purses; young men, among others, with the new cares of marriage and children already heavy upon them.

Doctor's bills "seen to"; a summer at the seashore, for a drooping young mother, "arranged for"; the new home cozily furnished, and books and clothing found, for a burnt-out household; a telephone installed, a year at college provided for; a girl, not at fault, but in trouble, taken in and made one of the family; these instances and their like crowd the town's unwritten annals.

I must not seem to rate our dear Town too highly, or to claim that these examples are anything out of the common, that they shine brighter than the countless other unseen stars of the Milky Way of Kindness. I only stand abashed before a bed-rock quality of friendship, which never wears out nor tires; which gives and gives again, gravely, yet not counting the cost, and does not withhold that last sharing of hearth and privacy, before which so many dwellers in more sophisticated places cannot but waver.

Have I given too many examples? How can I withhold them!

I think of the machine-tender and his wife, who, in a year of ill-health and doctor's bills for themselves and their two children, took in the young wife of a fellow-worker who had lost his position; tended her when her baby came, cared for mother and child for eight months, till a new job was found.

Of two households, who took in and made happy, the one a broken-down artist who had fallen on evil times in a great city, the other a sour-tempered old working woman, left without kin. The first household have growing-up children, an automobile, horses, all the complexities of well-to-do life in these days, but the tie of old friendship was the one thing considered. The householders in the second case were not even near friends, merely fellow church members, a kind man and wife, left without children, who could not enjoy their warm house while old Hannah was friendless. They tended her as they might have tended their own sister.

Of the young teacher, alone in the world, who, when calamity came to two married friends (a burnt house and office, and desperate illness) took *all* the savings that were to have gone for three years' special training, went to them, a three-days' railroad journey, brought them home, and bore all the household expenses of the young couple, and of their baby's coming, until new work was found.

The cooking and housework for four persons, (together with a heavy amount of neighborhood work,) would seem enough for even a very capable and kind pair of hands. Well, one friend, in addition to this, for two years cooked and carried in *all* the meals for a neighbor (a good many doors away), a crippled girl, a prey, heretofore, to torturing dyspepsia. There was no chance of saving the girl's life, she had a fatal complaint, but thanks to this simple ministry, her last two years were free from pain, and she was as happy a creature as could well be.

These and like cases crowd to one's mind, till the memories of the town ring like a chime of bells.

I remember how troubled we were about one neighbor, a gentle, sweet lady, left the last of a large and affectionate family circle; how we dreaded the loneliness for her. We need not have been troubled. There was a place for her at every hearth in the neighborhood, and when the long last illness set in, kind, pitiful hands of neighbors were close about, soothing and tending her. One younger friend, like a daughter, never left her, day after day. Her own people were all gone before her, her harvest was gathered, there could be no more anguish of parting; and her last years seemed, as one might say, carried forward on a sunny river of friendship.

III

People from sunnier climates speak sometimes of our lack of community cheer and of festivals; but a temperature of twenty below zero—or even twenty above—does not conduce to dancing on the green; and it may be that the spirit's light-footedness, like that of the outward person, is hampered by many wrappings. Yet once in a while even we northern people do "break out"; as on Fourth of July, when, in the early morning, the "Antiques and Horribles," masked and painted, ride, grinning, through the streets.

After a football victory, our High School boys, like boys everywhere, break out in unorganized revel. They caper about in night-shirts put on over their clothes, or in their mother's and sisters' skirts, and with the girls as well, they dance down the street in a snake-dance. They light a bonfire in the square, and sing, cheer, and frolic around it. Though they do not know it, it is pure carnival.

The long white months of winter see us all very busy and settled. This is the time of year when solid reading is done, and sheets are hemmed, when our Literary Societies write and read their papers, when we get up plays and tableaux, and the best work is done in the schools. Nobody minds the long evenings, the lamplight beside the open fires is so infinitely cozy; and on moonlight nights, all winter, the long double-runners slip past outside, with joyful laughter and clatter, as the boys and girls—and their elders—take one hill after another in the Mile Coast.

With the breaking-up of the ice, all our settled order breaks up, too, in the tremendous effort of Spring Cleaning. It is as chaotic within the house as without. The furniture is huddled in the middle of the room, swathed in sheets. The master of the house mourns and seeks, like a bird robbed of its nest. We live in aprons and sweeping caps, and in mock despair. The painter will not come; the step-ladder is broken; the spare-room matting is too worn to be put down again; but every dimmest corner of the attic, every picture and molding, every fragment of put-away china, is shining and polished before the weary wives will take rest.

With the first warm-scented May nights, the children's bedtime becomes an indefinite hour. They are all out after dusk, like flights of chimney-swallows. They run and race down the streets, they don't know why, and frolic like moths about the electric-light poles.

Memorial Day, with its grave celebration, renews our citizenship. The children are in the fields almost at sunrise, gathering scarlet columbines in the hill crannies, yellow dog-tooth violets, buttercups in the tall wet grass, stripping their mothers' gardens of their brilliant blaze of tulips, bending down the heavy, dewy heads of white and purple lilacs. The matrons meet early at Grand Army Hall, and tie up and trim bouquets and baskets busily till noon. The talk is sober, but cheerful, and there is a realization of harvest-home and achievement, rather than sadness. The little sacred procession marches past, to the sound of music that is more elating than mournful. Later, after the marching, the tired men find hot coffee and sandwiches ready for them.

With summer, inconsequence and irresponsibility steal happily over the town. Even in the shops and factories the work is not the same, for employers and employees have become easy-going,

and the business streets look contentedly drowsy. Bricks and paving stones cannot keep out the wafts of summer fragrance, and with them an ease and gayety, a *joie de vivre*, diffuse themselves, which are astonishing after our winter soberness. Our night-lunch carts, popcorn, and pink lemonade booths, with their little flaring lights, are ugly, if compared, for instance, to kindred things in Italy, but they manifest the same spirit. The coming of a circus shows this feeling at its height, but it does not need a circus to bring it out; and the Merry-go-round on one of our wharves toots its gay little whistle all summer. Music, sometimes queer and naive in expression, comes stealing out through the town. Our music is never organized, but the strains of brass or string quartettes or a small band, or of a little part singing, are heard of an evening.

Everybody who can manage it goes down to the sea, if but for one day, and the small excursion steamer is crowded on her daily trips to “The Islands.”

“It takes from trade,” remarks I. Scanlon, the teamster, “but you’ve only got one life to live. At a time!” he adds reverently; and he and his wife and six children travel down to a much-be-cottaged island, set up their tent on the beach, and for a delicious, barefoot fortnight live on fish of their own catching, and potatoes brought with them from home.

We almost live on our lawns, and neighbors stray across to each other’s piazzas for friendly talk, friendly silence, all through the warm summer evenings.

By October every string needs tautening. The still, keen weather takes matters into its own hands, and we are brought back strictly to work. Meetings are held, committees appointed, plans made for the winter’s tasks, and soon each group is hard at it, for this and that missionary barrel, this and that campaign; and at Thanksgiving the matrons meet again at Grand Army Hall, to apportion and send out the Thanksgiving Dinner. It is a privilege to be with the kind, able women, to watch their capable hands, their shortcuts to the heart of the matter in question, their easy authority, their large friendliness; in more cases than not, their distinction of bearing as well.

Thanksgiving once over, the pace quickens. Each church has its yearly sale and supper at hand, for which months of faithful work have been preparing, and these once worked off, the whole town, as I have said, loses its head in a perfect fever of giving. What does anything matter but happiness? Christmas is coming! Every man, woman, and child is a hurrying Santa Claus. The first snow brings its strange hush, its strange sheltering pureness, and the sleigh-bells begin once more to jingle all about. During Christmas week hundreds of strings of colored lights are hung across the business streets. Wreaths and garlands of fragrant balsam fir, the very breath and expression of our countryside, are hung everywhere, over shop windows and doorways, in every house window, and on quiet mounds in the churchyard and cemetery. The solemnity of the great festival, which is our Christmas, our All Saints’ and All Souls’ in one, folds round us.

The churches are all dark and sweet, like rich nests, with their heavy fir garlands, lit up by candles. Pews that may be scantily filled at most times are crowded to-night, for here are the boys and girls, thronging home from business and college. Here are the three tall boys of one household, whom we have not seen for a long time, and there are four others. Here are girls home from boarding-school, rosy and sweet, blossomed into full maidenhood, bringing a whiff of the city in their furs and well-cut frocks. There is the only son of one family, who left home a stripling, now back for the first time, a stalwart man, with his young wife and three children. His little mother cannot see plainly, through her happy tears; and there, and there, and there again, are re-united households.

The bells ring out, and after them comes the silver sound of the first hymn.

Of late, on Christmas evening, the choirs of the different churches have begun the custom of meeting on the Common, to lead the crowd in hymns, round the town Christmas Tree. Later they separate and go about singing to different invalids and shut-ins, and many of the houses are lighted up.

“Silent Night! Holy Night!”

So, within doors, we neighbors meet in reverent and thankful worship; while without, the pure snow, the grave trees, the stars, bear their enduring witness to that of which they, and we and our human worship, are a part.

Peace and good-will to our town, where it lies sheltered among its hills. The country rises on each side of it, and stretches peacefully away to east and west. The valleys gather their waters, the wooded hills climb to the stars; they wait, guarding in silent bosoms the treasure of their memories, the secret of their hopes.

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