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DANIEL B. FEARING  
NEWPORT R. I.

1895

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Letter from S. N. Warfel who sold  
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*Publishers WEEKLY, Sept 10. 98.*

Daniel B. Fearing, Newport, R. I. [Cask.]  
Owl Creek Letters, and Other Correspondence, 12°.  
New York, Baker & Scribner, 1848.

*and entirely our  
letters -  
Very dr*

*St Lenny Eng  
L C*

**Newport News. Oct. 1898.**

**WANTED**—To purchase for cash, copy of an old book called "The Owl Creek Letters and other correspondence." Any one possessing a copy which they are willing to part with, address Box 63, Daily News Office.

THE  
OWL CREEK LETTERS,

AND  
OTHER CORRESPONDENCE.

BY W.

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NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY BAKER & SCRIBNER,  
145 NASSAU STREET AND 36 PARK ROW.  
—  
1848.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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MY DEAR L—— :

These letters, which were commenced without any idea that they would be continued beyond the month in which the first one was written, have at length become a long series, and are now gathered between covers for your benefit, whose they have been in their origin and continuation.

And you will permit me, in laying a copy of them on your table, to say again and yet again, that it shall always be, as it has always been, my duty as well as my happiness, to contribute in every method in my power to your gratification, however slight my ability may be.

These letters which have met your eye regularly, as they have from time to time appeared in the Journal of Commerce, are no elaborate paintings. They profess to be entirely the contrary. Many of them, in fact the larger portion, were written under circumstances that rendered it impossible to refine a sketch or shade an outline. With folio resting on

a gnarled branch of the fallen tree on the river bank, or on the unsteady deck of the Phantom, or on my knee in a rail-car, by the sunlight, by the twilight, by the fitful glare of the pine knots on the cabin table; at morning, evening, and midnight, from every place, every situation; these sketches have been sent without revision, without even a second reading after being once written, and while they lack the polish which a careful elaboration might have given them, they will be more valuable to you as the unschooled, unwhipt fancies, and the matter-of-fact experiences of your friend.

They were sent originally to be read by the denizens of our great city, and thus published in the columns of a commercial paper. It may be supposed that they contain much that would scarcely interest such readers; and I may have failed to attract their attention to my thoughts in my many roving. Yet I have never hesitated in overstepping the ordinary line of demarkation, nor did I ever fear that allusions to the deeper feelings, the finer sensibilities, the holier affections of the heart, would fail to meet a welcome in any soul which has been *thoughtful* while it has lived. On the contrary, I have found none so ready to sit and talk with me as I most love to talk in the more serious hours of

my day, as are those very persons who are at other times occupied with the weary duties of business-life.

That heart was originally callous and has not been made so by contact with the world, which refuses to grow glad when the springs of youth gush forth again. Believe me, there are very few persons who can look at the days of youth in any other light than as a holy memory. To you, to them, to me, the past is a memory of vigils on earth, by the wreck of many earthly hopes, the grave of many earthly loves. A memory of green fields we once walked through, and pure springs we once drank of, such fields as we may never walk through again, such springs as we may never kneel beside again, until the voices that died away here break once more melodiously on our ears, and we find rest in the green fields by the still waters of the better land.

I need not point you to the refuge from such a saddening memory. When visions of faded fancies, of eyes that are dim, and forms that are dust, thus haunt you, when songs long hushed fall faintly on your ears as echoes from the blue arch of heaven mingling somewhat of its sounds with their own remembered tones, you will go as I have gone, out into the starlight, and bowing reverently awhile, lift

your longing and expectant gaze to the God who is more immutable than the stars or than their laws, and bethink you of the land which is beyond them.

Thus, whatever might be thought of these letters by others, I have been always sure that they met a welcome in one seat, by one fireside, knowing that your heart answered mine in every emotion of pleasure or of pain. And while I give them now to the public in a new form, you will permit me to say that I should not do so, were I not well assured that you would place some value on them, above what any stranger to me might estimate them at, and that while I remain a stranger to others, you will find no difficulty in recognising the familiar initial of your old friend,

W.

OWL CREEK CABIN, Jan. 1848.

# THE OWL CREEK LETTERS.



## LETTER I.

NIGHT ON THE RIVER BANK.

OWL CREEK CABIN, Nov., 1846.

IN the grand old forest! Weariness is gone and all care and sadness, and we rejoice under the calm blue sky with perfect joy. As the stars began to shine (Monday evening it was), we came out from the wood, on the bank of the river, and met Nora and Echo—Good dogs! How glad they were to see us again. Nora is a knowing animal, and as she came and stood before me, and put her paws on my shoulder and looked wistfully in my face, I knew as well as if she had spoken, that she wanted to know how they all were at home, and especially how *one* was —. Ah Nora, you think as much of your gentle mistress as your master does. “She’s well,

good dog," said I, "and they're all improving," and Nora was satisfied; and straightway she and Echo began to raise the greatest racket of joy you can imagine, and that brought Black and Willis out of the cabin; and then we had a welcome as warm as ever welcome was in our luxurious city, and proceeded to enlighten them with reference to matters and things in the world from which we had come; and when midnight came, it found us sitting in front of the hearthfire still.

In the matter of sociability we lack nothing now. Willis, J., and myself, are friends by no common bond. Long talks have we now of college days, and of scenes in our lives, not long but weary enough. We have had joys together, and have wept together. Yes, we call ourselves men, and yet we three have wept over the graves of the good and well beloved. So joying and sorrowing together, we go on loving and loved, and we three are left to one another now, alone, of all the young and manly and fair that sat

together a few years ago in a quiet home on the banks of the Hudson.

And that reminds me of our last expedition, of which I must tell you. The day before yesterday, we had started for the Wilahanna, but were led to the North by an expectation of better game. The truth was, we had an idea that an old bear, with at least one cub, had crossed the country above us, and we hoped for the good luck of meeting them. It was just at sunset that we reached the foot of the highest hill in the country, and resolved to see the sun go down from its top. The sides were covered with hemlock and cedar and scrub-oak, strangely mixed, but the peak was open, and a large rock rose in the centre like a monument. Willis reached the summit first, and called my attention to a hickory tree, in the bark of which he had found my mark. I made it there four years ago, when alone on a hunt, but the point of especial interest was a mark underneath it, which Willis did not know. I knew it well, and

as the sun went down in the sky, I looked in the gathering glory of the West, and wondered if the spirit of my friend were with me there.

How wildly we are driven about by the tempests of life. Years had passed since we met last, but he had crossed my track here in the lone forest, on this mountain summit, and had made a note in the bark that said to me in his own tone of voice, so well remembered, "Friend I have come where thou hast been, and I remember." He is dead now! He died in the strength of manhood, with his clear eye fixed on Heaven. Afar off in the East, our eyes saw the last sun-ray gleaming on a blue mountain peak. At the foot of that mountain is a grave-yard, and in that grave-yard is a mound, marked by a plain white stone, whereon is the name of the noblest spirit of the class of —. That is the grave of hopes, golden hopes;—the grave of love—a holy heavenly love, that weeps even now over the fallen.

As I named his name to Willis and J—, an expression of sadness stole over their faces, and we sat on the rock, and watched the fading light, and spoke of him forgetting entirely the necessary preparations for the night. As darkness enveloped us, we concluded to make our bivouac at the foot of the rock, and so kindling a fire we piled on all the broken branches and wood we could collect, swept or *kicked* together into a niche of the rock as many leaves as lay about, lit our cigars and sat down. J—'s pocket furnished a partridge, and mine some dried venison, salt, &c., and Willis added some cold corn cake. The partridge soon swung over the fire by a green vine branch, and the appetites of the three added what was wanting, if anything.

As we sat here disposing of the edibles as fast as possible, J— pointed out a light in the forest, or rather over the top of it, at a distance of perhaps two miles, which he thought was smoke from some one's camp fire. We had expected to meet Black the

next day on the Willahanna, but it occurred to me that he might have taken the same course we had, and I know that if it were he, Nora's voice would reach him.

The dog has a way of speaking, I can't call it howling, when she hears a mournful sound, and I had before taken advantage of this peculiarity. I therefore called her to me, and commenced as piteous a howl myself as I could get up. She took the idea, and sent a mournful sound over the silent and solemn forest, that must have scared the very ghosts of the Indians that haunt them. I never heard so wild a cry as that, save once when I heard a drowning horse in the Scioto.

Her voice rang and echoed among the trees at the foot of the hill, until it seemed as if the fiends themselves were wailing there, and one calling to another, and the other answering again, and all together shrieking, till the sounds died away in the dim old arches. Willis and J—, who had added their voices in screams of laughter

to my howl and Nora's wail, had ceased, and were leaning forward and listening as intently as I, when a rifle rang in the woods, and the light blazed suddenly as if an armful of leaves had been thrown on it. We answered by three shots, that Black, if it were he, might recognise our number. The next moment the light disappeared, by which we knew that the fire was scattered, and whoever the party was, he or they would be with us soon. In half an hour, Black came up the hill, and we exchanged notes, talked till midnight, and then slept till morning. As I woke the day was breaking in the east, and when the sun rose we were on our way. As for the bear aforesaid, we haven't seen her yet. At noon yesterday, we learned that she was dead; killed two days before. So we changed our march, spent last night in a cabin in the forest, and this morning reached the bank of the Willahanna. The information which we got there was such as induced us to return to our cabin to-day, and we reached

home this evening. The amount of game killed in the three days is small, and we are rather ashamed of our deeds. A fox which J— shot this morning, and a wild duck of Willis's killing, is the sum total. But we have had a pleasant walk, and some fun, and not a little excitement, and so our lives pass here.—My visit to the city has been productive of one good, if no more, in adding J— to our Company. But beside, it has made me know how happy I actually am in the forest. We grow proud and egotistical here, fancying all the glories of nature made for our especial benefit. We at least learn to feel our own importance, and gain in that sort of self respect which is no hurt to a man. "We learn to battle with giant thoughts," said Willis. "None of that Joe, that's Byronic," said J—; "Byron was always battling with strong thoughts, and they generally beat him." It is late as I write, and I have just looked out at the sky. The head of Taurus, with the bright star of the Wanderer, is past the zenith, and I know it must be midnight.

## LETTER II.

### THE FOREST BEAUTY.

NEW YORK CITY, Feb., 1847.

ON a bright winter morning we emerged from the forest, and found ourselves standing once more in the broad and civilized world. The first sight of life that greeted our eyes was a mill, and as we stooped to drink of the water, we found it filled with sawdust, and our lips, that had been gladly wet where frogs and lizards were swimming with the water-snake unmolested, refused to touch that stream wherein the evidences of our fellow man's existence and presence and work of destruction were visible. It was a long journey and a wearisome one (for we were leaving the homes of our hearts) that brought us to the city, and as we stepped from the boat on the wharf, we looked at each other and sighed, and (was

it weakness?) were sick of humanity, and would gladly have been back again. We grasped each other's hands, and looking sadly at the river once, buttoned our coats, looked at one another again, sighed once or twice, and—"Carriage, Sir?"—we were in N. York.

What do you think of us when I tell you that on Christmas morning Willis and myself were again in the forest? So it was. We had grown so weary already, and so heartily sickened was I of living the life of hypocrisy that I needs must live if among men, that I shouldered my rifle, gave Willis notice, and found him at my side ready for one and but one more hunt.

It was a night hunt for deer on the Willahanna. We reached the lake bank that morning. The sun was warm and clear, but before dark it had become cloudy, and at eight o'clock the gloom was impenetrable. We had appointed a rendezvous at the outlet, and reached it ourselves just at dark,

but the remainder of our party (our old friend Black and another backwoodsman) did not arrive till nine.

By way of episode I may as well tell a story here. Joe and myself were seated in the Log Cabin of Farmer S. (at the outlet) which is the most extensive and comfortable log cabin I have ever seen; the fire was blazing so as to render candles useless, and I was composing myself to a quiet doze in my chair, when a lady entered a side door, bowed quietly, and said, "Good evening, gentlemen. You are welcome. What news do you bring us from the great city?"

In every sense she was queenly. Her voice was as musical as a waterfall in a moony night. (Water always sounds sweeter by night than by day.) Willis, who is a staid fellow and never thrown off his balance, replied with a bow:—"News of wars and rumors of wars, madam; not so pleasant as you doubtless bring from fairy land, for you must have come from there to

this wild place." "Oh no, no, I came from P——" said the lady laughing, and the conversation ran on merrily awhile, and I gathered, in my listening, her history. I talked little, for Joe monopolized all, and besides I am a confirmed old bachelor, having had miserable success in such affairs. She was the daughter of farmer S——, educated in the city, and with wealthy and aristocratic relatives, with every inducement to remain in the gay life of the world. But no—she clung to her mother and her home, and when her years of study were over, she went gladly and hastily to that forest home, to live, and (if she could find nothing but nature, that would do) to love and die. I assure you it was strange to meet such a vision of loveliness there, and hear her talk as earnestly as she did of all the beautiful and glorious works of God. She sang songs of Scotland. How her voice did swell with the mournful melody of "Jeannie Morrison!" Willis

(the baby) cried outright, and I—the truth is when she sang “I’m wearing awa’ Jeen,” I was thinking a sad thought and looked another way; and when she sang to an old air, which she had arranged for the words herself, Moir’s

“Fare thee well, our last and fairest,  
Dear wee Willie, fare thee well,”

I moved out of the fire-light. I have written more of this than I intended, but it is a forest incident. One thing rest assured of, namely, that if Joe ever writes you a letter from that part of the country, it will be dated “Bank of the Willahanna,” and requesting you to publish a notice for him, not under the head of “Deaths.” All that night we hunted, and yet when I rose after a short sleep the next morning, I found him standing by Miss C. on the bank of the lake, teaching her the use of his rifle, and as I approached them, I heard something about the most fatal wound being in the heart; it annoyed him somewhat that I took up the gauntlet just there, and assured her most

seriously that Joe was mistaken, practically, as a deer often carries a ball in his heart some distance, and it was always safer to shoot at the shoulder. "Break his fore leg," said I, "and you are sure of him."

Blessings on that fair girl. She came to us as a vision from a fair and holy country, and I thanked God that He made some such to be on His earth.

## LETTER III.

### THE NIGHT HUNT.

NEW YORK CITY, Feb. 1847.

It was ten o'clock nearly when Black arrived with Smith, and interrupted our conversation by the fireside. It would be no more than the truth, if I acknowledged that we were ready to give up the hunt entirely, and stay where we were. The night was, as I have said, very dark and very cold, and the Lake, which had not yet been frozen, gave promise of being closed over in the morning, if the wind should fall. When we went out to look at it, it was like taking a cold bath. We shivered and our teeth chattered merrily. But we nerved our courage, and Willis's suggesting that our forest friend, Miss C., would not admire a back-out, decidedly warmed us.

The lake is shaped like a figure 8. At the end of the larger part is the outlet. The

narrower part is formed by two mountains which frown across the water, on whose peaks and sides gigantic hemlocks nod solemnly to one another, and in a windy night moan and wail in the desolation of solitude. The whole lake (3 miles long by an average of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  broad) is surrounded to the very shore by hills covered densely with forest, in which we have hunted in past years every four footed beast that is in our forests, from bear to fox.

The grandeur of a night scene on the lake I have never seen surpassed. Our canoe—shall I describe that; I forget that I write for citizens who imagine these implements of 'venerie' to be such as they have read of in magazines, whose contributors sit by their comfortable tables and write of things they have evidently seen little and know nothing of. It would amuse you to see the actual difference between hunting, and that which is *called* hunting in magazine tales. A hunting coat is in the city a decidedly dashing coat, fit to wear in Broadway. My hunting coat

is the most respectable one that has been seen on the lake in years, and consists of a Scotch plaid loose roundabout, hanging like a bag to my waist, and tied in front with black strings. There is not a button on it, nor should there be.

Let me describe Joe Willis in full dress, and you will know how a city bred, fashionable man looks in the forest when he looks as he should—and be sure when you hear of handsome hunting coats (or see them either), hunting boots, and silver breeched rifles, that those rifles in the hands of such men wouldn't throw a ball into a barn door across a barn yard.

Joe is a good looking fellow (he'll blush at reading that, for he is modest too), but his Bleecker St. friends wouldn't recognise him in this dress.—To begin : Head covered with a tight skull cap without front—no collar nor cravat—(we never dream of colds), a roundabout like mine, only made of darker plaid, and tied with bright red strings, a loose pair of dark pants, and as light shoes as can

be made strong. Boots are never used in hunting. No man can run or jump well in boots. His powder is in a very small flask in his coat pocket, on the left side, where, also, are balls. His rifle is a plain swivel breech, and his eye is so used to it that his ball never varies an inch in three hundred yards. But I was to speak of that canoe. It is a simple "dug-out," about thirty five feet long and less than three wide. Sharp, and slightly turned up at each end, and as unpleasant a craft to sail in, for one not used to it, as could well be invented; but when well balanced, with four good paddlers, I have no idea of anything swifter in the small boat line.

I took the bow paddle and Willis the last one. Black and Smith were between us, and with slow stroke standing all of us; we sent her out into the night. I had often left the same spot in the same canoe, on the same errand, but never felt as I felt that night, and (I can't tell the reason, nor could he), as we left the shore Willis commenced a

low chant which we had learned from an Indian long ago, and as I listened, I found he had adapted it to the celebrated

“*Dies iræ, dies illa,  
Solvēt cœlum in favilla,  
Teste David cum Sibylla.*”

and I joined it. Black and Smith who had heard the Indians when we heard them, joined us, only varying in the use of words ; for while we sang the Latin hymn they sang the Indian words, or what it sounded like when the old Indians sat by their fire and chanted till they slept :

“*Che-o-wan-na ! Che-o-wan-na.*”

And so we swept along, and I verily believe if you had met us out on that lake that night, and seen us pass you, timing our paddles to the solemn chant, you would have only doubted whether you had seen the ghosts of dead Christians or Savages.

Five minutes or less brought us under the precipice of the Willawan, and we rested.—A pan of pine knots soon blazed on the prow of the canoe, prevented from shining

on us, but casting a broad light over the water. We then entered the smallest part of the lake, and I guided the canoe to the mouth of a small brook. We went now very slowly, and as we neared the shore we laid our paddles down and waited a few moments for the game; then paddled slowly along the shore till Black's ear caught the sound of a tread in the forest.

At the next instant I saw the fire-light in two eyes that glared wildly at us from the shore, and aiming at the place I supposed the ear of the deer to be I shot. He jumped forward and fell in the water. After he fell we were about to pull up to him, when Willis called suddenly "Stop," and the next moment his rifle cracked—"What was it?" "I don't know what. I saw a pair of bright eyes up yonder in the dark. Is there a bank up there?" "No—nothing but trees. It must have been a panther." "There they are again; steadily now," said I, and swinging the breech of my gun over, I guessed from the eyes where the neck must be, and shot for that. One of the wildest screams

that ever entered my ears filled the air and rang across the lake. They heard it distinctly at the outlet, three miles off. "Put out the light," shouted Willis. I dashed the fire into the lake, and our eyes no longer dazzled by it, began to distinguish trees, and finally saw the animal clinging to a branch of a tree, not fifty yards from us. Black took a cool, calm sight over his barrel, and shot. The huge cat dropped stone-like and dead, and we pushed inshore to take our game. Willis's ball was in his breast, and he claimed and held the skin by hunter's law. "Be quick," said Black, "or the mate will be here;" and so, throwing deer and panther across our canoe, we pushed out into the lake and waited awhile, hoping the other would come. But she came not, and we turned homeward. As we passed the narrow part of the lake, we heard the cry of the female off on the mountain, and waited again, but in vain. Our rifle shots had scared her away.

We pulled slowly along the shore for awhile, with our fire rekindled, but saw no

more game; and at midnight the clouds broke away and the stars shone out. Excitement had kept us warm, and I now sat down, or rather lay down on my back, and looked up, and thought of—it would do you no good if I should say what, and I might have been better occupied. But it was a glorious night, and the wind had gone down, and the solemn trees, stood sentinel-like above,—and farther up in the deep sky, and away down in the deep water, gleamed the watch-towers of heaven, and we seemed floating in the midst of them—on air rather than on water. If however any such idea were in our minds, it would have been dispelled by the concluding incidents of the night's adventures. I had not noticed that Joe had dropped his paddle, and lay in the other end of the canoe, just as I was lying in my end, while Smith and Black did all the paddling. After awhile Joe seemed to have been thinking deeply, for he called out to me, (my head by the way was resting on the panther and Joe's on the deer), "Will, do you believe the evidence of the senses

always? Now look up yonder and see those stars, and you have only ocular evidence that they are there. How do you know they are not down below also? For just look over the side into the water. I had been looking so for ten minutes, and as Joe saw fit to look over the same side, we all started on an expedition to find some other than ocular demonstration of the existence of stars down below. In a twinkling we were all in the water,—Smith, Black, Joe, and myself, swimming among paddles, panther and deer, and each man holding his rifle instinctively. It was odd that we lost nothing; but we swam around and reversed the canoe, baled her out and picked up the game the best way we could. Black pushed the canoe ashore, and Joe and myself swam to it, about fifty yards off. Think of that ye city men in your overcoats! a bath on Christmas night at 12 o'clock!

So ended the season. I am again among brick walls and weary. When I am again on the Willahanna or in my cabin, you may hear of me.

## LETTER IV.

### THE RIVER AND THE CABIN.

NEW YORK, MARCH, 1847.

I PROMISED that you should hear from me again when I reached my cabin : but I have had, ever since I wrote my last, an increasing desire to tell you of some other incidents of forest life, and finding a tempting sheet of paper lying before me, and seeing withal a tremulous motion in my pen in yonder stand, and sitting as I happen to sit at this moment underneath the antlers of the largest buck I ever shot, I cannot resist the invitation the pen gives me. Consider then my promise of silence unmade, and let me write on.

It is night, and darkness lies over the mighty city. A darkness of deeper blackness than night alone can make, up out of which ascend the mingled voices of struggling, joying, agonizing, dying humanity.—

And I bethink me of the solemn night times in the forest, when the holy stars looked peacefully down through the hemlock branches, and the moonlight fell as if angels poured it over the lake and on the waterfalls. If you had been there, you would not wonder at the frequent comparisons I draw between the woods and civilization. I went there first when in college, years ago, and I still retain most vividly the impressions I first received, as Willis and myself came out on the bank of the river, some two miles above the cabin which has since been our starting point in all hunts, and the place from which we hail.

Our day's walk had been long and wearisome, and we saw the sun set from the hill-top just before we descended to the bank of the stream. Being then wholly unacquainted with that section of country, and not knowing of a settlement or cabin, we made our preparations for a comfortable night's sleep on a rock near the water, which was overhung by higher rocks, and

shaded by masses of *Rhododendra*. Drift wood from the shore made our fire blaze merrily, and as twilight settled we disposed of a wild duck and some crackers, which constituted the sum total of our larder, and being well satisfied with that, stretched ourselves on our backs and talked till midnight. One by one the glorious assembly appeared above us, and we who had learned, by long experience, to sleep thus, recognised and welcomed the companions of our magnificent bed chamber in a hundred such scenes. For we had learned to regard them as our truest and most holy *visible* friends. They never failed to keep appointments, but whenever and wherever we lay down to rest they were there!

The rushing of the rapids lulled us to sleep, and I dreamed all manner of strange dreams, until a slight touch on my foot awoke me. Willis was lying on his face at full length, with his rifle in his hand, and his head slightly raised, as he looked over the water at some object in the moonlight which

I could not distinctly see. His foot had touched mine. I managed, without rising, to screw (that's the word) myself along to his side, and ask what was in the wind, or rather in the water. He replied that he had woke, and was lying on his side looking up the stream, when he heard, as he supposed, the leap of some large animal into the water, and thought also that he saw the splash about a half mile up on the opposite side. The distance at which a sound can be heard over the water in a calm night, is astonishing; but no ear which was not remarkably acute, could distinguish between such a sound and the continual rush of the river, which was not loud, although the current was deep and strong. Well assured, however, that Joe would not mistake in such a matter, I waited, with him, the event; for we judged that the swift stream would bring any large animal as far down as our position in a few minutes, especially if it were deer, who can swim with astonishing swiftness across still water (astonishing when we con-

sider the size of their feet and legs), but can make no headway against the current. Joe's usual accuracy had not failed him, for all that I have related had occupied but a short space of time, and before he had finished the answer to my question, his rifle was at his shoulder and his sight taken on a small black spot that came floating down in the moonlight.

A deer swims with nothing above water but about one-half his head. The whole body and the head, up to a line across under the eye, are immersed. It was therefore not difficult for a practised eye to recognise the object on which he had sight, as the head of a buck slowly nearing our shore, but sweeping down with the current. Without a motion more than was necessary to keep the mark covered, Willis followed the game with his eye and rifle, until the moonlight fell on it just as he wished, and then shot. For an instant after the crack of his rifle, a perfect stillness fell over everything, for by contrast our ears were rendered

deaf to the ripple of the water. The silence was almost fearful. The next moment changed it into a succession of the strangest and most startling echoes I ever heard. The river bed rang as with a hundred rifles. From the opposite shore, from the rocks above, and from the bend below, came back the sharp sound, and echoed and re-echoed more and more faintly till it almost ceased, and then, from away up the river came back a single heavy, half suppressed report. The buck was hit. A plunge which threw his fore feet out of the water showed it, and then he vanished altogether. By this we knew that he was dead; for in death the weight of the antlers carries the head below water.

Leaving our rock, we sprang down to the edge of the water, and in a moment caught sight of the body as it went over a ripple.

The night was cold enough to make the idea of a swim uncomfortable, and we therefore followed the stream down, watching the deer, and hoping he would float

within reach of the shore. But for two miles he kept the middle of the river, which then widened and flowed slowly. It was with no small gratification that we found a canoe lying here, and pushed out for our game. On returning to the shore, we found ourselves at the mouth of a creek, into which we paddled, and drawing canoe and deer on the bank, we cut the throat of the latter, and looked about for the owner of the former. We soon saw a cabin or log house, but the sky told us that morning was not far off, and the hoot of the owls, which grew more and more melancholy, corroborated the idea; so we concluded not to wake the occupants. We therefore sat down on the bank, and commenced a conversation, which I have not yet forgotten.

It was and is the great pleasure of our forest life, that we are by no means shut out from the conversation and the thoughts of the more civilized world; and I have learned many lessons from Willis, Russell, and others, while we thus sat alone and talked

of the spiritual or the ideal. It may seem strange that we should mix up so much of the mental with the physical as we do ; but we never spend three hours in hunting, without discussing one or another subject, far distant from the scenes we are in, and relating usually to philosophy, either natural or mental. I remember that at that time, Willis spoke first of Plato's idea that the noblest occupation of man was the study of the gods, and remarked that it was but natural that a heathen philosopher should so think if he studied the stars, but expressed also the wonder that so few so thought. As the first dim sons of night began to disappear, we grew silent, and looking up watched the fading of our companion-stars. One by one they sank into the sky, as babes into their mothers' arms. The most dead silence conceivable reigned (as it always does) when the dimmest of them vanished, and we looked up and fixed our eyes on one brighter than any other, until it flickered like a far beacon

light in the sea wind, and the blue deep closed over it. What a marvellous depth the sky has, when the sun rays are streaming over it before they touch our hill tops! The tall dead hemlock on the peak of the opposite mountain had not yet been gilded by the first sunbeam, when a man came from the cabin and gave us a woodland invitation to breakfast. Such was our introduction to Black and our Owl Creek Cabin.

## LETTER V.

♦  
A FOREST FUNERAL.

NEW YORK, MARCH, 1847.

I HAVE been several times on the point of writing you about Sunday in the forest, but have each time forgotten my intention, or had something else to say. There have been many scenes of worship in which I have taken part, or which I have witnessed. I have seen the ignorant worshipper of senseless images, and the formal worshippers of the pretended real body of The Crucified, present in the bread of the Host. I have heard the solemn cathedral chant when thousands knelt and prayed, and I have heard the *miserere* in the solemn Passion night thrill through the soul of countless waiting worshippers. But I never felt so near to God and so near to Heaven as

on the bank of the river on a calm Sunday morning, when the thousand voices of the forest were united in a hymn of joy. There is a melody in running water that is never imitated or equalled by any art; and there is a strange harmony between the sounds of running water and rushing wind and singing birds and the voices of the various wood animals, that altogether make up the morning song of the forest when it wakes to praise the Infinite.

How slowly and silently the dead leaves drop one by one into the water from the listless branches. The branches themselves bend and sway up and down and back and forth as if with life; for it does not seem that any wind is blowing, but the trees lean over as if to see their own shades a thousand times repeated in the rippling river, and reach their arms down toward the glittering surface, as if longing to lie in the cool clear bed.

Some of them have fallen. Yonder is one

that has lain for four, yes, six years, to my knowledge in that same position—and every year, at the same time, I come and sit here and watch that long branch swaying backward and forward in the swift current. Once, while Willis and I sat here, he saw a mink's head rise above the water in the eddy below the trunk, and his rifle ball, true to his unerring aim, cracked the small skull at this distance, and it is not less than a hundred and twenty yards.

We had one long and weary and somewhat unsuccessful expedition last fall. We made our calculations to go through the whole hunting district in the course of six days, and reach the river ten miles below our cabin on Saturday, so that we might attend church—or rather hear preaching, in a log school house, from a clergyman who once a month visited the small settlement. We worked hard during the week, and we were not sorry at dusk on Saturday to sit down in the comfortable frame house of

Colonel —, who is the owner of some thousands of acres in that immediate vicinity. The school house in which services were to be held is beautifully situated in a grove of oaks on a point around which the river bends and runs rapidly with a lulling sound. Did you ever notice how different the voice of a river is in passing different scenes? Up in the gorge above, it is wild, and rages as if angry with the rocks it meets, and its voice is like the voice of a roused warrior. But here it goes slowly and sedately by the little "oak school house," as it is called, and would seem to linger as if loving the quiet scene.

It was nearly midnight of Saturday night that a messenger came to Col. —, requesting him to go to the cabin of a settler some three miles down the river, and see his daughter, a girl of fourteen who was supposed to be dying. Col. — awoke and asked me to accompany him, and I consented, taking with me the small package

of medicines which I always carried in the forest. But I learned soon that there was no need of these for her disease was past cure.

Leaving the house, we descended to the bank of the river, and stepped into a canoe that lay in an eddy, and seizing a pole, flattened at one end for a paddle, Col. — pushed the slight vessel out into the current, and we shot swiftly down. You may imagine the scene if you choose, as I lay in the bottom of the canoe, and he used now his pole, and now his paddle, to guide the bark in the rapids.

“She is a strange child,” said the Colonel, “her father is as strange a man. They live together alone on the bank of the river. They came here three years ago, and no one knows whence or why. He has money, and is a keen shot. The child has been wasting away for a year past. I have seen her often, and she seems gifted with a marvellous intellect. She speaks some-

times as if inspired ; and she seems to be the only hope of her father."

We reached the hut of the settler in less than half an hour, and entered it reverently. The scene was one that cannot easily be forgotten. There were books and evidences of luxury and taste lying on the rude table in the centre. A guitar lay on a bench near the small window, and the bed furniture, on which the dying girl lay, was as soft as the covering of a dying queen. I was, of course, startled, never having heard of these people before ; but knowing it to be no uncommon thing for misanthropes to go into the woods to live and die, I was content to ask no explanations, more especially as the death hour was evidently near.

She was a fair child, with masses of long black hair lying over her pillow. Her eye was dark and piercing and as it met mine, she started slightly, but smiled and looked upward. I spoke a few words to her father, and turning to her asked her if she knew her condition,

"I know that my Redeemer liveth," said she, in a voice whose melody was like the sweetest strain of an Eolian. You may imagine that the answer startled me, and with a few words of like import I turned from her. A half hour passed, and she spoke in that same deep, richly melodious voice :

"Father, I am cold, lie down beside me"—and the old lay down by his dying child, and she twined her emaciated arms around his neck, and murmured in a dreamy voice, "Dear father, dear father."

"My child," said the old man, "Doth the flood seem deep to thee?"

"Nay, father, for my soul is strong."

"Seest thou the thither shore?"

"I see it, father, and its banks are green with immortal verdure."

"Hearest thou the voices of its inhabitants?"

"I hear them, father, as the voices of angels falling from afar in the still and solemn night-time, and they call me. *Her* voice too; father,—Oh, I heard it then!"

“Doth she speak to thee?”

“She speaketh in tones most heavenly!”

“Doth she smile?”

“An angel smile! But a cold calm smile. But I am cold—cold!—Father, there’s a mist in the room, You’ll be lonely, lonely, lonely. Is this death, father?”

“It is death, my Mary.”

“Thank God.”

And she knelt before him!

I stepped out in the night, and stood long and silently looking at the rushing river. The wife of a settler arrived soon after, and then the Colonel’s excellent lady and her daughter, and we left the cabin.

The Sabbath morning broke over the Eastern hills before we reached the school house again. But never came Sabbath light so solemnly before. The morning service in the school house I have not room to describe now, for I have taken more time and space than I had any idea of.

As evening approached, a slow and sad procession came through the forest to the

little school-house. There with simple rites the good clergyman performed his duty, and we went to the grave. It was in the inclosure where two of Col. ——'s children lie, a lovely spot. The sun was setting as we entered the grove. The procession was short. They were hardy men and rough, in shooting jackets, and some with rifles on their shoulders. But their warm hearts gave beauty to their unshaven faces, as they stood in reverent silence by the grave. The river murmured, and the birds sang, and so we buried her.

I lingered and saw the sun go down from the same spot, and the stars were bright before I left it—for I have always had an idea that a graveyard was the nearest place to heaven on this earth: and with old Sir Thomas Browne, I love to see a church in a graveyard, for “even as we pass through the place of graves to the temple of God on earth, so we must pass through the grave to the temple of God on high.”

## LETTER VI.

### THE CABIN AT NIGHT.

NEW YORK, MARCH, 1847.

THE story I was without forethought led to tell you in my last, has reminded me of one scene in forest life which I have not given you any description of. I mean the cabin hearth-side at night. The persons who meet in the wilderness are a varied set, and it is not uncommon for those who have similar tastes and feelings, to be thrown together in the most unexpected manner.

I remember one night, when the wind roared outside, as the surf roars on an ocean beach in a March wind, that we were gathered around a blazing fire in the broad stone chimney of the cabin, to rest after a weary day's hunt. Willis, Russell, Black, and myself, were the company, and we had been eating, but had grown somewhat silent. I can't tell what others were thinking of, but

I was far away in thoughts. The sound of that wind carried me to a distant home, and the faces of the loving and the loved were present to me, and—and—and a thousand other things which I omit. Echo lay at Willis's side, and Nora was looking up in my face as if to hear me speak. The dog I doubt not, thought some of the same thoughts that I did; for I whispered a name that we both knew, and she sprang to the door to welcome one she thought must be near.

At that moment the voice of the wind grew louder, and I heard the limbs of the giant oak over the cabin creaking and moaning, and seemingly pleading with the tempest to have more respect for their venerable age. The winds of four hundred winters had battled with the stout old tree, and it stood firm and strong. Anon, the wind seemed to answer the appeal of the old father of the forest; and an animated discussion began. "I am old," moaned the tree,—“I am old, and four hundred years have dried the life

blood out of my veins." But the wind only laughed, and the tree went on. "I am stiff, and easy to break; have pity!" But the wind said something I couldn't exactly catch, about bending or breaking. Then the oak pleaded its acquaintance with the olden time:—"I have seen the nations passing away, and have grown strong on the blood of the fallen. I have seen four hundred suns pass to the North, and four hundred times my leaves have covered the graves of the forgotten. We have been good friends long, O mountain wind. You have borne me news of far lands, till I have become a historian of the centuries. I have heard of crumbling thrones, of empires falling and rising, and dynasties created and swept away; I have seen a nation born, and have heard from afar carried on your wings the wail of nations dying. They are gone, and I stand as in the olden time. Spare me, O wind." But the wind laughed a wild laugh, and it seemed for a moment as if a dozen

winds had met, and the old tree cracked and crashed as a large limb swept off and fell, and then the tempest hushed like a frightened child that has done mischief. A faint halloo reached our ears at this moment, and we sprang to the door. It was clear and light, for the moon was near its full, and we saw on the other side of the river three men, who were beckoning for a boat. Black and myself jumped into the long canoe, forty feet by three, and pushed out. The wind rose again, and it was with extreme difficulty that we kept the slight thing right side up as we paddled across, took in our load, and returned. What this load was, will appear.

“It blows some,” shouted one of them in my ear, as we paddled back, “A few,” answered I, adopting the slang of the company I was in. Satisfied with my answer, he tried to sit down in the canoe; but that was not so easy a matter as may be imagined. To do it properly, required a series of scientific calculations and movements.

So he began by looking sharply at the prow of the boat, knelt on one knee, and—but just then she turned a little on one side, and he, to prevent an overturn, threw his weight suddenly on the other, which sent her quickly over that way, and the consequence was a series of saltatory movements on our part to recover the balance of the canoe, which were not a little ludicrous. We reached the shore safely, and were soon seated again in the cabin.

The addition thus made to our company consisted of three as varied characters as can be found in any company of the same size anywhere. The principal and most interesting man of the three, was a hunter in outward appearance, but a man of refined taste and extraordinary conversational powers. I had heard of him often before I met him, and after an acquaintance of some years, I had not yet fathomed the depths of his mind. He always seemed especially interested when I spoke of a particular part

of the country, and when the soul was the matter of conversation, I found him disposed to entertain some doubtful metaphysical ideas. Farther than this, I only knew him as a man of fine talents and far-reaching intellect. He never asked nor took any interest in news from the world, but spent his time in hunting, fishing, and taking care of a cabin on the bank of the creek, three miles back from the river.

Of the other two who were his companions, one (Smith) was a full bred hunter in manner and character; a woodsman in every sense. The other was a singular specimen of "a green un," as Smith called him in a whisper to me. They made themselves, as they evidently felt, entirely at home, and as they were made. The wind was wild again, and as it roared without, we sat by the blazing fire and talked.

It is this scene that I would, if I could, introduce you to. Tales of past years, of toils in the chase, and other tales of distant scenes filled up the time.

Willis lay on the floor with his feet toward the fire, and looked straight up at the bark covering of the hut. Smith and Black sat on opposite sides of the fire, each on the floor, with his feet to the blaze; Johnson and the aforesaid "green un," yclept Barnes, sat on the only stools of which our furniture boasted; and I lay on a bear skin which I had drawn to the middle of the cabin, and raised my head on my elbow to listen to Johnson who was speaking.

He told a sad story of the woodland. How a hunter had a wife and child in a little cabin near where we then were, and how he loved that wife and that child with an earnest love that they returned in kind. He kissed them both one sunny winter morning, and told them he should not be back that night, perhaps not the next, nor the next; and so left them. Yet he turned back and looked wistfully at the cabin door wherein she stood holding their boy up to see his father go, and so he went back and

kissed them again and again, and plunged into the forest.

Long and mournful was her waiting for his footstep. But he came no more. The third day a heavy snow storm covered the ground deep with the white mantle of winter, and no footprint was visible to or from the door of his hut. The fifth, the sixth day passed, and she started out to the cabin of the next settler, some four miles away, carrying her boy. But she heard no news of the lost one. Spring came, and the sunshine melted away the snow. With weary heart and aching brain she sought her old home to droop and die. The cabin was deserted; the underbrush grew thickly in the clearing; and "as I passed one day six years ago," Johnson went on to say, "I shot a wolf in the very doorway of the cabin at whose hearth I had so often received a welcome and been happy. Not a year after the morning on which Williams left his cabin to return no more, a man found on the

west side of the deep gulley of the Willawan, a skeleton and a rifle. I saw the rifle, it was Williams's. It was empty, and the jaw and skull of the skeleton were shattered. His death had been easy and sudden."

A half dozen stories of different sorts were told as the night passed on. I have written enough of this for the present. At an hour after midnight I was lying in a blanket, and looked around at five men sleeping as sound a sleep on the hard floor as was ever slept on down or feathers.

## LETTER VII.

### NIGHT IN THE WOODS.

OWL CREEK CABIN, April, 1847.

I DATE again, unexpectedly to myself, from the forest. Tired of the dull routine of Doe *vs.* Roe, and yet more tired of living alone in the midst of a crowd, and hearing that the trout were fine in the creek, and plenty, and as I heard it, fixing my eye on a certain rod that has been the means of landing some pounds of the finest fish that ever swam in fresh water, I left the city a week ago to-day, and am here alone. Alone, yet not alone. Never happier—never in better health or spirits. I spent the first day in looking around, greeting my old friends, and resting after a walk of some forty miles, which was necessary to reach my present position and old home. The snow has been off for some weeks past, although all the neighborhood is

still covered. By neighborhood, I mean nothing within twenty miles of my cabin. I have had means within the past few weeks of judging of all the various kinds of travelling. It is not a fortnight since I came through the Sound on a magnificent steamer, and here I have reached my cabin by weary foot-toil over mountains and across streams, and sleeping one night under the cold calm stars. And I hardly need say to you who know my tastes so well, that I enjoyed the foot travelling above the other—all save the fact that with the one I had the loving and the loved for company, and with the other was alone with the forest trees.

That one night's sleep on my way hither, under the holy starlight, was so novel as compared with the luxurious life I have been leading in my city home, that I cannot forbear telling you how it happened. In truth it was against my own will. I had no blanket, and my fishing-rod and rifle were weights that had wearied me, and made me

long for a good bed. The rifle would have been as nothing, but the rod I was not so well used to, and it annoyed me. It is a great mistake to suppose that a poor bed is any more welcome to a weary man than one that is not. A tired man can sleep anywhere; but a tired man on a rough bed dreams horrible dreams, and wakes usually more tired than when he slept. I had expected to reach the Willahana before dark, but it was five miles ahead of me when it grew so black that I could not tell tree tops from clouds, and so I concluded to make the best of it and sleep.

I knew my ground right well. There was a wet, swampy place about there, in which I was assured I then was. North-west of the spot in which I judged myself to be, was a dry, rocky hill side, and it therefore remained for me to find it. The bark of the trees soon told me which was north, and I took my direction accordingly, and found myself, in ten minutes, on a platform of

rock something like forty feet long by twenty-five or thirty broad, on which masses of granite had fallen from the hill above. Dried leaves and branches were soon gathered into a pile and a cheerful light spreading around, showed me logs and large broken branches that I heaped on and made a glorious fire.

I was outrageously hungry. I had eaten nothing since six o'clock in the morning, and had nothing in my pocket but one bird and one trout and some crackers. That bird, by the way, was a wild pigeon, which I had hit with my rifle at a distance of a hundred yards, on the wing. I so seldom make a good shot, that I put that on record. I heated some flat stones in the fire to a proper heat, and had broiled fish in a short time. I then cut a stick, and sticking the pigeon on the end of it, sat down and held it in the fire till it was done to a turn. It would have amused you to see me sitting there with my back against a rock, quiet-

ly holding the pigeon in the flame, and slowly turning him round and round, and looking up at the clouds and peering into the forest, and listening intently for every sound of life that was heard in the still night. I was not lonely though alone. Nora (I beg the dog's pardon for not mentioning her before) lay quietly by the fire, looking up into my face. I had given her a squirrel some time before, and she had finished her supper on that, and with that dog I felt as secure as if I had bolts and bars between me and the forest air. The pigeon cooked, my pocket supplied salt and crackers, and I feasted. I did not even make a hunting knife supply the place of an ordinary one, but my fingers and teeth were knife and fork enough, and I had a grand meal. Nora cleaned off the table, and finished washing dishes by effectually licking off the stone I had used for a platter, and I started off to find some water. I remembered a brook that ran down the hill side not

far from me, and I had heard its dashing while I was sitting by my fire. I found it without difficulty, but as I approached it, heard the step of an animal, and instantly threw myself on the ground. Hearing nothing now, and as the wind was rising, I moved slowly toward the brook. When within twenty yards of it, I saw two points of light which I knew to be the eyes of an animal. With great caution I succeeded in approaching within a few yards. A large doe stood glaring at the fire as fixed as a statue, and by her side was a fawn, slight and beautifully shaped, looking with equal intentness on the strange sight. I paused, looked at them, and admired them for some time; then gave a low short whistle to alarm them but not frighten them away. The mother sprang back and turned and looked again, the fawn keeping by her side. It was a single, graceful bound. I imitated as well as I was able, the bleat of the fawn. It replied immediately, and the mother ad-

vanced toward where I lay on the ground. But Nora, whom I had left by the fire, heard the bleat, and I heard her voice in an instant after, as she walked around the fire, which she dared not leave till I gave her permission. At the first sound of the dog's voice, the doe threw her beautiful head into the air, then turned and sprang away, and the fawn kept by her side. I would not have harmed one of them for a hundred like her.

I rose and went on to the stream, and drank of the cool rich water. As I looked around me, a sight met my eyes that I would go a hundred miles to see again. The brook, which was not very large, fell from a rock more than thirty feet high, into a dark pool. The fall was a sheet of foam, but in my fire light, which, although several hundred yards distant, was bright and clear, it seemed to be a falling shower of diamonds and gems of every hue. I saw a thousand fairy forms flitting in it up and

down among the gorgeous drops, and seeming to struggle up against the current, for awhile successfully, then at last borne down and falling into the black deep pool below. I sat once at the mouth of the Cave of Winds at Niagara, when the moon was shining down on it, and it looked as beautifully; but I never saw another scene that at all compared with it. I will stand by that waterfall with you some night, dear \* \* \*, and tell you what I thought that night, as I looked at it alone.

An idea occurred to me that there might be trout in the pool, and I went back for my line. I brought a coal of fire, and gathering some leaves and small sticks, placed them on a rock that stood on the edge of the water, and set fire to them. The pool was about thirty feet broad, and somewhat longer; and this rock was near the fall, and as I afterward found, the water at the side of the rock was about eight feet deep. At the instant that my fire blazed

up, I dropped my hook into the water, and as it went down felt the vigorous pull of a large fish. With no little trouble I succeeded in drowning him, and landed him at last on the bank of the outlet of the stream. He was a noble salmon trout, and weighed not less than four pounds. I did not stop to take more, for I had no means of preserving them, and having secured a breakfast for the morning, I was satisfied. I amused myself for half an hour in scratching an outline of the fish, size of life, on the rock, then stretched myself out between two pieces of granite, with my feet toward the fire, and—I have an indistinct recollection of feeling Nora as she laid her head on my feet. I knew nothing, however, till morning. The sun caught me there, and when I woke I saw him through the smoke at my feet, just rising as I rose too.

## LETTER VIII

### THE LEGEND OF THE HAUNTED ROCK.

OWL CREEK CABIN, MAY 1st, 1847.

It is positively the month of May! And here am I seated by a rousing fire, and looking out at the dreariest sky that it ever entered into the head of man to conceive of. The clouds have a desperate look, as if threatening snow, and it's of no use to coax trout to jump in such a season as this. They wont touch bait, and I have'nt been able to persuade one to look at a fly since last Tuesday. I shouldn't wonder if the creek were covered with ice in the morning. And it's May day! I think of you in the city to-day, ye rovers. What a pleasant conglomeration of beds and boxes and bundles, and chairs and china and children, are to be seen in the streets, and how naturally every one makes up

his mind to be as uncomfortable as circumstances will permit, and as cross as he can make himself consistently with his own convenience. Don't you envy me my seat by this broad chimney, and my feet comfortably covered with a pair of the softest slippers that your fairy hands ever traced embroidery over, my gentle —? By the way it would amuse you, to see how beautifully your handiwork looks at this instant, half buried as they are in a magnificent bear-skin. Slippers are the only luxury I allow myself here. (books are *necessities* not luxuries.)

If you'll sit down by me here, my friend, (I have a box at your service, or you may lie on the bear-skin and toast your feet,) I'll tell you a story of these same hills, and this river, that may be worth listening to. It is a legend I heard from an old Indian, long ago, who has since gone to the distant hunting grounds of his fathers. I like to preserve these tales of the past,

which may or may not have their foundations in fact, for they must in time be the material for our national poetry, when our nation finds time to write or read poetry. You must let me tell the story in my own way.

About a mile above here, on the opposite side of the river, is a precipice, two hundred feet high, overhanging the stream. The ascent from the land side is gradual and comparatively easy, but from the river there is no reaching it. About forty feet from the top is a ledge of the rock, or a shelf, some six feet wide, on which grow a few cedar bushes, sending their roots into the thin soil which has collected from decaying leaves, and clinging with wonderful tenacity to the rock. Thus much by way of pre-mise, and now to my story.

The gem of her tribe, and the fairest child of the forest that ever the good spirit gave to the red man to tend his lodge and smile on him, was (I am not sure of the In-

dian name, it is so long since I heard it) Lotawanna, "The dawn of day," and there was but one opinion of that matter in all the red nations of the North. Her fame had gone out among them, and many a warrior brought her scalps and bears' claws as delicate expressions of his regard. But as far as my experience goes, there never was a beauty that was not 'spoken for' long before the world knew her beauty, and so it was with Lota. Syosuk had by some means won the heart of the maiden, and she had in so many words promised to be Mrs. Syosuk. But, as in more modern and civilized affiancing, the consent of some one else was necessary, and they went most dutifully to consult Papa. The manner in which such matters are now-a-days conducted, was no guide then, I imagine. I can see the trembling hesitating air of my friend B —, when he asked Mr. M — if he would trust his priceless Ellen to other hands than his own. How he stammered

and paused, and finally bolted out his question in just the way he did'nt mean to, and then waited (as a boy waits for a thrashing) to hear the reply.

Not so Syosuk. He enters the old man's lodge, and with maidenly modesty the fair Lota retires. He sits down and smokes in cold calm silence. At length he pushes the blanket from his shoulder, and leaning forward, with his finger on a broad scar speaks :

“The Mohawk's hatchet struck deep in Syosuk's shoulder, when he was on the far war track.”

“Syosuk is brave.”

“He has slain these enemies.” And he threw a suspicious bundle of hair locks attached to parchment looking appendages, which the old man knew as so many scalps from the heads of the enemies aforesaid. “He has a lodge, and it has no keeper. Syosuk wants Lota.”

This was coming to the point, and the old

fellow without a moment's hesitation replies :

“ When the scalp locks are twice as many, Lota will be in the lodge of Syosuk.”

There was of course no appeal from this quiet decision ; and Syosuk, as in duty bound, starts in search of heads from which he may obtain the necessaries. A queer currency this, especially in bargaining for a wife.

While he is absent, times change on the river bank. The Chief of the Mohawks comes from his distant lodge, and demands Lota. He is refused, and instantly begins an exterminating war. She in her maiden beauty is regarded as the Indians seldom regarded woman, as something holy, and they said she had communion with the unseen world. It was not strange that such surpassing loveliness should seem a thing of heaven.

It was the night of the first spring moon. That moon went down a little later than

the sun, and as the night wore away toward its noon the red man slept.

Suddenly Lota rushed to her father and awoke him, and with clear voice cried for the tribe to come to the council lodge. They gathered in haste, and with torches glaring on their fierce faces, the scene must have been wild indeed. Lota stood in the centre of the circle of warrior chiefs—none else was in the lodge. “I have seen Manitou!” They started as if an angel spoke. “The Mohawks are here. They will be in our lodges ere the morning dawn. The good Spirit bade me warn you to watch for their coming.”

So they armed themselves; and when the Mohawks came, although outnumbering them two to one, they met a fiercer resistance than ever foe gave foe. It was a fearful night. In the deep darkness men grappled with men, and the hot blood gurgled out of its natural channels, and covered the slippery ground. Long and fierce was the

fight. Hand to hand in that inhuman butchery they stood, and when the daylight dawned, there were but six left to the battle with but eight. And these lay awhile on the ground and gathered strength, then sprang like wild cats at each other's throats, and with breast held to breast fell in the embrace of death,—all but two Mohawks. These were left to look on the field of slaughter, and when they looked around they saw no sign of life, but only red rich blood. They entered the lodge of old Kinnyunk, and found the chief stretched dead; his head lay in the lap of Lota.

Seizing the girl who was stupified with grief, the Mohawk chief (it was he) took her and the scalp of her father, and went swiftly to the Northward. Syosuk and one companion returned an hour after he had left, and followed on his trail. They overtook him near the precipice I have spoken of. They were two to two; but the Mohawks had Lota with them, and retreated toward

the brow of the hill, hoping to secure a safe position from their pursuers, whom they had seen far in the rear. Here they met, and Lota lay senseless on a rock, while they fought a fiercer fight than any of the night before. The two who were not chiefs fell first. Then, hand to hand, the other two stood and struck blows at one another till their arms were weary. Syosuk drove the other back till they stood across the body of Lota. Then he made a firm stand, and three hours they made manful battle, and she moved not. Then with fiercer strokes than before Syosuk pressed the Mohawk toward the precipice, step by step backward and backward, till a blow struck his hatchet from his hand, and the next would have cloven him to the ground, but he sprang back with a long bound, and his feet touching the edge of the rock, he made one grasp at nothingness, and fell backward over the precipice !

Syosuk turned to Lota. She was dead.

For the first time his voice was heard, and it rang in the forest as the scream of a wounded eagle. He took her in his arms, and chafed her forehead and her hands, and called her name. But she spoke not, nor moved, nor looked as she had looked in days gone by into his face; and when the sun had set, he sat silently holding her in his arms and chanting the solemn death song. In the morning they were gone, and the Indians believe that Manitou took them together to the hunting grounds of the blessed. In that bright dream-land of the Red man, Lota sits all day in the door of her lodge, looking for the coming of Syosuk at the sunset. She is fairer there than all earthly dreams of beauty, and her eye is intensely bright with the love light of the spirit home. The shade of the Mohawk shut out from those broad fields, wanders restlessly on earth, and especially haunts the rock of his last struggle. He may be seen at times, in a starry night, sitting on the ledge of the

rock, with his head bowed down on his knees, and the wail of his God-forsaken spirit is like the wail of Lucifer falling from his throne.

I can't say that I ever heard it.

## LETTER IX.

### THE THUNDER STORM.

OWL CREEK CABIN, June, 1847.

THERE was a tempest in the mountains last night, and my ears and eyes have not yet done with the roar of the thunder and the glare of the lightning.—The sun went down as calmly in the evening as ever sun went down from shining on this sin-stricken world, and the twilight was as pure and holy a twilight as ever angel basked in. I was lazily inclined all day, and had been doing little more than mend rods and lines; and when the sun approached the horizon, I was seated on a fallen tree with my feet in the river, and I sat there till the last ray of daylight shrank back into the far blue of the summer evening sky. Almost imperceptibly darkness stole on, and the moon was watching me before I had begun to think of her presence. The sounds of the

forest fell peacefully on my ear,—the rush of the water, the chirp of the insects, the hoot of the owls, the faint far cry in the forest that came occasionally and inexplicably, which might have been the scream of a panther or the wail of a night bird, and the low lulling rustle of the leaves as they whispered one to another, that now was the time to rest. With these sounds and scenes came that deep calm feeling of repose which is to be known by none who frequent the haunts of men,—a feeling of direct and immediate connexion with the invisible world, of total separation from all bodily care and all earthly presence, and a sense of companionship with the holy, the happy, the sainted. The soul seemed bathing in a serener, a diviner element, and breathing the air of immortality with full, free respirations. Slowly my head fell backward against a supporting branch of the tree, and without knowing it, I gave up all control over body or mind, and lay looking upward, nothing noting the swift streams below me

Anon the sounds of the forest and the night, assumed new tones, and assimilated themselves to the half dream which had taken possession of me. The low song of the insect became a voice of praise—the creature beginning its evening praises to the Creator. The river's gushing and the soft mild tone of the wind in the hemlock branches, was the distant anthem of the blessed. And ever and again there came above the other tones a wind voice of peculiar richness and sweetness, that trembled fitfully a moment, then passed into the anthem again, and to my world-wearied ear it was a note flung down to me from a seraph's harp, a note wherewith was joined the tone of a remembered voice whose melody I loved in the olden time, but whose warblings have long ago died away in the far off harmonies of the better land. Oh ye who deem and *dream* that to worship God with solemn soul ye must sit in Gothic gloom, and listen to the organ's triumphant tones,

go out into the night, and while all is hushed save the humble anthem of the humblest of God's creatures, kneel and look up at the watchers on high, the holy stars that shone in the bright fountains of Eden, and will shine on the wreck of this (when it shall be a God-forsaken) world, and learn at that hour and in that company to worship in spirit and in truth. I do verily believe that half of you in Athenian ignorance bow down to an unknown God. But I am no preacher. If you have mistaken me for one, please correct the error.

The rough shaking of the tree in whose branches I was lying, roused me, and I saw Black stepping toward me with the idea, clearly, that I was asleep, and he could throw me from my seat into the river. I therefore lay quietly till he had nearly reached me,—and as he was walking erect on the tree, balancing himself without touching the branches at either side of him, I had no difficulty in giving so sudden a shake of the

tree as to cause him, after numerous ineffectual gesticulations toward the stars I had been gazing at, to regard it as the best plan to take to the water. Accordingly he made a long leap into the air, and falling feet foremost into the eddy below the tree, swam quietly toward me, and when I did reach the bank, which was with unsteady steps, I was thoroughly soaked by water, which he applied unmercifully.

Sleeping on my bear-skin as usual, I dreamed all manner of strange dreams till I was startled by the sound of far off thunder, a low muttering among the distant hills. Rising from my bed (or floor) I went to the cabin door, and opening it looked out. The scene was of surpassing beauty, and I sat on a fallen tree some fifty yards from the cabin, and watched the dark thunder heads that were rising in the West, and had nearly reached the zenith. Slowly sweeping upward, they soon covered the moon, and for awhile a silver edge was given to the cloud,

that, by its calm beauty, mocked the fierce flashes that lit with incessant glare the central portions. Soon all was gloom—the last faint streak of blue in the East, in which had rested a bright star, peaceful and serene, as if opposing with its incessant purity the coming tempest, now wholly passed away, and the wild glare of the lightning was unremittingly bright. It was a strange revel of the elements. The far off summit of the Haunted Rock gleamed, white and stern, in the North-West, and the mountain ridge across the river stood boldly out against the sky. The trees, the old forest trees, bending and nodding and wagging their branches, seemed, in that magical light, to be dancing a wild dance to the grand music of the tempest and the thunder. The clouds were fairly spiritual, flying with mad speed, whirling in mazy waltzes and gallops, twining their arms around each other, and flinging their golden tresses out on the air; now stooping earthward, now hastening heaven-

ward, now keeping time to the roar and crash of the thunder, now rushing heedless of time or figure away across the heavens, and vanishing wholly in the misty East.

That roar of the thunder surpassed all sounds of earth in its solemnity. It were vain to try to describe it. It appeared to shake the foundations whereon the very arch of heaven rested, and the earth did not seem to quake or tremble, but to sway back and forth as a leaf on a tree-top. The artillery of the angels fighting the battle for heaven against Lucifer, must have been like it. It did not sound like the voice of God, for by some strange mental process it seemed to convey an idea of God that rendered all conception of his voice or his presence impossible ; and terrible as was that thunder, it seemed more like the voice of one of His servants, than like His voice whose eye-light no lightning-flash ever equalled.

I have said nothing about rain as yet, but you may well suppose it rained *some* (as

Black expressed it). I had a glorious shower bath of course, and not the first one I have thus taken, by some scores.

Slowly and painfully the storm went toiling along, and in about half an hour the rain had ceased, and all was dark and still. But I saw in the West occasional flashes that foretold another shower, and did not go in. It came up swiftly. The lightning was not frequent, but the thunder was severe, and the roar seemed to be of peculiarly long continuance. At length the rain began to fall in large drops, and then to pour in torrents. By this time my interest began to flag, and I was about to go into the cabin, when a wild flash, followed at an interval of scarcely two seconds, by a crash of thunder, arrested me. I saw the fire of Heaven fall on the side of the opposite mountain, and instantly a gigantic tree blazed up in the midst of the forest, as if a torch were lit in the hands of some Cyclopean monster. The few surrounding trees bowed their heads

and waited in silence by the pyre of their brother, and the lurid blaze shot up into the dark sky awhile,—then suddenly disappeared, and all was silence, solemn, deep, and dark ; no voice of earth or air or forest ; no sound of wind or whispering leaf or falling rain or bird or man. Even the river was apparently hushed to perfect stillness, save once it rippled loudly over a rock, one musical ripple, but then as if it had forgotten itself, it was still, and the hush of deepest, calmest repose fell over nature.

## LETTER X.

### THE MOURNER.

NEW YORK, JULY, 1847.

It was a golden morning, that of the last day on the river, and Nora and I had been rejoiced the night before by letters from home and from as dear ones elsewhere, (Nora always seemed to know when good news came, and joined me in all the gladness it occasioned). As the sun rose, I was standing on the branch of the fallen tree I have told you of, that lies in the river, and, after watching the round red day-god rise slowly from his forest bed on the hill top, I sprang into the air and fell into the river, with a delicious sense of cool happiness that you must know before you can imagine. Black had trout for breakfast, and well cooked as usual. We ate with woodland appetites, and arranging for some future

plans with my kind friend, I called Nora, swung my rifle and rod on my back, with my small pack, and trudged slowly into the forest.

The sunshine scarcely reached the ground in that magnificent temple. Long dim arches, wherein giants might have worshipped with reverential awe, stretched away before me, and I became involuntarily impressed with a deep sense of solemnity as I looked up at the leafy covering. It was strangely still. The very birds seemed to be keeping a Sabbath-silence. After a walk of perhaps two hours, I came to the bank of a large creek, at a point where it widened into a broad pond: out in which, nodding lazily to the ripples, lay the beautiful lotus flowers. Did you ever lie and watch them? You can't do it without growing sleepy. I threw myself down under a large tree, and began repeating to Nora Tennyson's Ulysses, and as I went on with it, line after line, I gradually forgot the

place and the poetry, the sunshine and the creek, and — I was woke an hour later with Nora's low growl, and starting up saw a man approaching me. Nora, noble dog, lay at my head looking angrily at him and growling, offering decided objections to any one disturbing my quiet sleep. I recognised the new comer instantly, as the father of the fair child whose death and burial I told you of some time ago, and he knew me also as the stranger who was present when God took his earth idol from him. I had not seen him since, but he sat down by me, and I was astonished at the calm dignity and great intellect of the hunter. He spoke of oldentimes as of the present, and when I mentioned my employment an hour before, namely, the repetition of Tennyson, he took it up and seemed familiar with poets and historians and dramatists, of every age and nation, quoting with equal fluency from Homer, Persius, Dante, Corneille and Shakespeare. Proctor would have been delighted

at the enthusiasm with which he quoted "Golden Tressed Adelaide." But that reminded him of his child, and the strong man was bowed down with grief. His soul struggled with overwhelming agony, and to call off his attention from the subject, I sent Nora into the water to bring me a lily.

As I took it in my hand, he stood and looked at, and said mournfully, "She loved flowers."

"Aye," said I, "And now she gathers them in a land where they bloom in immortal radiance! Think you there are not fairer flowers than the Lotus blossom, in the waters of the river of Life?" His eye lit with a glow of enthusiasm as I spoke, and his head was raised, and his hair, long and gray, already streamed out on the summer wind as he looked up into the far deep sky, as if to catch a sound, one faint far sound, if but a single note from his seraph-daughter's golden harp, falling into the holy sunlight!

Then his head drooped on his breast, his eye dimmed with tears (manly tears! were they not?) and I saw his lip moving convulsively. "She is not here," he thought—"my cabin is desolate, and the door stone will be deserted when I go home to-night!" No, no, old man! she is not here. Her white arms are not around your neck, her kiss falls not now on your wrinkled cheek! Her voice has died away in solemn stillness, and death has set his seal on her eloquent lip!

And he wanders thus alone, ever thinking of her in the forest or the cabin, by day or by night. Lonely and sorrowful he waiteth for the hour when the voice of God (to him how welcome!) shall call him to join her yonder. At times, as he sits in the night in his desolate cabin, he hears her voice. He hears it as of old in all the melody of her girlish love. The white locks are softly and gently pushed back from his forehead, and a kiss falls on it as a drop of balm

might fall from heaven! He looks up and a glorious eye gazes down on him through the gloom, and a white hand beckons to him from the Sabbath-shore. His heart keeps vigil like the angel watchers at the sepulchre, with earnest eye fixed on the place where the object of his adoration lay.

I left him. He went toward his lonely cabin some miles westward—I eastward toward the road. I fear me much (I almost said I hoped) when I am again at my cabin he will be sleeping by her side in the little grave-yard. What a happy meeting theirs will be!

## LETTER XI.

### THE OCEAN.

MONTAUK, bearing South 40°, West 5 miles,  
July 20th, 1847. }

WHEN I wrote you last, I was uncertain where another week might find me. It found me at Long Branch, sunning myself on the shore, and occasionally fishing in a surf-boat. The next, to my own surprise as much as to any one's else, I was on the way to my cabin. But loitering along, I was overtaken by a letter, which called me back after about a week in the forest. I did not reach the river, and scarcely used my rifle or rod.

I am now rocking quietly and lazily on the ocean, in a small but comfortable and beautiful craft, with company of the pleasantest kind. We have been out two days only, fishing, reading, and sleeping. The

chief object with all of us is, to keep off shore until the weather shall prove more tolerable there. Just now, you cannot imagine a more delicious air than this which comes to us from the South-West. It crosses Montauk, but it receives no scents of the land there. It is a pure ocean wind, and the life-like boat rises and falls on the waves, as if it too enjoyed the breeze, even as we. The sun is but now going down over the North point of the Island, which lies almost out of sight under the water, some twenty miles Westward. Manchnock, or Gardener's Island, is nearer by a few miles. A flood of golden glory is over them. What sunsets they have on the East end of Long Island! I remember them years ago, as impressing me, when a boy, with their incomparable beauty. Slowly the sun goes down, lower—lower—, but half its bright disk above the horizon—now a single line, a point of light—now the whole West is flooding with the yellow

beams, as if the portals of heaven were opening there, and one small cloud is almost as golden as was the sun ; and now that floats upward, and grows fainter and fainter, and another takes its place, and yet another, and the smile of God seems verily to be over the world.

I have been resting on my elbow, gazing over the taffrail at that scene, until I forgot entirely to write or speak, or do aught else than look and look and think. It always appears to me at such times, as if the rays of light came through a different medium from the atmosphere. They fall so holily and gently, not on the eye but on the soul. They seem to be spiritual rays. Who dare say that they come not through hosts of unseen watchers, angels, or spirits of the sainted? I for one am very confident that there are those with us whom we see not, but whose presence we may learn to know. I learned, as do all students in the metaphysics of books, that all ideas are derived

from two sources, sensation and reflection. I have since learned to add spiritual suggestion. Do you not believe it? Else whence came that voice to me last night, as I lay on deck looking up into the holy sky, that voice of the buried unforgotten? I had not been thinking of the past; I had not been dreaming of the future. I was simply wondering whether or not I could again go over the calculation of the distance of Alpha Lyræ, as I once did in days of mathematical inclinations. And as I lay thus thinking, a voice seemed to say to me, in those clear tones of the long lost and loved, 'Do you remember that morning on the bank of the Hudson?' 'Aye, do I, thou well-beloved one.' And for an hour we talked of the days of boyhood and boyish affections.

I am interrupted by a call to eat—a call I never hesitate to answer here, however often repeated. Bill of fare: Coffee (good), sea biscuit, &c.; cold ham, blue-fish broiled,

sword-fish' (à la Block Island), &c., &c. Four gentlemen already seated call me to hurry.

July 23d, 9 o'clock P. M.

I am lying on deck writing by a lantern. The roll of the boat prevents my scrawl being quite as intelligible as it otherwise might be. The night is beyond description beautiful. The moon hangs overhead with pale and solemn face, and the stars keep no reluctant vigil, if their sparkling purity be any indication.

The stars and the ocean have always seemed to me to have connexion. They have been so long companions, unchanged, unchanging. Night after night, from the morning they sang together in the rejoicing anthem of creation until now, the sea has answered their song from afar, and with unceasing music praised the God of the Waters. Night after night they have looked down from their diamond thrones on the bright waves, and caressed them as they leaped up to meet the star-beam's kiss.

Tried companions are they. The stars saw the ocean when it smiled in the first twilight; they were above when it burst its bonds and baptized the world, sweeping an apostate race to perdition. They heard the last agonizing cry of mortality as it rang over the sullen waters, and then beheld the floods shrinking calmly back to their deep repose. They, with the waves, are chroniclers of the centuries, and you can read of the ages past as well in the starlight as on the ocean sand. They are alike sublime. Sublimity consists in the approach to Infinity. Whatever is Infinite is necessarily sublime. The view across the ocean, the horizon of water, the unceasing roll of the surf on the sand, day after day, year after year, century after century, impresses the mind with a sense of vastness which it cannot fully grasp, even as when we look up into the illimitable sky, we are lost in the idea of immensity.

We are running in toward Sag Harbor,

which is still some thirty miles distant. We shall scarcely reach there before midnight, and merely wait to mail packages of letters. The beacon lights of the Island and Sound are all around us—Montauk to the south, Gull Island, Plum Island, and the other lights to enter Greenport and Sag Harbor, to the west and I fancy at times I can see Watch Hill away in the north.

## LETTER XII.

### STONINGTON POINT.

STONINGTON, CONN., Aug. 2d, 1847.

WE have at length left the water, and are quietly ensconced in this coolest of all cool places in summer. After the first three days out, I grew tired of fishing, and spent all the time in reading or sleeping, except when B—— hooked a shark, as he did in three or four instances, and then I helped kill him with right good will. This shark-catching is exciting amusement. Hooks and lines for the purpose being always on board, when he saw one, B—— baited with a small blue-fish, and throwing it over as far astern as possible, took a turn around the taffrel, and if he didn't bite, pulled in and threw again. The second or third throw usually showed the white side of the fish as he seized the bait on the top of the

water, and then, "all hands to pull in a shark!" and all hands rushed eagerly and pulled heartily till he came under the stern, where a spear soon quieted him. After inspecting him awhile, he is allowed to float away, food for his unscrupulous brethren.

But more than the sea, I have enjoyed the land as we ran by it. Here an island, there a head-land. Here the long, low sand bar, covered at high water; there the rock-guarded point, dark with forests. These waters are all more or less familiar to me, but the land is all over covered with scenes that wake a thousand memories.

I have been this evening seated on a rock at the extremity of the Point, watching the sun-set, and looking over the water as far as my eye can reach. I had company (pleasant company!) and we talked of the scene till our minds became so full of the beauty, and finally with the solemnity of it, that, as was remarked, silence became the most pleasant conversation. I fixed my eye

on the faint blue streak on the southern horizon, the bluffs of Montauk. The surf broke in measured time around the rock on which we sat. (The surf here, by the way, is not heavy, except in a very high wind: Fisher's Island and Watch Hill break it considerably before it reached us). The sun had gathered round him a host of glorious clouds to watch his calm descent into the water of the Sound. In the South, as far as I could see, was the unchanged, unchanging ocean, and the horizon was formed by that narrow blue strip, scarcely distinguishable from the waves. For an instant a sail flashed out in the beams of the red sun, as if a flame were playing on the ocean, a marine will-o'-the-wisp (do you see the Irishism in that sentence?) but it passed into a dull gray again, and was no longer visible. The lighthouse at Watch Hill, tinted with the same bright rays, stood in the East, and between it and our seat a dozen sail of small boats, freighted with light hearts and merriness, or lobsters

and clams, as the case might be, hung idly in the motionless air.

Anon the sun went down, and all grew cold and gray, and a stillness which did not seem broken even by the surf, settled over the sea. A fisherman, with a small boy seated in the stern of his boat on a pile of nets, pulled slowly around the Point, and set the nets, and then returned homeward. Neither he nor the boy spoke a word—all was silent. The surf almost entirely ceased. The waves came in at long intervals, and then fell with a half hushed sound on the rocks, as if they too felt the beauty of the night's approach. "Is it not like a glorious death, this sun-set and the coming night?" said my companion. "Aye," thought and said I, "a glorious death passing into a night not starless, but lit with beacon lights, gleaming clearly and with heaven's own lustre through the gloom of the grave. I never saw sun-set like that yonder, that did not make me think of heaven."

“It was right yonder, in the sun’s wake, that the Atlantic was wrecked.”

“Then verily that sunset may well remind us of the land whereunto the sainted are gone, for that was the path which at least *one* trod thitherward.”

“Yes, I knew him well. Who knew him that did not love him?”

And so the stars came out, and we sat talking of the departed—until my companion suddenly pointed to the South, and I saw Montauk light just on the water’s edge apparently.

“How it would have frightened Wyandantee, had he seen that beacon in his time?”

At the name of Wyandantee I started, and straightway we spoke of the Indian legends of old Montauk. If you have never heard the story of the chief, it is worth hearing. I will tell it briefly when I next write. We left the point an hour ago. The surf roar has increased with a strong South wind, and is in my ears as I write. We propose to-morrow to leave for Block Island and seaward.

## LETTER XIV.

### A LEGEND OF MONTAUK.

STONINGTON, Aug. 5th. 1847.

IN my last I promised a legend of the Point which like a long finger points seaward from Long Island. It is a holy place with the red man, and the few of the once noble Montauks who now remain, in the intervals of reason which they have and of sober reflection, turn sad, and, I have thought at times, longing looks toward the graves of their valiant tribe, and sometimes watch the setting sun and dream of beholding the hunting grounds of their fathers and the fair maidens that were the pride of the Island. I saw the dull eye of the only one now left who has anything of the nobility of the tribe, flash with the eagle glance of pride as I stood by him on the beach, and pointing into the far blue sky above him asked him if he ever

hoped to hunt with Wyandannee in the spirit-land. He rose from the sand and straightened his tall form, and looking into my face, with a strong grasp on my shoulder, pointed westward with a sudden and convulsive motion of his hand. His lips trembled an instant as if laboring to convey some words of fierce eloquence, then he became calm again, his eye dull, his form bent, and he sank back on the sand, a pitiable representation of the lords of the soil. Looking on him, you would have dreamed it possible that he was the descendant of the Eagle of the North. But to the legend.

It was three hundred years ago. In the tempests of three centuries the red man has been swept away, and the storms of a few more hundred years will sweep away his memory. Let us strive to keep their valor and their nobleness before the living age, and teach our children tales of the Indian warriors.—A holy embalmment is that of a memory when it passes into household legends and fireside tales.

Wyandannee was the great chief of the Montauks. (A later chief of this name was the protégé of Gardiner, the original settler of Gardiner's Island.) He was the son of a chief bearing the same name. His father died on Shelter Island, and was borne in solemn state to the great burial ground on Montauk. It appears that shortly after this, the chief of the Manhasset tribe offered an indignity to the grave of the old chief, and hence arose a deadly strife that resulted in the fierce fight I am about to relate, as I have recently heard it repeated. As usual in Indian legends, a prophet maiden must enter. Saka warned Wyandannee on the shore one moony night, that he must not leave the land. They stood in the shade of a rock some three miles from what is now called Sag Harbor, and she begged him not to enter his canoe which lay on the beach. He laughed at her fears, and parting from her with a promise of a return with a load of fish and game for their lodge, pushed gaily out into the moonlight. Then leaning

steadily to his paddle, the bark shot swiftly across toward the shore of Manchonock, (now Gardiner's Island.) As he passed a point of the island, he heard the twang of a bow-string, and an arrow flew over his head. But he did not look up, nor cease his steady stroke with the paddle. Perhaps had an eye seen his face, a smile of derision might have been found on it. As he passed on, a canoe shot out from the point, and the moon showed in it five of the Manhasset warriors. Wyandantee saw them without raising his head or turning his body, save as he bent low to his paddle. There was no apparent increase of speed or anxiety on his part, but had you been with him you might have seen that smile grow strangely settled on his face, and perhaps a steadier arm and longer stroke as he turned shoreward. Scarcely five minutes passed, and a heavy surge completely overturned the pursuing bark. Their arrows and bows floated all over the waves, and a half hour was lost

in gathering them, during which Wyandannee, having seen the accident, had turned his course Eastward, and keeping close to the shore pulled steadily out toward the sea. Two hours later he saw the canoe of the Manhassets some miles behind him, and then pushed swiftly on. He thought to meet his chosen warriors on the point, and so kept on until they gained on him so nearly as to be just out of bow-shot. Then every nerve was strained, and his life-like boat danced from wave to wave like a bird. The yells of the pursuers did not move him. Once and only once he raised his head and listened for the peculiar surf roar which he knew was the voice of the ocean to old and hoary Montauk, and so plying on reached the shore precisely where now the sand had been thrown up into a jutting point some rods from the Eastward point. Then his yell rang over the ocean and the land. But no answer came from either. No friend was near. The frightened sea-gull alone

replied with a wild scream as she rose from her sleep on the wave. The Manhassets were behind him, but he sprang to a rock and fixing his foot firmly on it, with his back to another, waited their coming.

I have heard the story varied here. Some saying that another Montauk warrior came to the chieftain's aid, others that he met the foe alone. As in all such cases I have been in the habit of preferring the most incredible story, as being most desirable for a good legend, I shall do so in this.

In that moment of expectation the Montauk warrior looked to heaven and thought of Saka and her prophecy, and the long, long waiting of the dove-eyed girl at the door of the lodge. It nerved his arm, and the first wolf of the foe that came within the sweep of his hatchet, went down under that fierce blow and lay motionless and dead before him. Another and another fell voiceless and unmoving, and he stood behind their bodies untouched and fearless. The

moon never looked down on such a scene before nor since, on old Montauk. It was a fierce struggle of rage and blood. No words were spoken, no sound was heard but the thunder of the surf. Across the pile of slain the unwounded Montauk's eye flashed fiercely on the two remaining foes. A moment passed, and one of them sprang over the ghastly barrier, and staggering under a blow that fell deep into his left shoulder, wound his right arm around the legs of the Montauk and brought him almost to the ground. As he staggered, an arrow from the last of the enemy entered his breast. He leaped forward across the men he had slain, hurled his hatchet with giant force deep into the skull of the Manhasset chief, and then, as his last foe fell dead, his triumphant cry again woke the sea-gull and went floating away over the rolling sea.

But the arrow of the Manhasset was stealing away his life. He felt that death was near. The moon was never so calm and holy in his eyes, the surf was never more

melodious. (The sounds of life are always sweeter to the dying). He sat down on the sand, and sang his death song. Its burden was the story of his battle-fields, and wounds in fight (for though young he was all over scarred); and then he chaunted the praises of the beloved Saka: "In the broad forests of the spirit-land, when holier moonbeams fall on more melodious waves, on the green banks of bluer brighter seas, we shall love on with spirit love, my dark-eyed bride."

The moon went down, and the stars were left to watch the scene. As the bright Aldebaran rose from the ocean, the death song ceased. Wyandannee had met his fathers.

There is a foot print in the rock, which the Indians said was the print of his foot in that fierce fight, and a fountain bubbles up over the spot where he died. Another story is, that the foot print is that of Manitou, when he came down to visit his Red children. You may believe just which of the two you prefer. I trust my story has not wearied you.

## LETTER XV.

BLOCK ISLAND.

STONINGTON, Aug. 10, 1847.

I HAVE preferred this time to wait until I could sit down quietly on shore and write to you. It is somewhat pleasanter to use one's pen seated by a table that stands securely on four legs, than to scrawl on a sheet of paper laid on a deck which varies its angle with the horizon from  $45^{\circ}$  to  $50^{\circ}$  with every passing wave. My writing, none the best at any time, becomes then a succession of such characters as no well-bred spider would leave on the paper, had he been dipped in my ink and allowed to travel across it.

I was to tell you of Block Island. If you have been there, you'll appreciate the richness of a sail to it. If not, then by all means go.

Go, if but to see the Ocean in all its glory. You may enjoy it from a ship's deck, or the shore, or in the surf. All these I know. But to be *acquainted* with the Ocean, to claim a sort of friendship with the waves, trust yourself to a boat that will feel every wind and roll gaily to every billow, and dash the cool delicious spray over you, and bound with all the life of a sea-bird across the water. A life of voyages across the Ocean will not make a man so perfectly at home on the water as a few summers spent in the way that we are now spending this.

The wind blew freshly from the southwest as we left the Breakwater at day-light, and the sky was bluer than usual after the shower in the night. Watch Hill seemed to be winking his bright eye slowly, and I thought kept it shut longer than usual, as if he was terribly tired of his night's duty, and half asleep already. (What a life-like appearance a revolving light has when you observe it closely.) In an hour we were

fairly at sea. Are you tired of hearing me speak of the Ocean? I never tire of looking at it, or rolling on or in it. Men speak of "our mother the earth." But I never could appreciate the metaphor. A hard mother is old Terra. She refuses us food save when compelled by hard struggling with her, and then yields it reluctantly. She deceives us too often and finally takes us, when worn and weary, to her bosom, only by the difficult digging of a grave.

But the ocean is mother-like, singing songs to us continually, and telling a thousand legends to our baby ears. She casts up toys for us on every shore, bright shells and pebbles. (What else do we live for?) True, maniac as she is, she sometimes raves madly and hurls her children from her arms, but see how instantly she clasps them again close, close to her heaving bosom, and how calmly and quietly and holily they sleep there as she sings to them, nor wake again to sorrow!

The breeze freshened in a few hours considerably. We loitered away the forenoon in fishing, taking some seven and eight pound blue-fish, and a quantity of a size a little smaller. All of our fish that day averaged five pounds.

In the afternoon we had made some forty miles offing, and as the weather looked squally, we drew in our lines and ran up for Block Island.

To imagine our pleasure, you should know each and all of our company. I deposited myself in the lee scuppers with Festus in my hand. J—— had a rare old copy of Grotius' poems. Willis (Joe is here; what would I do without him?) who has a passion for the more modern, had the last edition of Carlyle's 'Past and Present.' S—— had Schiller, and the Doctor had the rudder. But little reading did we. It seems to me, if those waves are running yet (and they must be off Labrador by this time), they are still echoing our loud laughter.

Especially when the spray soaked the 'Past and Present' in Joe's hands as he was reading, "Coped with the star galaxies; paved with the green mosaic of earth and sea—" It was just then the water blinded him, and when he looked at his book it was as salt as a mackerel.

We made the island before sunset and anchored in the offing. Leaving two of our party on board for the night in case it should blow on shore (when it would be necessary to slip the cable and run out to sea or to get to leeward of the land), J. and Willis and myself went ashore. Our first operation was to clean and salt the fish we had taken, which we did with the help of the islanders; and then climbing the bank or steep hill rising almost directly from the shore made our way to Card's tavern, a snug old fashioned and quite comfortable house, where we—*ate!* How we did eat! They were good cooks. We had the dainties of the season, viz.: blue-fish just out of

water, and broiled *secundum artem*, with plenty of sweet butter and fresh eggs, which are certainly better laid by the Block Island hens than by any other gallinaceous females in the world. (Why they are better I don't know, but it's a fact. *Connoisseurs* in eggs can readily distinguish them from any others in this meridian.) Add to this bill of fare the unfailing "ash-loaf" of corn bread, raked up in the embers of the tug to bake slowly during the night (delicious for breakfast), and you have a table fit for Apicius.

This "tug," a species of peat found on the island, is almost their only fuel, for there are no trees of any size, and anthracite is yet unknown. It burns with a disagreeable odor, imparting its fragrance to the dress and persons of islanders, who can be as readily distinguished by the nose as by the eye; or the ear either for that matter, for their peculiar nasal twang is strikingly characteristic.

As you may imagine, the inhabitants of Block Island are "of their own kind." You must see them to know them. Within the past few years they have vastly changed. Ten years ago a Block Islander was a proverb for a drunkard. Now they are all temperance men (at least in name, for I confess to overhearing a suspicious request from a boat-load of fishermen that hailed us in the offing).

They have no wharves, for there is no bay nor place for a wharf on the island. The everlasting thunder of the Atlantic shakes the foundation of the land. It rolls on shore from Europe and Africa, unbroken till it breaks here. Those three great waves that told of the earthquake at Lisbon, which it was said bore the tidings of that fearful scene across the ocean, must have shaken the island to its base.

Strange that men born and living thus on the shore of God's vast sea, should not be worshippers by nature!

They have no boats here which may not be drawn up on shore out of the reach of storm or tide. What craft they have, are admirably adapted to living in bad weather, having great breadth of beam with high weather boards, and being very deep, schooner rigged, usually without a jib, the foremast being stepped quite forward, or "in the eyes" of the boat.

As evening closed in, the weather began to thicken, and it now blew a gale. We walked to the beach, and looked at the little Phantom as she rode half a mile off. She was gaily dancing on the water, ever and anon throwing up a shower of white foam from under her bow, and we pitied the Doctor and S——, as we saw a fair prospect of their having a run out to sea. The scene had become grand indeed. The surf roar was terrific, and the waves went leaping along as far as we could see out in the offing, like a host of monsters chasing each other. I remembered an exclamation of a friend,

made some weeks ago at Long Branch, as we looked, one beautiful, sunshiny morning, at the waves. "See," said he, pointing to a white crest far out at sea; "see that foam cap! Do you remember Eschylus calls it *γελασμα*, *the laughter of the wave*?" But it was wild laughter now. The laughter of fiends. I trembled for the Phantom. While we were watching her, I saw a lantern in her rigging, and guessed that the Doctor was making all ready for a run.

Directly I saw the sail rise a little way. He had four reefs in it. A moment more and the beautiful thing raised her head on a wave, and turning swiftly around, shot into the gloom to leeward. A half hour later I thought I saw a light in the offing as if she was beating up again; but a dense mist and rain drove me from the beach.

Shall I tell you where I found J—— when I returned? Sitting in the old kitchen at Card's sedately and dignifiedly stirring coffee in a large pan, and looking demurely into one of the prettiest faces you or he

ever dreamed of, while a pleasant voice sang a plaintive song that perfectly delighted us all. It was apropos too; "The Sailor boy's grave." And a merry party we made in that old kitchen. J——'s coffee was admirable, as we voted the next morning. You should know him to enjoy the oddity of his appearance over that tug fire and coffee pan. How he winked his bright eye as the smoke filled it! Tears followed: but whether the song (it was indeed a sweet one from a sweet voice) or the smoke caused them, I can't say. I slept too sound that night to dream of the Phantom. The gale moaned and shrieked all night. Now, as fitfully as a sick child wailing, and now as mournfully as the weeping of a mother over her first-born. The surf thundered on the shore, and surf-roar and tempest united, made it a fearful night. And yet I slept.

## LETTER XVI.

### THE FIRE-SHIP.

STONINGTON, Aug. 10th, 1847.

THE wind went down toward morning, but the weather continued thick and we saw nothing of the Phantom. Still we had no fear of her safety, for the Doctor often rode out worse gales in her than this. By noon the clouds broke away and we had a gleam of sunshine, but it afterwards settled into a sort of autumn day, cloudy and squally. About one o'clock the Phantom hove in sight, and ran up to her old anchorage. We went out to her toward evening, although the surf ran tremendously. But we thought it no more than fair to relieve the Doctor and S——, whom we found in excellent health and spirits, but outrageously hungry. Having been unable to cook anything they had confined their eating to biscuit and cold ham, which S—— thought

hard fare. His round face had a look of gloom on it which went to my heart. I avoided any mention of the blue-fish and eggs and ash-loaf, but commending him to Card's good care and declining Willis's company, J—— and myself drew in the anchor, and the Phantom dashed merrily out to sea. We had taken the precaution to supply our larder as well as possible before coming out, and therefore had little care for the night on that score.

It was a lonely and yet a pleasant evening that which we passed on the sea together. Lonely, because we two were cut off from all the world, but we lacked no company. The clouds and the wind and the swift waves were company, and our hearts leaped merrily, for we were positively happy. J—— has escaped from the weight of office duties, and I had been waiting for just such a time to talk with him of matters of deep interest to both of us. The sea became more quiet and the wind lulled, so

that at about ten o'clock we ran back to our anchorage, and our boat lay slowly rising and falling and rolling on the waves.

We then lay across the deck for awhile and peered into the gloom to seaward, vainly striving to catch a glimpse of the *Fire Ship*.

This Fire Ship is a part of the creed of a Block Islander, and (the truth is to be acknowledged) there is something very odd about her. Others than the islanders have believed in it. Dr. Mitchell once visited the island for the sake of examining and reporting on the apparition, and if I mistake not did so do, and his account is published in the transactions of some Society in New York.

Some seventy years ago a ship appeared in the offing of Block Island. (I give the story now as I heard it first. It has a variety of shades, as all such legends have, and is told in fifty ways.) She was a noble vessel, with sky scrapers set, and the island-

ers watched her till she disappeared in the gloom of night. She was then but a few miles distant, hove to, the wind blowing fresh from the west. As night thickened, they saw her lights gleaming on the water, but before midnight all was dark save one bright light in her rigging.

An islander sat on the beach watching that light. He heard a voice, even at that distance, and the shrill whistle of the boatswain, but even as he heard it a dark cloud swept with the sea wind across the horizon and a dense mist hid the light from his view. Fifteen minutes might have passed and again the light was visible. At the instant that his eye caught it a sheet of flame rose from the deck of the vessel and every spar and rope gleamed against the cloud. In a moment the watcher started from the beach and alarmed the inhabitants, and they gathered on the shore and watched the flames as they leaped along the spars of the noble ship. A half hour passed and

the crew of the burning vessel, doubtless had by this time taken to their boats. The wind had entirely lulled, and when the tall thin spire of flame caught the sail which had been fluttering on the main royal, there was not air enough moving to break off the spar, but burned it to a thin *line* of fire, and then crumbled and fell in a shower of coals. At this moment the eye of an islander saw a strange commotion in the clouds which were lit up by the blaze of the burning ship, and beyond her, out in the offing the foam leaped from the crests of the wave, showing that a squall was coming.

On it came, tearing up the sea before it, whirling the clouds into all fantastic shapes and driving the spray like a white wall of water on, till it reached the blazing ship. Away to leeward flew flakes of fire and streams of flame, and burning rigging and bright gleaming spars. An instant the gallant vessel staggered and bowed to the tempest, then flew like a wild bird swiftly to-

ward the shore. It was a fearful sight, that mass of fire and flame bounding over the ocean. An awe fell on all that saw it, and the watchers on the surf-beaten shore sat silently side by side, and fixed their affrighted gaze on the phantom-like ship that swept shoreward in such magnificent array. No thought now of the spoils of the week, no thoughts of the lives of gallant men, no thought of anything but that frightful vision that seemed to be a curse of God, a bolt from his hand flying on toward the Island.

Five, ten minutes might she have been driving thus before the gale, and had neared the Island within but a short distance, when suddenly she stopped, or seemed to stop in her wild flight. There was a flash, blinding and fierce as the lightning of heaven, a thousand brilliant spars and burning timbers filled the air, and deep darkness, the very blackness of darkness settled on the sea. Ten times had the heart of the watcher on the rock sent the blood through

his trembling body, when a sound came over the sea that shook the Island as it never shook in the surf-thunder.

From that day to this the Block Islanders have believed that they see the spectral fire ship in stormy nights, and that its coming foretells some disaster. One and all believe it as they believe there is an ocean, and I have seen many of them, young and old, who say they have seen it. Indeed I never saw an islander who had not, and the young lady whose song I had told you of in my last, told J—— as he sat stirring that coffer that she had twice seen it with her own blue eyes. I was especially amused by the earnest manner in which J—— said “I don’t doubt it.” I have become satisfied myself that they do see something strange in the mist. Persons from the main land who have come off here to make an examination, say that they saw it distinctly, and if you wish to forfeit all respect of a Block Islander, express a doubt of the truth of the

apparition, and you are set down as unworthy of attention. Whether the vision be a strange conformation of the mists, owing to peculiar currents of air or not, and if so, what the cause of these currents can be, I leave you to imagine. I heard an old man say he had seen it often, every spar and rope and timber being distinct and bright, and that he had watched it a half hour at a time as it lay rolling in the offing.

But I left my running account of the day and night to tell this story. J—— and myself lay on deck and watched for the fire ship, but it did not come. We talked earnestly, for we had earnest matters to talk of; our own plans for the future, the plans of others, and finally we dropped into our accustomed vein of discussion and talked of metaphysics till the hands of our watches stood together at 12. I then went below (our boat has a beautiful cabin, being as pleasant a yacht as you can imagine) and set some eatables on the table. J. came down and we ate heartily and went on

deck again with cloaks and blankets, and were soon rocked to sleep by our ocean mother.

The gale continued to blow on Saturday, rendering it impossible for us to reach Stonington again. We therefore passed Sunday as quietly as possible on our boat. We had the best of reading for the day, and after dinner we set Willis to reading a sermon or two from Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy. Monday was clear and glorious. We left the Island at daylight, fished all day, and lay to off the North East point of Gardener's Island at night. On Tuesday we ran with a fresh wind into Stonington again.

## LETTER XVII.

### THE SOUND.

NEW YORK, August, 1847.

I could not sleep the night that I came through the Sound, although I was weary enough, and anxious to forget myself if it were possible. So I strolled up and down the deck almost all night, reading occasionally for a half hour, and then walking another half hour.

I know of no pleasanter employment than looking in faces and (avoiding the impertinence of staring) trying to guess out the meaning of lines that we see on them. I have especially been thus interested in going through the Sound. No line of boats, as far as my experience goes, in the United States, carries as intelligent and respectable passengers in the cabin as the Stonington line, unless I except the Fall River line, of

which I know but little. Among these I never failed to find those who were remarkable for some expression of face, perhaps of happiness, more likely of sorrow, for the sorrow of life seems by far to overbalance the joy. I heard a gentleman remark to Willis, "The boats ought not to make the attempt to run through the Sound in storms or fogs. It is a risk of which there is no need, and they should never leave the wharf except in perfectly safe weather."

"My dear Sir," said Willis, "there are on this boat to-night more than two hundred cabin passengers. If you knew the object which each of these passengers has in going through the Sound to-night, I will venture to say you would find more than fifty who would give five hundred dollars each to be taken through, fog or storm, rock or wave notwithstanding. How many do you suppose are hastening to death-beds, to catch the last words of some beloved one? How many are carrying the fortunes of their families, the actual pecuniary fortunes of

themselves or others? Rest assured, Sir, there is anxiety enough on this boat, actual agony at this delay, to warrant officers in running great risks, and the officers feel their responsibility to both classes of passengers." The remark is worth thinking of.

As I stood in the car-house at Stonington while the Boston passengers were going from cars to boat, I saw a gentleman and lady supporting between them a young lady, whose pale, calm face told of a soul fixed in its contemplation on a quiet rest, the rest of death. A half hour later I saw them seated in the Saloon, and I passed them repeatedly as I walked up and down, looking, when I had opportunity, into their faces. There was a something familiar to me in all of them, yet I could not make out what it was. At length it flashed across my mind.

Two years ago I was coming down the lakes in one of the magnificent steamers which ply on those waters. I had my horse with me, a tried companion, who had carried me three hundred miles in five days

previous, resting over one Sunday (hot weather it was too), swimming and fording over twenty rivers or large creeks, and at length resting himself, in good condition, on the forward deck of the boat. I was standing on the upper deck, looking down at him, when I heard an exclamation of delight at my side. "Father, come and look at this horse. Does'nt he look like our Jack?"

I turned and saw the face of a young lady, remarkable for an expression of overflowing joy, a face such as Dr. Cummings of Scotland called in one of his great speeches, "a love letter to the whole human family."

As she continued to converse with her father, I learned that they were from the East, travelling on her account. The idea of disease being concealed under that joyous face was almost too strange to be credible. I met her repeatedly on the boat, and always with the bounding step and free light motion of gay, happy, life-loving youth.

At length the boat touched at Erie, in Pennsylvania, and lay an hour or more. I walked up into the town, and being given to the admiration of flowers and fruits, stopped in front of a fine garden and admired its appearance. A gentleman politely asked me to walk in, and I did so; he showed me his place, and then cut a number of flowers and handed them to me, with which I returned to the boat. It was a glorious summer evening as we left the wharf. The sun had not yet set, but before we were out of the harbor, it went down; and I was standing watching the sky when a lady stepped toward me and begged to be allowed to examine the flowers I held in my hand. I handed them to her of course, and then saw that she was the mother of the young lady I had seen so often. After they had examined them, they returned them to me. I took them, and making the politest bow in my power, begged the mother to allow me to present them to her

daughter, who received them with a smile of thanks, and I turned away to see to the comfort of Iran.

A few moments afterward, the father of the lady, who stood near me on the upper deck forward, addressed a remark to me about my horse; and a conversation followed, an exchange of names, a discovery that we knew some of the same people in New England, and an introduction to his family.

Perhaps I have been too particular in describing the manner of my introduction to them, but every incident remained deeply impressed on my mind, and our last meeting was so unexpected, that I remember them now vividly. The next morning we were in Buffalo, and I did not see them. The next afternoon I was watching the sunset from the tower at Niagara, when the same party came unexpectedly up the winding stair, I could do no otherwise than join them. It was Sunday evening. A holy place is Niagara to spend a Sabbath. How the torrent worships God!

They were New Englanders, and (almost of course), religious people. (I don't like that word *religious*, let me say *Christian*.) I had a host of friends there, but none with whom I could pass as pleasant a Sabbath evening as with them. We talked of the majesty of God, as we listened to the thunder of the Fall. I was deeply interested in the pure and perfect faith which I found in the mind of the young lady of whom I am particularly writing.

"I should like to die here," said she; "Heaven can't be far from such a scene of God's power."

I saw a shade fall over the mother's face as she overheard this remark, but I smiled and spoke of the beauty of our belief that Heaven was never far off.

The next morning I was about mounting Iran, when I heard a merry voice, and turning saw that my friends were about leaving in the morning train. We parted with smiles and hopes of meeting again. We met next on the Vanderbilt, as I have told

you in the commencement of this letter. In the former meeting I was bronzed by long exposure to the sun, and my beard was heavy, and only shaved from the upper and under lip. I had now a clean face, and was not much tanned. It was not strange they did not recognise me. If their eyes meet this letter, I am well assured they will pardon the liberty I take in recalling the pleasure of our meeting at Niagara, and on the Lakes.

They are still travelling, the world over, in search of health. God grant they may find a life-giving air somewhere for that fair girl. The smile was gone from her face. Her eye seemed, as I have said, to be fixed on the far off land, whereunto her weary feet are even now, I fear, tending. Yet if her faith be as it was when we stood together on the frail bridge over the Fall, and looked first down into the deep, then up to Heaven: if she looks still with yearning gaze into the blue sky as to her holier home, the home of hope and love and God:

if still her foot is firm in the path she then trod joyously with songs and smiles, though now with saddened expectation, then am I sure that wherever God's voice reaches her, on land or sea, in America or in a far country, it will be to her a voice of welcome, and she will press her feverish lip on her mother's forehead, and unclasping the arm I saw wound around her father's neck, bathe those lips in the river of life, open her blue eye on bluer skies, and her sweet voice be loud and clear among the Seraphim !  
God go with you, friends !

## LETTER XVIII.

A MEMORY OF THE OLD CONGRESS.

SARATOGA, Aug. 16th, 1847.

I HAD almost determined not to write to you from this section of country at all; for the ordinary subject matter of letters is so much the same old story of amusements and time-murdering, that I imagine your readers could not be much interested in what I might say. But the notes of a looker-on may be worth as much, if not more than those of one who joins the whirl of gaiety.

And after some days of gazing at the thousands who are around me, my usual morning ride being ended, with no companion but my horse, my old and tried companion of whom I spoke to you in my last, and who is now rustivating with me, I am at a loss for employment for an hour, and will even write to you.

Do not expect to hear of the gaieties of Saratoga. I am not here to enjoy them. It is a long while since I sickened of them ; and although every summer finds me here more or less, it is with reluctance that I come, and only to meet those whom I could not otherwise see. For sketches of balls and hops (the standing amusements of those who are at loss for brains to kill time otherwise) I refer you to others. I am decidedly an advocate for dancing. It seems to me a harmless way of making a fool of one's self, when that is the object (and it is the object of most pleasure-seekers of the day). It is so much easier to use one's heels than one's head, that people desirous of escaping all exertion may well be excused for avoiding mental labor, though at the expense of bodily fatigue. Did you ever pass the windows of a room in which there was dancing, and watch the figures when you could not hear the music? Try it sometimes, and if the graceful movements of the dance do not

become positively ludicrous, then I am no judge. Do you ask how I would pass time more pleasantly? Come with me, my friend, and let us stroll up and down this long piazza of the Congress, and talk awhile of the past and the present.

I have a love for this same old colonnade. A thousand memories linger here. The young, the lovely, the light hearted of many years have walked this same round, and listened and spoken the words of faith and hope that are spoken now so lightly, and so easily forgotten by the gay haunters of yonder brick hotel. It seems to me that a very few years have effected a great change in the character of the visitors at Saratoga. It is now of a lighter, gayer sort. Even the dance seems to have become more airy and less solemn than it used to be. When I first frequented Saratoga, "flirtations" were less frequent, love was a serious matter, and many a happy life of affection began, where we now stand. The old Congress is a sa-

cred place with me, and I prefer it still, for the sake of these associations. Stand with me by this pillar, and I'll tell you a love story.

It will be ten years next month, since I stood here, as we now stand, with two friends. How well I loved them! The one was a young man, my friend: a senior in Princeton, passing his vacation before commencement, at the Springs. The other was a gentle girl. There is none here like her, none half so lovely. I should incur the severe condemnation of some fifty ladies, to whom I bow each day, did they know that I am the writer of this letter, when I say that I never saw as little beauty at Saratoga as this summer. Out of some hundreds of ladies, there are not twenty that bear looking at twice. But, perhaps, my taste has left me, and I am no judge. Certainly, I have seen none to compare with L—. She was a fairy child of seventeen. Her eye was blue as heaven, and had in it a

winning earnestness, that made her ten times more lovely. She was the worship of a host of admirers. Her seat in the drawing room was always surrounded by a crowd, and she never lacked for a word or a smile where it was deserved, or a cold bow where that was desirable.

I have said she was a fairy in form. Her foot fell as lightly on the carpet (as Longfellow said of Preciosa), "as a sunbeam on the water." Every movement was grace, every laugh a thrill of melody. Her song was a gush of such overflowing sweetness as I never heard surpassed; no, nor equalled. That song haunts this spot on which we stand. I linger here in the night to listen to it. It is this that makes me love the Old Congress!

We stood together that night, having escaped the crowded ball room, and by this very pillar, my friend and I—— exchanged the words of parting which are apt to be exchanged between those who love. It was

an ordinary parting. No tears, nothing but smiles. He was to return to Princeton, attend commencement, return to the Springs, and they were to go to Niagara together. Her father, a man of great wealth, and devoted to his daughter, stood yonder watching us. I remember the scene well, how well!

“Do not let them make you forget me,” said Fred, with a smile. “A week is a long time to be away, and you may be wooed and won by some one in that time. You remember the girl who was wooed, won, and married in a day!”

“Don’t speak so, Fred,” said she; “I don’t like to speak of forgetting even in that way.”

“Well, I will not then. Expect me on Saturday. Good bye! and he passed his manly arm around her, and pressed his lips to hers, and saying “Take good care of her, W——,” sprang on his horse and rode swiftly away.

“Give me your arm,” said L——, “and

let us walk here a while. I can't go back to that room again."

So we walked till midnight, talking of Fred, for L—— would listen by the hour while I praised my friend. She loved him with a holy love. It is a blessed thing to meet such love in this world. Such love is like a smile of God among the rough scenes of life. She was hopeful, trustful, I need not say faithful. But Fred. and L. never met again. He died, alone, in a lonely place. Saturday came and he came not. She was disappointed and sad. All day Sunday I devised excuses for him.—Monday and no Fred. Tuesday, Wednesday passed, and at length Saturday brought me a letter from a strange hand. "I write you, Sir," said the letter, "as directed by Mr. Frederick G——, who died at my house last night." I need not attempt to describe my feelings as I went on to read the particulars of his sudden death, his last words to me, his message to L. They were written out by a stranger, taken down from his lips. How full of

warmth, of love, of agony. "Tell him to tell *her*. He will know who I mean. She must not weep. She may, I wish she could, forget me."

I broke the news to her as well as I could, standing again just at the same place. She stood statue-like and listened—then fell like a dead person into my arms. Since then, she too has fallen asleep! Her blue eye is closed. Her glorious hair is under the coffin-lid. Her voice has learned a new, a purer melody! I stand here now and think of her while the sounds of revelry come faintly to my ear. I grow purer myself in communion with the dead. Should not this be a sacred place to me?

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DESERTED CHURCHES.

BALLSTON, N. Y., Aug. 13, 1847.

THIS is far pleasanter than Saratoga. The old Sans Souci is quiet and comfortable. There is no crowd, no noise, all is delightfully still and pleasant.

I am quietly and pleasantly situated with my friends, and we shall spend the next week here, then perhaps go back to Saratoga, and then to the city again.

We rode again yesterday toward the Lake, and around the head of it to the Sulphur Spring. This has been our favorite ride, although the road is outrageous on the shore of the lake. As we were returning, we passed a grave-yard, the country-grave-yard, where the stout arms that tilled the soil lie nerveless under it, and the fathers of the living generation are sleeping after their

labors. As we passed on, we saw a grave-stone leaning against the fence, and I read the name across the top of the stone which alone was visible, thus,—

MARY.

And I was struck with the singularity of a coincidence which I will explain.

A few weeks ago I was riding on horse-back by the side of a fair and thoughtful friend over the hills of Connecticut. It was twilight, and as we passed a grave-yard, I fancied I could read on a stone, to which I called my friend's attention, the same name, "Mary." "Let us stop here," said she, drawing her rein and looking with earnest eye at it.

"How many stones I have seen in grave-yards bearing that name, 'a tear,' or 'bitterness,' and how many hearts, think you, W——, are in bitterness for that girl's memory? She was a girl, you see, by the size of the stone. They always make the size of grave-stones correspond with the ages of the

dead in the country. She must have been about seventeen. I wonder whether she was not happier than I am. She must have been. I wonder if she loved, and whom she loved, and whose embrace she has exchanged for that bed under the long grass.

‘ Had she a father ? Had she a mother ?  
Had she a sister ? Had she a brother ?  
Or was there a nearer one still, and a dearer one  
Yet than all other ?’

I can imagine a sad scene when she died. How they loved her ! And how she bade them not to weep for her, but to lay her gently in the old hill-side grave-yard under the oak tree yonder. Then there was agony, the agony of the warm *country heart*. Oh, how different from our *schooled* grief and weeping by conventional law ! The old father stands choking with his manly sorrow by her side ; the mother holds her dear girl’s head in her faithful arms. (She held her in her babyhood thus ! Who so fit to hold her now ?) The little sister has thrown herself across the foot of the bed, and cries

bitterly. *The one*, the dearer one than all others, stands for awhile with pale face by the foot of the bed, silently gazing into the eye of the dying girl, until he sees a smile flitting across that face like a dream of heaven, and she reaches out both hands to him, and he springs toward her, and in that last long kiss she ceases to breathe, dying just where she always wished, on his breast.

“There! have I not made a scene for you? Now be so kind as to repeat that passage from old Sir Thomas Overbury, that you read to me almost a year ago, in N——.”

I had been looking into her saddened face while she spoke, and could do no less than obey her, quoting as nearly as I could from memory, the conclusion of the beautiful and quaint description of a “Faire and Happy Milk-Maid.”

“She dares go alone and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, for she means none. She is never alone, to say

truth, for she is always accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers; short ones, but they have their efficacy! Her dreams are so chaste that she dare tell them, only a Friday's dream is her superstition; that she conceals. Thus lives she, and her only care is that she may die in Spring-time, *to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding sheet.*"

"Thank you, thank you," said my companion, "and now let us ride on." "Not till I look a little nearer at that stone," said I. Riding to the fence, and leaning over, I read aloud:

"Mary, wife of ———, died April 9th, 1847, aged 71 years, &c., &c. (I couldn't read a word on the stone, but I wished to see the effect of such a dash of cold water on the romance of my friend, and so continued as if reading),—"A woman of great worth, a pattern for industry, for love of her family and her home, and universally beloved by all who knew her. An aged husband and

a large number of descendants of two generations weep at her grave."

I turned away with a serious face, and rode along by the side of my companion. She rode with her eyes on the ground awhile, then looked up with a sigh, and said as if musing, "Poor old man! how lonely his hearth will be next winter." And then tightening her rein, her horse sprang forward, while I enjoyed my laugh at her incorrigible imagination.

But to return to Ballston. We rode yesterday afternoon out on the old middle road to Milton, and looked at the deserted churches there. One was Episcopal, the other Presbyterian. They are both now in utter ruin. I pushed open the door of one of them, and found the porch occupied by a loom for weaving which a farmer's wife had placed there to have a cool place to work. Cool? It was frigid! No glass in the windows; the walls were crumbling away. I went up into the little round pulpit by a winding

stair. It had a sounding board over it, exactly like an umbrella, supported by a single pillar. How odd it looked. I stood there and read above the pulpit, sounding board and all, on a black half-moon in the wall, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, Oh, Lord of Hosts." It was a solemn mockery! Years ago the last sermon was preached from this desk, the last song of praise echoed in this temple. The preacher sleeps in the graveyard yonder; the voices of the village choir are feeble and tremulous with age, or silently wait to take up the new song. The graveyard has grown eloquent! I spoke aloud. My voice scared me. I attempted to laugh, but could not. I dared not laugh there.

I should like to go into that church some moonlight night, and sit down in the little seat under the pulpit. If the dead ever come back to earth, that is the place. They would come across the street from their present homes, and take their old seats in the square pews. What a solemn looking

procession that would be, as one by one the old men and their old wives come tottering across to the church door, while laughing maidens by the side of strong and ruddy farmer boys, go tripping into the gallery! Then the preacher ascends the pulpit stairs, and looks down on his solemn audience. They sing! what voices! the voices of the buried generation. I heard some sounds while there yesterday, that startled me, as if I had heard the songs of the forgotten. The preacher opens his Bible, and again his voice rings in the ears of his people, as he pleads with them earnestly. He speaks of hope, of Heaven, of God. A tall thin man in the front pew starts up and shrieks "Too late! Too late! Lost! Lost!" and the phantom congregation vanish. The old church is deserted again and silent. The dead sleep in the old grave yard. I had such thoughts as I stood in that old pulpit.

The other ruin is used now only for funerals. When they bury their dead, they

gather again in the old meeting-house, but never save then. It is a fit time to enter its portals ; fitting to bear the dead from the old church aisle to the old country grave-yard.

I am writing you an odd letter from the Springs, all about graves and grave-yards. I am well interrupted by overhearing Willis's laugh. I must join him and our company.

## LETTER XX.

### THE DOVE OF THE MOHAWKS.

BALLSTON, Aug. 20th, 1847.

THE temptation was too strong and I yielded to it. It happened this way. I was sitting quietly enough with Willis at the window, talking about the probabilities for and against Gen. Scott being in Mexico, when a man walked by with a reed pole on his shoulder and a string of fish in his hand. "Where did you get those?" said Joe. "In Saratoga Lake," was the reply. "Too far by half for my laziness," said Willis, dropping contentedly into his chair again. "Joe," said I, about five minutes later. "Well." "There are trout in the Kayderoceros. We used to take them there." "Well." "Well? don't you see the inference? We must take them out." "Too much trouble W——, altogether too much." "So I thought

until about two minutes and a half ago, but I'm now convinced its easy enough. I'm off instantly : come." " No, no, I'll take care of the ladies. They may be able to spare you elderly people, but not me—ahem. Ask Mr. T. to go with you." So having settled it in my own mind, I proceeded to make an examination and exploration for rods and lines, &c., to manufacture some flies. The forenoon was used up in this way, and after dinner, I put Festus into my pocket in case of dull sport, and strolled away over the Rail Road bridge. Then turned into the woods, and walking up the stream about a half a mile, came down to the water and prepared my tackle for use. But the wind had lulled since I started, and the sun had come out from clouds, and its rays fell hot and bright on the water. I coaxed and coaxed the trout, offering them every fly I had, and especially tempting their lazy appetites with the green fly of August. But if they were there, they lay still in

their holes, and I changed my hooks and tried bait. There was one place where the creek fell over rocks into a deep broad basin, and ran under overhanging banks. It might have been some eighty feet across it above the fall, and it widened to a hundred or more, below. Here I tried my worms, and took out a dozen good sized wind fish, weighing perhaps three quarters of a pound each. But still no trout. So I replaced my flies, tried one and another and another, and then gave it up, and walked slowly down the stream till I came to the *Lover's Leap*, where I threw myself on the ground, and taking out my book began to read.

It is a magnificent place for repose. I was on a greensward, which sloped gently down to the water, the stream here being about fifty or sixty feet wide. Behind me was a dense forest of Hemlock and Pine. I lay under a noble Elm. Before me rolled the Kayderoceros, deep and dark, under a precipice of black rock a hundred feet above

the water, on whose peak gigantic Pines stood in solemn grandeur, almost a hundred feet higher. At my right the river rushed with wild fury down a channel of rocks, until it struck the base of the hill, then suddenly grew calm and even sluggish, and turning around the little green spot on which I was, went slowly eastward, till it reached its next fall.

That greensward where I lay is seldom reached by sunbeam. It is a calm deep solitude there, a place to go on a quiet summer's day and sit with one friend, and tell the story of Nunilla, the dove of the Mohawks.

You will tire of my legends if I tell you any more of them. But I confess to a devotion to Indian stories. I would rather sit down in such a place and hear a story of three hundred years ago, than be in the merriest company you could give me. I shall therefore make no apology for my tales of the olden time.

This tale of Nunilla I have somewhere, but not here, and I therefore must premise

my brief recountal of it, by saying that I tell it from a memory of ten years at least. I have not seen nor heard it in that time, until I told it to Willis an hour ago.

It was in the days when the Mohawks were lords, from the great river of the North to the thunder of the cataract. And Nunilla was the idol of the tribe, the daughter of the proudest warrior chief. I need not write all this out; it is of course a part of the legend as of all others, and you can imagine too the firm foot and bright eye and strong arm of the Hawk, the warrior who loved her. Fill out the description to suit yourself.

The lodge of the Hawk was ready for Nunilla, and the dove was to rest in the nest of the falcon. (Now some infidel will say, as he reads this, that that singular conjunction of names, the dove and the Hawk, makes the story seem apocryphal. To any such I would suggest this idea. It's a great deal easier, and will save you lots of trouble, if you'll only be a little more credulous. It is

my principle to doubt nothing; or, if I do doubt, to say nothing about my skepticism.)

The love of an Indian girl must be a love worth possessing. So natural, pure, and holy, gushing fountain-like from a glad guileless heart, and enriching its object with a wealth that civilization never dreams of. If I were as young as I once was, and could meet with a second Nunilla, I would be inclined to lead a forest life and believe in the hunting grounds of the blessed.

The Hawk went on a war-track and fell overpowered by numbers. He fought valiantly, and his hatchet was red with the blood of his enemies. The Mohawks were victorious, but brought him home in their arms, wounded and dying. Nunilla met them. She watched him till he died, and then the fond girl's eye grew dim with long, long weeping. At length she ceased to weep, but the unnatural lustre in her eye was the gleam of madness. Poor girl! Her love was more faithful than the love of white maidens.

One sunny afternoon she sought the dark forest, on the summit of the rock I have described, and seating herself on the edge of the precipice, sang songs to the wind, and plucking wild flowers, flung them into the stream far below. As the sun neared the horizon her song grew wilder and more sweet. An Indian passing on the other side fancied he heard a voice from the land of the brave dead, and raising his eyes saw the fair girl seated on a rock and looking up into the far off sky. When the sun had set she began her death song. It floated out in the twilight, and the river hushed to listen to the wild melody. And as she sang she disrobed herself, laying her dress and ornaments one by one on the rock, recounting the story of her love and her lover's gifts. At length she stood up in the last rays of the day light with no covering on her graceful limbs and fairy body, save the long black hair that hung over them, and raising her hands to heaven, called aloud the name of

her lost love, and sprang into the air. The deep dark water opened to receive and closed above her.

In the hunting grounds of the spirit-land when the Hawk Chief came back from the chase to his lodge that night, the soft arms of Nunilla were flung around his neck, and her melodious voice syllabled his name.

Just as the dawn appeared the next morning, the canoe of a young Indian going out to fish on the lake, passed near the outlet of the Kayderoceros. The solitary fisherman looked over the side of his boat, and started as he saw on the bottom of the clear water the form of a girl, and diving, brought it to the surface and laid it in the prow of his canoe. Then he recognised the matchless form and features of the dove of the Mohawks. A smile so holy and heavenly was on her face, that as the young warrior laid her body on the green turf of the shore, he knelt and gazed, and looking up to heaven, vowed to love no Indian girl till he should meet Nu-

nilla in the land of spirits. They buried her under the very turf on which I lay reading, and for many a year the Indian maidens brought flowers and laid them reverently on the grave. Even I, searching diligently for some mark which might indicate the precise spot of her sleep, threw a handful of flowers over her, and turning back to my book, read till the last sunbeam lit the top of the pine tree that tapered far up into the air above me.

I was reading just at the parting of Elissa and Lucifer—

LUCIFER. Now let us part or I shall die of wrath,  
Be my estrangement perfect as my love.

ELISSA. Part then.

LUCIFER. Thank God, it is for eternity.

ELISSA. I do; away!

LUCIFER. Festus, I wait for thee.

FESTUS. Come, thou art not the first deceived in love.  
Yet love is not so much love as a dream  
Which hath it seems like guerdon with the thing—  
The staring madness when we wake and find  
That what we have loved, must love, is not that  
We meant to love.

Plash! a trout jumped! I was on my feet

in an instant, and the gray fly on my line went dancing over the ripples. A leap—I had him. He pulled gallantly—straight down the stream with fifteen fathoms of line before I could turn him. Then up again like a flash. I used my reel, but had to give him twenty fathoms as he went up. Then he turned and dashed under a bank, where he lay till I teased him out. Up stream again! and now I gave him line and followed, for the water was not so deep above. So we struggled for fifteen minutes, when at last I drowned him, and landed him—a good three pounder. Rather small to have given me so much trouble, but I had a light rod, and could not trust it. He was grand for breakfast.

## LETTER XXI.

### THE RAIL-ROAD AND THE GRAVE-YARD.

SARATOGA, Aug. 24th, 1847.

As you perceive, I date again from the head quarters of all that is gay. Never mind why I am here. If you should guess that I came back for the same reasons I was here before, you wouldn't be far from guessing right. It is stiller than it was; there are decidedly fewer persons here, and water and tables are much more easily got at than they were last week. I looked in at the United States a moment last Saturday, but went back to Ballston again the same evening. I'll tell you how it was.

By the kindness of a friend we had a horse car placed at our service after the last train up in the afternoon, and with a pleasant load of laughers we started for Saratoga. Our horse being a *rail-road animal*,

we made a little better time than the locomotives usually do, and our car (the superintendent's rubble-car with which he drives over and examines the road), was just the thing for comfortable talking and laughing.

"I shall ask you to bring back two passengers with you when you return," said the agent,— "a workman and his wife who missed the last train down." "Certainly," said we, our car being "capacious of all things," as Sheridan (wasn't it?) said of Hyder Ali's mind. But we didn't bargain for the rest of the man's family. The moon was eminently beautiful as we left Saratoga with the merriest, happiest load you could imagine, and for *forward deck* passengers, the family aforesaid, including three genuine young Hibernians, who were practising apparently the various intonations of "Faugh-a-ballah." They kept it up deliciously. The boy I pitied extremely, and at length Miss T——'s sympathy became so great, that she seized the little fellow and

placed him on the seat between her and myself, and there he was for a time more contented, with his head lying against her arm. (If I was only a younger man now, I would add something about any one being contented in such a position. But I dare not.)

“W——, do you remember the twilight at S——the other day? Was it not much like this?” “It was, in truth, beautiful in the ——” “Bah—ah—ah” from the Hibernian number three, with “Bu——hu—hu” from number two, and an occasional ejaculatory sob from number one between Miss T. and myself.

“Mrs. H——, will you not sing that beautiful thing I heard you singing this morning?” “Certainly, Mr. Willis. What was it that you mean?” “I don’t know the name of it, it was a plaintive air, that I have heard years ago, I am sure; perhaps when I was in college. At least, it reminded me of those days.” “A plaintive air? Reminded

you of college days? What could it have been? Ah, yes! I remember." Attention all, while Mrs. H——, in a bird-like voice with a saddened face, begins: "Come, landlord fill, &c." The allusion to Joe's college life is palpable, and before the first line is finished a burst of merriment, in which Willis joins heartily, interrupted the singer.

"Mr. W——, you are still. What's the matter?" "Giving all my attention to this animal, madam. I'm afraid he'll have us off the track, or that this frightful velocity will end in a snake head." "Apropos of snake heads, W——, please sing Springfield Mountain." "Your will is my law, my dear M——, and I have the call after the song." "Of course."

Your humble servant therefore sings the celebrated "Pison Sarpent" song, and calls on Miss B—— for "Oh, promise me to sing, love,"—which was sung in a sweet voice and beautifully (accompaniment on the bagpipes by Miss T——'s protégé, and two

exquisite trebles from Numbers two and three; the trill on the repeat "O——o——o——oh promise, &c." being timed by the number of spike heads we passed over in the strap rail, and the song being stopped by a loud laugh from the whole company, led off by the fair singer herself.)

"Mrs. H——, *will* you not sing me that song?" "Anything to oblige you, Mr. Willis. But it can't be a song you heard years ago, unless, as I have suspected myself, the air is an old one;" and Mrs. H—— sang. "Are we almost there?" So pleasantly we rode along, and, stopping for awhile at the Ellis Spring to drink, passed forest and farm and reached Ballston at no late hour.

On Sunday we attended the Presbyterian church in Ballston. The congregation is a fine-looking one, composed of visitors, villagers, and farmers from the country around. They come on foot, in carriages, wagons, and occasionally a gentlemen and lady on

horseback. The attention in church is eminently solemn ; the men, one and all, fixing their eyes on the pulpit, and appearing to lose not a word of the sermon. After church in the afternoon, I walked up to the graveyard with a friend from the city, who was many years ago the pastor of this church. He went to look up numbers of his congregation whom he had missed from their pews. He found most of them—in the solemn congregation of the dead.

Among the graves were many of those who died while seeking from these waters the life that was ebbing away. Some from far lands sleep the long sleep on this hill ; many who were eminent in their day whose graves are now forgotten. Here was the bed of an old man who was weary and glad to rest. As I entered the yard I observed a mother leaning over a grave which I knew to be that of her son, and at length kneeling beside it with her head bowed over it. Poor woman ! She was praying for the peace of his soul.

“Here,” said my reverend companion, “Here is one whom I remember. Her’s was a troubled pilgrimage. ‘After life’s fitful fever she sleeps well.’ Here is another. He was a proud man—” and I heard him in a low tone quoting the Roman Flaccus, “Mors equo pede, &c.” “This is the grave of——. I was with her when she died. It was a startling incident. She was sick, dying with consumption, and earnestly wished to make a public profession of faith in the Savior, and to partake of the communion. At length I took some members of my session with me to see her, and we examined and admitted her to the church. I made a public announcement of it at her request from the pulpit the next Sabbath, and proposed, if she still insisted on it, to administer the Sacrament of the Supper by her bedside during the next week. That evening I visited her and sat down by her side. She had a large black eye, full of light; *a speaking eye*, by which I knew her thoughts when

she could with difficulty articulate words. She looked up at me as I took my seat, and fixed her eyes on mine as she always did, and listened with an intent look of interest until I ceased speaking. She was dead! How long I had been speaking to the ear of death, neither I nor any who were present knew. There had been no sigh, no motion of hand or lip or eye—she was calmly and placidly dead.”

With such converse as this we passed an hour in the church-yard (I like that phrase “church-yard”), and read over the marbles. It is a pleasant walk on a Sunday afternoon, in a village grave-yard. There is something in my mind peculiarly pleasant in having the grave-yard near the church, so that every sabbath-day the congregation all meet, the living and the dead, in the presence of God. And then at noon, the farmers with their families, who have brought their dinners, to stay until afternoon service, walk out into the burying-ground, and, sitting down on graves, talk of the dead, and tell their chil-

dren stories of their own far gone but forgotten childhood. And you may see some sitting with tear-dimmed eyes. Holy tears are those! Next in holiness, I think, to tears of penitence. They come into the place of graves, mothers and sisters (sometimes fathers and brothers, but not so often), and bowing their heads over the dust of the beloved, weep because the dead are separate from them; but then remembering how the minister, when he laid them down in the ground, lifted his hat from his head and said in solemn tones, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," they look up into one another's faces somewhat more cheerfully, and then pulling the weeds and dead grass from the sod, turn back to their seats by the window in the old church, where they can look out at the stone whose record they know all by heart, and listen to the afternoon service with earnest attention. Then they ride home in their long wagons,

all the family together, better and wiser than they were in the morning, as well for the teachings of the grave as for the words of the clergyman.

I cannot express to you how much these scenes of my long gone boyhood affect me now. I am a child again on a Sunday morning in the country. I walk reverently to the church, and listen to the village choir, and remember. What a depth there is in that word *remember!*

I think of my own changed person; my bent body, my cheeks already marked with life's lines. I remember the careless, thoughtless, happy boy, I knew myself to be, and when I compare that boy with the man, schooled to hypocrisy, well learned in the lessons of life, I may well grow sad. There are other and more sorrowful thoughts. The time between that childhood and the present is filled with the experience of *living*. It took me just as long as it takes every one, to learn that there were others in the world beside myself who

were hypocrites, and just as long after that, to learn that after all it was a pleasant world, and full of happiness and truth, for all who would look on the bright side of it. You, at least, will give me credit for extracting as much of the good out of it, for enjoying it as keenly, and quarreling with it as little, as most persons. I sat in that church last Sunday, and was sad as I thought of one I once sat there with. We rode together from Saratoga to Ballston to church one bright morning long ago. She has passed hence to holier Sabbaths! I saw her coffined.

“Thy lip was ruddy and calm, Lassie,  
 Thy lip was ruddy and calm,  
 But gone was the holy breath of Heaven  
 That sang the evening psalm.”

## LETTER XXII.

### FACES.

U. S. HOTEL, SARATOGA, August 25th.

AMONG the thousand visitors here, it would be strange if there were not some marked characters, whose very faces bear the impress of a life of strange experience. Such a person I passed on the piazza last evening, and meeting him repeatedly in my walk, a companion who was leaning on my arm at length observed that his face indicated a life of thoughtlessness, and yet there was in his appearance an evidence of some *one* great sorrow. "Not more than one, I should think," continued my friend. "There is always a different look on the face of a person broken down by some pre-eminent grief, from that expression which indicates a life of trial. That man has been a dissipated man, a *roue* in every sense of the word; and yet see how sedately he

walks now ; how appealingly he looks to every face he meets, as if at last he had learned the necessity of sympathy."

"You are right," said Willis, joining us at the moment ; "I have just heard his history from one who knows it. He is young, and yet old. His body is young, but his soul is weighed down with years that only became heavy in a single instant of agony." "How was it, Mr. Willis ? Will you not tell me ?" "Assuredly, Madam. It is a short history. He is a native of Louisiana, wealthy, and of good family. He plunged into all manner of dissipation, from which he was rescued by a lady whom he then loved better than his companions, and who married him. But two years passed, and he was deeper than before in drunkenness, gambling, and all the means of destruction which New Orleans affords. His beautiful wife was treated with coldness, contempt, and final cruelty. She pined away under such treatment, until one evening when she begged

him not to leave her bed-side, for she felt that death was near, he, in his insanity, called her by names more opprobrious than he had ever before used, and with an oath left her. An hour later, while he was in the drinking room of the — Hotel, already drunk, a messenger came to tell him that his wife was dead. From that hour to this he has been a sober man. He never knew till then how well he loved her; and now he cannot forget her nor his last words to her." "He will remember those words in the judgment morning!" said my companion, with an earnestness which startled me.

This is here, as elsewhere, the most interesting as well as profitable amusement of the day or evening, the study of physiognomy, the reading of life-histories on faces. A little experience prevents the possibility of mistake. The language is one easily learned; the imprint is legible, and the imprimatur is from God; so that the book is

always to be depended upon as just what it professes to be, a record of the soul. Even as we were looking at that world-worn man, he raised his hat from his head, and bowed low to a lady who came out from the drawing-room to the piazza, and joining her in her promenade, seemed to be the mere polished gentleman, who had for a time thrown aside his business to talk and while away a week at the Springs. But as he passed me, I could see underneath that smile a sneer, that I am sure was the effect of a comparison of his companion with his buried wife.

That companion was a confirmed belle. Every step was by rule; her smile *heavy* (a settled smile), her voice clear and musical, but toned according to the occasion. Perhaps she knew that her companion was a widower, worth half a million. Whatever she knew, I saw that he knew her. His smile flitted across his face, now bright, now calm, now verging into an actual laugh, and again settling into that cool, mocking sneer.

And I compared the two, while Willis relieved me of my companion, and leaning against a pillar thought of the difference between them. The one was an old man in his youth, and like a noble vessel, dismasted and rudderless from one wild storm, was drifting heedlessly to destruction. The other was a strange compound of thoughtful thoughtlessness. There is no paradox in that expression. Many an hour of every day she passed in deep reflection, on the progress she had made the day before, or the probable success of plans for to-day. Even while I was looking at her she was flinging idle words to the wind, yet deeply pondering all that time on the effect those words were producing. Both of them were talking of one thing, and thinking of another. She, as I have said, talking words that had effect on the air and nowhere else, yet wondering how deeply they sank into the heart of her companion, which heart, she little dreamed, was adamant now; while he, carelessly ut-

tering sentences of vague meaning, thought and cared nothing for them after they had left his lips, but was dreaming a long day dream of the wealth of love he had squandered, and perhaps longing for another life to fill with that same holy affection the coffers of his impoverished soul.

Other characters entered the scene as I stood there; the dandy who would be a drinking man and a *roue*, if it were not that he has no brains to be stolen away by "putting the thief into his mouth." The sedate, gentlemanly citizen, whose family are out in the carriage while he amuses himself with his cigar on the colonnade; the lawyer who has exerted himself in the chancellor's Court, and is now cooling his bare head in the evening breeze; the returned soldier, between two ladies who are determined to extract from him, what he seems equally determined to conceal (perhaps from a true sense of modesty), the story of Buena Vista or Cerro Gordo.

But let us return to the piazza. Perhaps no position in the United States (I mean *the country* not this Hotel), could be selected, so well adapted to the employment I am now speaking of, as the one which we have taken by this pillar. Here comes a party up the steps, returning from their ride. They are the family of the citizen before named. The mother is a fair specimen of the dignified matron, the mistress of a fine establishment. Her daughter is a black eyed, merry girl of seventeen, full of life and fond of fun. You see it sparkling in her eye now, as she declines the proffered assistance of that good-looking fellow who stands by the barouche door. There is something of childishness and innocence in her ways, but far more maturity than seventeen summers should have developed. Why is it? Because city children grow old faster than they do in the country. There is a daily experience there, which initiates the young mind in the world (so called) with frightful

rapidity. The "fair and happy milk maid," or even a village girl, knows nothing of this. That happy face has been already in the saloons of New York by winter, and has become familiar to Saratoga visitors in summer. The world, to her, is "the city and the springs." Her brother by her side, is an undergraduate in one of our Eastern colleges. A pleasant, warm-hearted sophomore. He strolls around here, amusing himself, and the favorite of all that know him. Observe the smiles and bows that greet him as he approaches us. There was something strangely formal in the manner in which he took off his hat to that elderly gentleman standing with his back toward us, talking with that pale-faced man. If you could see the face which belongs to that well-shaped head, I will answer for it you would recognise the President of A——. "Who is the pale man he is talking with?" I can't tell you, there are several such men here, and I like to look on those men better than any others in the town.

They are the men that live for immortality. They are seekers after no bauble. What do they here? They are worn with study, and the toil that wastes the body while it feeds the soul. They have been kneeling long by the fountain of knowledge, and now seek waters for bodily health, while for a little they let the spiritual rest. Some of them are passing away very fast. Yet death to such is not an unwelcome visitor. He opens a door to deeper, loftier study—They look to Heaven! No midnight lamp there! No weary poring over musty books; no crucible or alembic. Liberty, large souled liberty, and study by the light of God's presence everywhere! The fountain of knowledge flows not far from the waters of the river of life. 3

Did it never strike you as strange, that while the professed object of visitors at the Springs is to regain *health*, they so seldom think of death; the death so many of them are shunning? It would seem as if among a

crowd of thousands who are here to strengthen their hold on life, and beat off the attacks of disease, some preachers would be found every day standing by the Congress, and crying aloud to the throng. But I beg you'll not mistake me for one. I know I'm given to preaching occasionally, and can only beg pardon, and step out of the pulpit I have no right to be in.

Willis has passed us some half dozen times with his fair armful, and appears now to be calling her attention to a boy who is selling candy or peaches to a gentleman on the steps. The contrast between the seller's rags and the buyer's exquisite dress, is noticeable. But it bears no comparison with a contrast I saw a few weeks ago in your city. I was walking in South-street, and met a man and woman. She was tall, and had you met her in a palace, you would have said she was queenly. But such an expression of desolation I never saw on human faces as was on those two. He had

his arm around her, as if to support her feeble steps (remembering, perhaps, how he once supported them when they were young and strong, in dear old Ireland), but he was too weak with starvation, and so they tottered along side by side, toward the grave. They did not look up for any sound, but fixing their eyes on the stones of the pavement, which they thought, I doubt not, not half so hard as the hearts of men, they walked on. I cannot forget that look of settled agony! No smile, no shadow, no evidence of *thought* passed over their countenances, which were marbled into despair. I thought of that home across the water, the girlhood of that woman; their happy, holy love, their hopes and joys. They lived long together in Ireland. Then came the change. The crops failed, the rent was due, and they barely paid it, and had enough to come across the ocean. Then there was the long, long crossing of the sea. The children died one by one, till the youngest, her bright boy,

was let down into the deep water, and she was desolate ! I cannot pretend to sum up the volume I read in the instant that I was passing them in the street ; and almost the next man I met was one whom I knew as a millionaire. Was not the contrast fearful ? Those two wanderers have long ere this been buried in the pauper's grave. Death was in their faces ! those faces that left such an impression on my mind that I am thinking and writing of them here among the gay scenes of Saratoga.

## LETTER XXIII.

### THE COTTAGE.

U. S. HOTEL, SARATOGA, Aug. 28th.

“How do we manage to kill the time here,” did you ask? Reasonably well. Our company is far from a dull one, and the day passed in riding or walking furnishes material for a pleasant evening, when we collect our small forces in the corner of the parlor, and talk the hours away. They fly swiftly enough, I assure you. We have a sort of understanding that it is the duty of each one to seize on every anecdote, and especially every local incident he or she can find, for the benefit of the company. We have by this means amassed a quantity of matter in the way of legends and stories of Saratoga and its neighborhood, sufficient to stock a volume. I very much fear to weary you with any of these, for my letters have al-

ready proved too dull for Saratoga correspondence. But I will trust to your excellent judgment, my most sagacious friend, to read or not as may seem best to you ; and so I will let my pen run on.

Has it struck you that every good story you ever came across, whether truth or fiction, was a love-story ? I hesitate when about to write out a legend or a tale of life, lest some crusty reader shall exclaim with a sneer, "Pshaw ! a love-story ;" and throw the paper down. But I argue with myself that such readers are worthless. I pity the man who finds only nonsense or (what he esteems its equivalent) romance in the true history of an affection. He is lost to the finer feelings of the nature God gave him. Something has seared his heart, making it callous where it should be most sensitive. For myself I rejoice when I meet with or hear of such a love. I rejoice that something of Eden is left on earth ; that a gleam of heaven does fall through a rift in the

clouds of sensuality which darken our sky. That a smile of God is here and there to be met with on my pathway, and though I may have done with sunning myself in such smiles, I can remember when I did, and would to God others older than I would remember days when they loved.

In one of the pleasantest rides we have had about Saratoga, we found one day a cottage whose appearance, under a noble elm, and by the side of a brook whose prattling was for ever musical, led me instantly to suppose that it was worth visiting; more especially as it was evidently very old, and had about it the look of the eighteenth century. I took a couple of hours the other day to visit it, and having made up my mind that it had a story connected with it, I questioned the old man whom I found in it so closely, that I at length gathered a tale of the life of man, that I thought well worth repeating to the *coterie* aforesaid, and which may be worth writing here.

The widow Johnson occupied that cottage sixty-five years ago, and with her lived her son, a noble boy of fifteen, who was the pride of the country around. None was so well beloved as he, except his adopted sister Kate Harden. She was indeed a fairy. Her golden hair seemed to be akin to the winds on which it floated so freely, and her eyes had won their deep hue from the sky into which she was so often found gazing. "Why gazed she thus?" She had a mother beyond the blue above her! A mother who dying had left her to the care of Mrs. Johnson, and until her voice failed, charged her to meet her in Heaven. Nay, after she had ceased to speak, she held her daughter to her breast with her left arm, and pointing up with her thin, white finger, smiled a holy smile, and sought her home.

Mrs. Johnson was not rich in the world's goods. The few acres which she rented afforded a mere subsistence, and Kate and Edward assisted her in her labors. It was

not strange that those two children, when the one was sixteen and the other was seventeen, should love one another. Kate was a strange child. They said she talked with those whom others could not see—and I do not doubt it. I have no doubt she held high communion with her sainted mother. At all events her voice fell on her ear in dreams of day as well as of night, until she could no longer resist its earnest call.

She faded. One by one the bonds that held her to her cottage home were loosened; one by one her gay girlish affections were mastered and suppressed until one only remained, and then she was ready. That one love was the mightiest of all. She did not crush that, for she was thoughtful enough to know that *that* might live when death was passed; for there are affections strong enough to reach from earth to heaven.

The morning of her departure came, with its sweet spring flowers and atmosphere laden with the odors of the country. All things seemed to be strangely solemn. The

sun peered curiously in at the little lattice, and fell across the foot of the bed on which the slender form of the dying girl lay. Her bird sang doubtfully in its cage, and the very cat by the hearth looked up and seemed to feel that there was something sad going on.

The moment of agony at length came. She had parted with all but him, and now she held his hand between her two, and smiled on his pale face (as pale as hers), and spoke in a low sweet tone of all the past and future. "You will miss me when you go after the cow in the evening, Ned, and the lane will be lonely, will it not? And when you sit down here by the hearth with mother, and my chair is empty—you'll miss me then too, brother. You'll sit at the table with her, and have no one at the side of it;" and her voice, broken and faint as it was, fell to a lower tone as she continued. "Go out in the twilight sometimes, Ned, and sit down under the tree by the spring

on the red seat. I'll come there if I can." A moment passed in silence as he leaned over toward her; then suddenly throwing her arms around his neck she said, "I love you, love you, love you, brother Ned;" and drawing his head down, pressed her lips to his, in the last long kiss of life, and laying his cheek close against hers, smiled a smile of serene and joyful hope, and—— Kate was an angel!

"Is that all your story?" did you ask? Not by considerable, my dear friend. There's more love to come yet. "What! another love after his promised tryst with Kate on the green bank yonder by the spring?" Yes, another; but not such a one as you imagine. Don't you suppose a man can love anything else but a woman a year or two his junior? Remember that Edward has a mother, and now be patient, and I'll tell you what became of her.

Mrs. Johnson and Ned had a lonely life after they had laid their darling Kate in the

graveyard over by the churches at Milton ; and as misfortunes are said to come in crowds, so in their case. That very year the crops failed, the cow died, and a dozen other troubles followed ; and the result was, that Mrs. J. gave up the cottage and accepted the offer of a home with a kind neighbor, while Edward was to “go and seek his fortune.”

He went to New York, to a brother of his father, who was a sea captain, and who took him across the Atlantic. After his first voyage and two years' absence from home, he returned to his mother's side, “and,” said the old man, my informant, “I saw him the first night he was at home, sitting under the elm tree out there where you see that green bank, and I heard that before dark that afternoon he had been over to the churches and the grave-yard.”

A few days only, and he left home again. His mother, gladdened by his return, was, nevertheless, much more reluctant to have

him go than when he first went. This reluctance increased as the day approached. Then she begged him, if it were possible, to stay with her; but he had promised his uncle, and would not forfeit his word, nor would she have him. "I shall see you again, soon,—very soon mother. Why do you feel so badly? This voyage is not to be a long one, and if my uncle does all he promises, I will buy you the cottage when I come back. We shall meet again, very soon, mother." We shall meet again, when your father and you, and Kate and I meet yonder, my son," said the mother. "Why mother! What makes you speak so? It will not be a year before I shall kiss you, standing just here." "Never again, my son. I know that this will be the last kiss your lips will press on mine until the Resurrection."

And so that mother and son parted. They met again five years ago in heaven; not till then. He was older than she, as we count years here on earth, and his hair silvered and

thin, when he lay down to die among the sounds of the mighty metropolis. Every year, year after year, a pilgrim came in the early spring when the first flowers bloomed, and stayed for a few days in the cottage here. The afternoons he used to pass in the graveyard, but the twilight always found him seated on the bank by the spring. He grew rich until his coffers overflowed. He bought the cottage, but did not come to live in it. He seemed to have conceived an attachment for business and the city. His annual pilgrimage was the only relief he had from his counting room. He grew old, older, until he carried the weight of three score years and ten to keep that solemn tryst of his boyhood. One winter day he had been too unwell to go from his lordly mansion, and as evening came on, he lay on his bed and looked into the grate, listening to the roar of carriages in the street without. A young man from his office entered and conversed with him in regard to the day's business,

and left him lying thus alone. He had sent his housekeeper and servants out himself.

Who shall say what were the thoughts that filled the mind of the weary old man that night, or what communion he had with the past—the far, but unforgotten past! Did he hear the wind rustling the leaves of the old elm tree? Did the gurgle of the springs, the fall of the brook, the song of the birds, fill his ear with their old music? Did his mother's hand press coolly on his forehead, and her voice woo him to sleep with one of her old mountain songs? What fairy form was that? Did his angel Kate hover around his bed, and did her lips press his, and was her kiss now on his brow? Were those her arms around his neck once more in the embrace of girlhood, and was that melodious voice hers again murmuring in his ear,—“I love you, love you, love you, brother Ned? And did her cheek, her velvet cheek, lie warmly close to his, and did she draw him

closer, closer to her in that holy clasp,  
and was all this a dream of earth, or was  
it Heaven ?

It was Heaven, for he was there.

## NOTE.

This volume has been printed during the absence of its author from the city, and has not had the benefit of a careful revision in the proof. Before it reached the hands of the binder, the sheets were submitted to him and among many unimportant errors he has detected the following, which he deems it necessary to correct.

<i>Page</i>	<i>21,</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>2d</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>Jeen</i>	<i>read,</i>	<i>Jean.</i>
	<i>27,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5th</i>		<i>cælum</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>sæclum.</i>
	<i>91,</i>	<i>last line but one</i>			<i>into</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>in.</i>
	<i>95,</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>4th</i>		<i>dellicious</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>delicious.</i>
	<i>101,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>14th</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>taffrel</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>taffrail.</i>
	<i>103,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>7th</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>reached</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>reaches.</i>
	<i>129,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>8th</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>week</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>wreck.</i>