

A JACK-OAK STRUCTURE.

Life on a Backwoods Farm

OR

THE BOYHOOD OF
REUBEN RODNEY BLANNERHASSETT

BY

WILLIAM RILEY HALSTEAD

REUBEN RODNEY BLANNERHASSETT



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PREFACE.

THIS book is in no sense personal history. Its intent is to be true to life, rather than fact. The imagination is at play, therefore; but not as in works of morbid sensational fiction. It is the more wholesome imagination possessed by the plowman, and the well-digger, and the blacksmith, and the uncultured huntsman.

The author, of necessity, leaves the merits of the volume to the estimate to be placed upon it by its readers; but he may safely say of it, that it is not imitative. There is no other book like it. Its method is its own; but as to that, the author has thoroughly tested it in public utterance, and he trusts it will not fail him in the printed page.

As it is not a learned book, the scholars will have no recognition. It is not a novel. It is not a story. There is no attempt at coherence of time or place. It is incident without a plot—a simple medley of country tales. Rodney is, at least, not an impossible boy. The tales he spins are supposed to be a few of the things that touched his life to make him what he was—manly, strong, honest—and they are the things that touch every life. The waves of little events are thrown up against a boy's spirit, and he tells you how he felt and what he thought about them. The contention is, that everything has significance to the character. Please do not ask of the things you find recorded here, "Did that happen?" but ask, "*Could* that happen? and would it have the consequences put down to it?"

The artificial and the formal are abolished, and we have gone out in the sun and open air, among men and women who are strangers to the delicacies of refined living, who are yet rough and uncouth with the hardships of toil, but who are intensely active, who have never regretted being born, and who have never

thought of apologizing for the presumption of being in the world.

The output of American literature to this time has hardly been true to the American spirit and American conditions. To the extent that we write books like they do in Germany, or as we imitate the classics, we shall belong to the ancient school, and possess nothing on our own account. We shall be devoid of origination. The traditional in literature has certainly been sufficiently magnified. The power of the masters of the great past might well now become less, while we give a little more time and interest to that which is natural to us. Our literary plant will not abide unless it be indigenous to the soil. The better literary material for any people is not an import. Charles Dickens taught the English-speaking world that there is a never-ending supply of it in the manners and habits and lives of the common people.

In the preparation of this work the author has felt as if he were hacking a narrow roadway through a vast forest. It may be the road will get the forest settled.

WILLIAM RILEY HALSTEAD.

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA.



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LIFE ON A BACKWOODS FARM.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND COUNTRY LIFE.

“Away away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness,
Where the soul need not repress
Its music, lest it should not find
An echo in another’s mind,
While the touch of nature’s art
Harmonizes heart to heart.” —SHELLEY.

MY name is Reuben Rodney Blannerhassett. I tell you that now, so you will know who I am. And I want to say a thing or two before I begin. I doubt if the world has ever made due estimate of the earlier years of the personal life. Some one has said that the character is usually fixed at twelve. After this, it is

true, there are remarkable changes and transformations; but by this time the formative work has been largely done. I believe this position to be sound, so this record will close before I am grown. I shall not tell you of greatness, but of boyhood. That is all. That is enough. I have no deep-laid purpose to afflict you with any special theories of life, or of religion, or of politics. I shall hide nothing, extenuate nothing, and when I get through I will stop.

The little incidents of childhood are among the greatest of all events in the formation of the character. The child mind and heart are unreservedly open and receptive to all influences. It has but small capacity to shut down the gates against anything. Impressions are received as they come. All things are realistic. Early experiences are more completely thrown into one's being. They are the larger forces in making us what we are. The past is not gone. It is present, and is being reproduced with each successive moment. It is a law of the physical world that nothing is lost. All forces are conserved. If the events of childhood were only memories, they would be no more than idle tales, fit only to amuse and entertain. They are present realities. Each small event leaves its impress and becomes a part of the character.

The essence and the meaning of things we possess to-day. We can not escape the least incident; and we are either wiser or worse because of it. It speaks to the world in whatever it has helped to make us. That an influence is small, does not signify that it is not real.

It is with man as with nature. The chemistries of the soil and the sky are carried up into the plant, and are not lost but reproduced. The vegetable mold, with its forces and laws, is reproduced in the animal kingdom. So the animal life is reproduced in man, and enthroned with reason. The human spirit is a reservoir of storages and reproductions. The personal present is simply the full expression of the past. What we are to-day is a recapitulation of what we have gone over and known. Why should we have memory? Why should we linger over the past? Why do we like to think of childhood joys and sorrows? Why do we cherish the simple days when we put our little faces between our mother's knees and cried our discontent into refreshment? Why do we linger in delight over the barefooted tramps, the journeys to kinsfolk, and the school-day sports? Because the whole of all that was ever real of this is stored in us.

These things are a part of ourselves. We

can not escape them. They have had vitally to do in making us what we are. The flying years give us a sight of ourselves; and we see what they have done. An old man delights to entertain you with his childhood; and in so doing, he is simply bringing the record up to date. The fulfillment of more than he will ever tell you is there before you. So the past, not in its incidental and surface form, but in its essential value, is being constantly restored and reproduced. God finally weaves all the raveled ends into the fabric. The time of the restitution of all things is now.

You start up a mountain road. The first day the flowers are in bloom at the base. The next day the sun brings out the same bloom on the next altitude, and the next the same; and after you have reached the summit, and look back, a great scene is before you. But more than this, that journey has become permanently a part of you. The road, the flowers, the rugged rocks, the cascades, the trees, the cloud-burst, with every vision of your eye,—all this has become a part of you never to be effaced. That picture, finer than human artist could furnish for a mint of gold, is yours forever. You return to the valley, you cross the seas, you live half a century, but that mountain scene, sunshine and

all, has been ineffaceably placed on the canvas of your soul. That mountain did not absorb you; you absorbed the mountain. It will add richness to your spirit in eternity. In this way we take up and retain the essence of things, great and small, as we go. This is not because we will, but whether we will or no. It is not a question of preference. This law of human life would be fearful indeed were it not for the fact that the human personality is greater than all events. They shall not take the personality up into themselves. Time shall not, death shall not, eternity shall not; for the personality shall survive eternity. Only it will be influenced in one way or another by all its events, either in time or in eternity.

It is in this sense that the records of my boyhood days are not trivial affairs; because they are the things that have entered my life. They are the lessons God and nature and childhood brought me. Only in the smallest degree am I responsible for them. God himself would not deal justly with me if he did not take these things into the final adjudication.

Fifty years in this country measures a swift progress from savage wildness in a wilderness to the highest forms of civilization and culture.

Within this limit, the uncouth and hard-handed pioneer has given way to the dweller in a palace. To children now accustomed to our delicate ways of living, the experiences of our older people are like myths. They wonder how such things could have been. What wildness then, what freedom of spirit, what brusque independence of character, born of the solitariness of sparse populations and of a single-handed struggle with nature.

The heroic element, then, had larger cultivation in the excitements of the chase, in Indian wars, and in the absence of many of the wholesome civil regulations which now settle disputed questions between man and man. But is it not true that the thousand and one forces that influenced the human spirit in this semi-civilized state, contributed in a very significant way to the development of the stronger features of the American character? Are not the destinies usually settled for a race before it comes into real refinement? Refinement has its luxuries and its advantages, and it has its enervations also. The personal life in any pioneer time is usually a case of the survival of the fittest. When houses are poor, and clothing is scant, and food is of little variety and ill-prepared, the chances are against any born child coming to maturity.

Those who do make the riffle are likely to possess remarkable force and vigor. On the other hand, crowded populations hamper the spirit. They afford fewer chances for original growth. The city produces men. The country produces a man. But the child needs for companionship something more than human beings about it. It needs the fields, and trees, and rocks, and rivers, and birds, and animals tame and wild. The growing mind needs time and a chance to vegetate. The body needs free air for expansion. The typical New Yorker to-day is nearly an eighth smaller than the Middle Western State man. He is brighter mentally, but not so strong. The poverty and the hardships of a primitive country life are not calamities in the long run.

The Jacksons and the Lincolns and the Garfields and the Grants grew up under conditions greatly deflected from modern childhood; yet they survived all hindrances and disgraces, and came to significance. They came out of them in the sense that these limitations of opportunity were the making of their spirits. They grew out of them in the sense that we may not see their like again in manly force and greatness.

The contributions of country life to national progress is one of the significant lessons of the

time. The gift of leaders from the rural regions has been of inestimable value to the Nation. Rough-handed countrymen led in the War of the Revolution and in placing the foundations of the Republic. Washington and Adams and Jefferson were country born. Andrew Jackson loved the Hermitage more than any other place, because it expressed the conditions and the best forces of his child-life, and added to them all the more desirable advantages of country living.

Cities to-day, as compared with the country, hold primacy of influence, but they do it through fresh infusions from country blood. The advantages to child-life in the country, as compared with the city, are very greatly superior. To have been a country bumpkin is a great investment. Not in polish, not in culture as we ordinarily understand it; not in the fineries of life, but in the broad acquisitions of physical and intellectual brawn, and in the higher moral and spiritual possibilities which (God and nature can put into a man when they have him to themselves during the years of his childhood.) A boy does not grow by being put into a stretcher. Furnish him good victuals, and he will look after that thing himself. The greatest and most virile forces in the personal character are not ground in by human attrition. They grow;

and for such growths there must be time for rumination. When you tell a boy to "go to grass," you advise one of the greatest things for his spirit. (A boy follows not lines of thought, but lines of life.) He is engaged not in mental but in heart questioning, and he gets answers that he knows not of, and will not until he reaches the celestial kingdom. A thousand unsuspected voices in the country call the soul to the companionship of spiritual things. The waters, the teeming soil, the dew, the rainfall, the storm-cloud and the lightning, the hushed breathing of all life, the cherishing warmth of the rising sun, the cold Platonic friendship of the stars,—these forbid idolatry. They do not invite worship of themselves. They lead to life, and to sympathy, and to God.



CHAPTER II.

I WAS BORN.

"Up! up, my friend! and quit your books,
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up, my friend! and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?
One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can." —WORDSWORTH.

DID you ever smell newly-plowed ground? Pity for the nostrils that never caught the aroma of such a field! Did you ever taste the breath of a May morning as you waded in the grass till you were wet to your neck? Were you ever in the open and fruitful fields at day-break in the summer-time, and to remain there till dark, to see just how long a day in the country is? You city folks, you get up so late, you do not know how early the sun rises to kiss the

brow of the morning, and to clothe his child the day, and get it ready for its work. Sunrise in the country sets the throats of the songsters to going; and takes the covering of the night from the flowers; and has everything ready for your admiration long before you are awake. There is a breath of lengthened life each morning between daylight and sun-up, but it never comes indoors. It was never known to break a lock, or blow out a smudging night-lamp, or pull a blanket from the nose of a drowsy sleeper.

Did you ever walk through the fields and pluck clover-blossoms for your mouth; and did you ever find a honey-bee in the meshes? Did you ever swim in the creek until your back was blistered in the sun? Did you ever eat persimmons before frost? Did you ever get as many black haws as you could eat? Did you ever bet six tobacco marbles with your neighbor's second boy that you could eat more green apples than he could—worms and all? Did you ever follow an A harrow all day barefooted, with a stone-bruise on your heel? Did you ever have to hold a skein of yarn while your grandmother wound it off of you on to the ball? Did you ever have to go to bed while you had your pants patched? Did you ever wear just one suspender one whole summer? Did you ever try to drive

thirteen pigs out of a cornfield when they did not want to go? Did you ever hive bumble-bees in a jug? Did you ever plug up the hole in a hornet's nest with a corn-cob? If you never did, you do n't know very much about life in the backwoods.

I wonder that I did not die when I was a baby. I never expected to live to be a man; but now, since I am through with it, things do not seem so bad. There is, after all, an element of delightfulness about hardship, but only after you get by it for a time. This is so, I suppose, because the higher reason of it does not appear while passing through it. In the midst of hardship or sorrow, we are too close to understand. After ten or twenty years we see things in perspective. We have no place for sorrows while we are in them; but they pass by and we remain; and God shows them to us afterwards in such splendid relief that we not unwillingly read into them our life lessons. We endure the stints of poverty, we suffer and groan and weep, and afterwards laughter breaks through our tears.

I was born on a bleak, blustery night in March, in the year eighteen hundred and——no

matter when. I have no personal recollection of the event, anyway. Having certain reasons for beginning thus, I simply vouch for the fact that I was born, and that is sufficient for all the purposes of these narratives. Dates are sometimes embarrassing.

Our cabin stood on a cleared knoll of four acres, just west of a town called Hazelgreen. The prairie skirted us to the south, coming up to the foot of the knoll like the arm of a great sea, and opening to the eye a stretch of vision for more than twenty miles, with only an occasional tree to break the view. There was heavy timber on the east, and also on the west, following the bed of Honey Creek to the Wabash fifteen miles away. To the north, the timber, except an occasional break made by a small clearing, extended forty miles, with only blazed paths, and narrow, rugged roadways through it. It was a wilderness vaster than the prairie south of us. The Indians, as a body, had fled before the approach of the pale face, and had left him in peaceable possession of a heritage of unmeasured riches. It was no uncommon thing, however, for an aged, wandering red-skin to return to these the hunting grounds of his youth, as if it had gone from his memory that the white man had taken it from him; and

he would only appear to come to a realization of the fact when he would approach the cabins and clearings; and then, in a lonesome way, turn into the woods and be gone. What strange beings these old Indians were! How silent and mysterious their movements! They seemed as if they were dying broken-hearted that the richest hunting-grounds they ever knew were wrested from them forever. A lone Indian was known to the settlers to be harmless.

The Delawares were most acquainted with this region, and a number of their older men were rather familiar objects to the settlers. Their returning became finally the occasion of a tragedy. In cold blood four of them were killed in the space of a month; and it provoked threatenings of a general massacre from the Delaware tribe. It was a cowardly deed, evidently perpetrated by some white man for revenge, or from natural hate.

The Delawares were promised full redress, if the guilty party could be found. The settlers finally fixed on a comer from the south, who had furnished them with a two-sided clew against himself. One was the statement that his family had been the victims of Indian treachery; and the other the unwary statement that whenever he saw an Indian, he shut one

eye, and they never met again. This man, John Gleaso, shortly afterward disappeared. What became of him, no one ever knew certainly. It was said by the knowing ones that he was spotted to the Delawares, and they did the rest.

Hazelgreen consisted at first of one shanty, in which lived one man and one woman. These two were the joint owners of a barrel of whisky and a milch-cow. In this family life—or partnership arrangement, I do not know which—the woman managed the whisky, and the man the cow. This sort of division of the labor may have been for the reason that if the man should manage the whisky, he would drink up all the profits. The more satisfactory explanation is, that the woman was the man of the house. This man did chores and small jobs. After a time there was added to this first essential equipment of a trading post in a new country, a small stock of groceries, to supply the little necessities of the settlers.

This re-enforcement of stock was never more than a makeshift—a sort of bait and blind to draw trade to the liquor business. Hazelgreen began as a whisky town, it lived as a whisky town, it died as a whisky town. Whisky selling was always the uppermost business in it.

So it did quite an amount to blast and damn the community.

Our cabin was a jack-oak structure, sixteen by eighteen, with a seven-foot ceiling. It had white-oak chink-timber—the heart pieces of a board tree. It was daubed with yellow clay, mixed without lime; and the mortar was put on in such profuse fashion, that the clay filling the bark of the jack-oak logs gave it a most grotesque appearance. The gables were of like material with the walls, the logs being sloped at the ends, and each one made shorter so as to receive the roof-poles and make the slant. The roof-poles reached the length of the roof, and answered the double purpose of rafter and sheeting to receive the four-foot clapboards. On the top of these boards were laid other roof-poles, withed to those underneath at the ends—this to hold the boards in place. It was a roof made without nails or stroke of hammer. There were two doors, each made of fourteen-inch poplar-plank which had been cut with a whip-saw. Each door was made of two planks, battened and hung on wooden hinges. The memory of those hinges makes my flesh creep to this day. Of all the noises in this time of strange noises, these hinges made the worst. It did not seem to oc-

cur to any one to oil or soap them, and give the community rest from the discordant thing. The fireplace had a base of these jack-oak logs, split in halves, and notched into a frame to hold in place the sandstone rock that made the sides and back-jam of the six-foot fireplace. The chimney was made of lath and mortar. It was made wide, so that one could sit by the fire and look out at the top of the chimney into the top of a tree that stood near. In this fireplace there was ample space for cooking. The fire had to make its own way against the rain, and, of course, the smoke could depart at leisure. This arrangement also answered the purpose of a window in the daytime. The yellow clay mortar on the lath was constantly washing off, and it was a frequent thing for the chimney to take fire and burn down a foot or so before it was discovered. The water-bucket was kept on a bench inside near the door, and a woman could throw water to the top, and put it out.

Our cabin met the conditions of inside and outside harmony. The ashen floor was always clean and white; for my mother was as fit for a palace as for a cabin. The flat rock hearth was not very elegantly laid. In the fireplace was the swinging crane, that, like Pluto, lived in the middle of the flame. There was the great iron

pot in the corner, which was filled at least once a week with ham, or sirloin of venison. In the corner next the fireplace were seven shelves, held by wooden pins in the logs. Over these hung a flax cloth. These shelves held the table outfit—six pewter plates, with as many knives and forks; a wooden tray for bread; a Plymouth Rock meat-dish; a sugar-bowl of china, the priceless heirloom of some high Scotch ancestry, the pedigree to which was lost before I was born; three coffee-cups, with saucers; two ancient silver spoons, and three brass ones. These shelves were made for this table equipment, and nothing else was allowed on them.

In the corner next to the cupboard was a frying-pan, with a handle six feet long. In that long-handled frying-pan was put the venison-steak for breakfast; and as soon as it was made brown and fine over the fire, the steak was turned into the platter; and after that, the same pan received the buckwheat-batter. That is why it is called buckwheat. Buckwheat-cakes, venison-steak, and butter and wild honey! What a breakfast! No table of royalty ever had better.

In another corner of this room was an improvised bedstead, built into the walls by the man who built the house. In the remaining

corner was the only piece of pretentious furniture in the house—a black-walnut store bedstead, with corner posts six by six by seven feet high. This was a spare bed for the stranger within our gates. I remember two things about that bedstead. I was never able to get in it without climbing the corner post, till I was ten years old, and the trundle-bed was underneath, and needed no pulling out. O the memory of those trundle-bed days! How we did sleep then! We really went to sleep! We stayed there till morning! We snored away the nights in sweet oblivion of the world's carking cares. A healthy boy asleep in a trundle-bed, in a cabin, on a winter night, is happiness complete! No period along the long lonesome years will be richer in pleasure. Search for perfect hygienic conditions, and it is there. Ask for a prophecy of greatness in mind or body, and it is there. We now live in palaces. We are wrapped in fine linen. On cushioned couches we lie awake through the long hours of the night, and think, and think, and are unable to lay down the burdens of the day. The floodgates of the mind are open, and they refuse to be closed.

O, my weary soul, comfort yourself in these glorious days of a barefooted paradise, followed

by nights of slumber in the old-fashioned trundle-bed! The world is now running at high pressure. The springs of life are all in tension. This hot and restless age is burning the life out of souls. It puts them under the whip and into the ceaseless grind of destiny. Thousands wish they had never been born. No boy in a trundle-bed ever waked up to wish that. Civilization has its disadvantages.

But as I was about to tell you, on this bleak, howling night in March I came into this world. I had no expectations about that event of course. As well as I remember, the flicker of the fire-light hurt my eyes. The tallow candle was smudging on the shelf. My grandmother was too fussy by half. I had some difficulty with my nose getting it started. And I had an indistinct impression that I had come into a flannelly sort of a world.

My principal nurse was an old maid. This old maid did not understand me at all; and she came very near bringing me to an untimely end. I was wrapped in cushions and feathers so deep I could hardly get my breath. I had on, to start with, two flannel binders and one linen binder full of stickers; and over these a little white shirt, and over this two flannel petticoats, and over all this a dress longer than the

moral law. My lungs would not act. My stomach was so wrapped with the bandages that I threw up everything they poured down me. There was no room inside for anything. I cried, of course, nearly all the time. This old maid, Nancy Perkins, thought I had the colic, and that my stomach must be out of fix. So it was. It was cramped. It was collapsed by outside pressure. She kept the room very dark. She kept my head covered up, except when she would lift the cover off for a minute to see if I was dead. Then I would get a fresh breath, and get one delightful snap at the sunlight. She stuffed me with gruel and milk-toddy. O that toddy—that infernal toddy! It made my brain reel. It made me drunk. It grafted into my flesh the alcoholic life that I have had to fight all my days. I love liquor now better than bread. I dare not touch it. I do not keep it about me. So I say I was abused. I was sinned against through the ignorance of an old maid, who ought to have been better endowed. A new-born baby has a right to a fair chance. Give that baby some fresh air. Give it sunlight. Let it have an opportunity to fight that ghost of a baby's life, "the thing to do."

My mother was proud of me. She laughed at me through her tears. This was in the day

when motherhood in honorable wedlock, with all women, was a glory. Her womanly instincts were too strong, and her conscience too quick, to take my life before I was born. She was willing to reach out into the dark and struggle with God for a life.

My name was put on me next morning. I was named after my grandfathers on both sides. One was a Yankee, who came to Indiana by an Indian trail; and the other was a Scotchman, who had called his braes on the Highlands. The fact that I received my name so soon means that I was regarded only with the ordinary affection of matter-of-fact parents. They were not silly over me; to which, if they had been inclined, they had no time. The English language is hardly equal to the naming of the most ordinary baby in these times. Parents put it off for months for fear some mistake will be made. Then there are so many silly names now. Reuben Rodney—there is some strength in that. A name is either a help or a hindrance to character. It does not make or break, but it helps or hinders. Great men have been sent to the limbo of oblivion, simply because the public could never learn their names. If there be as much expression and meaning in the higher harmonies as the musicians say, there must be

something in the vocal effects of a name. I was always satisfied with my name. It was a little too heavy for the first five years ; but after that it became more and more serviceable. Any child of which anything is expected ought to have a full-grown name. It has a right to this, and it is grievously sinned against if it does not get it.

I was not rocked in a sugar-trough. I was pinned up in a pillow, and laid in the rocking-chair. And this very thing came very near being the end of me. Uncle Linus Hickum came over one day, and being near-sighted he was about to take my chair ; when mother threw a spoon at him, and Nancy Perkins yanked him into the corner so vigorously that he stepped on the side of the frying pan, and the handle flew up and whacked him on the head. Uncle Linus did not understand this, and he did not wait for an explanation. He went out of the house fighting mad. He regarded it as a premeditated and unprovoked attack on him. When there are blind people in the neighborhood, never put the baby in the rocking-chair.

When I was three years old I was full size, and had come to dexterous use of my legs and hands and tongue. My senses were all alert, and I received many strange and curious impres-

sions. As all children do, I lived in a realistic world. What succession of unreal appearances! What fascination by the incomprehensible! What strange impressions were made by the powerful and vast forces in both nature and life! What a time for spontaneous belief! I was not able to veil my thoughts from the barnyard animals. They would interpret my purposes and thwart my plans. There was one cow in the wood lot whose features were very much like Nancy Perkins's, and this cow could tell what I was thinking about whenever she saw me. Many a time I have kept out of her sight to keep her from knowing what I intended to do. One day I found the forearm, carpal, metacarpal, and phalanges bones of a human skeleton in a box under the edge of the bed. This, I learned afterward, was the property of an uncle, who was then a student of medicine. These bones attracted me; but I could hold them but a minute till the fingers would begin to move, and they would keep it up till I would lay them down. A score of times I tried this, and with no more success at the last than the first. I saw the movement of those fingers as if living, plainly as I ever saw anything.

One evening, as the sun had gone behind the trees in the west, I was sitting on father's

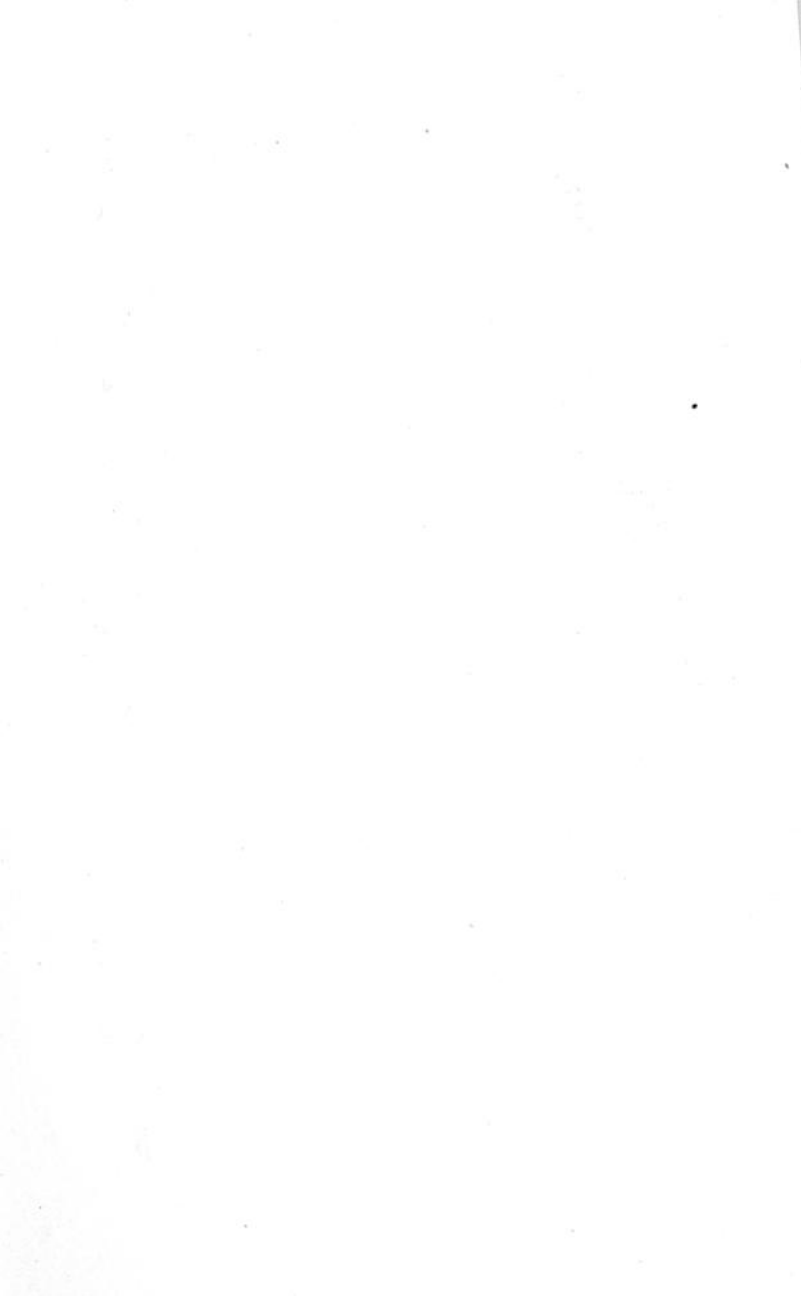
knee in the doorway. In those cabin times it was a common thing to sit in the door, and look out on the beauty of nature at nightfall. To-day people shut out nature, and feast on works of art on the inside. There is not much inside beauty in a cabin, but nature had as many charms for the soul then as now. Along the covert of the bushes and the pasture-fence our chickens were feeding, and a flock of crows were there, hopping on the ground and from stake to stake.

Father said: "Look there, Rodney; our chickens are turning to crows."

So it was then to me. One after another the chickens would fly a few feet from the ground, turn black and fly away. Nothing clearer as a matter of sensuous evidence ever appeared to me.

I attributed volition to the bending to and fro of the trees in the wind. I endowed all nature, not only with life, but with feeling and thought and purpose. I did this without knowing what I was doing. I did not know at all that I was separate and distinct from the stones and birds and trees. It was a mythological age to me. I was a small-sized idolater. Bishop Taylor says that the children of Africa are not born heathen. Children are born that in America. Civilization is not hereditary with the in-

dividual. Every Saxon scion is born a raw heathen. He is a little ignoramus, with a few instincts and nerve-centers, and with an original equipment of truth nothing in advance of the pickaninnies of Africa. His first look around the room is a universe of exploration. He has intimations of spiritual truth, but they do not come to consciousness straightway. The things his senses take in, and the meanings he first gets, are the prophecies of truth farther ahead. His first impressions of the world are largely misleading. The views of a child are taken as from a telescope with an unsettled surface ground, and he gets a blurred image. But the child as a knowledge-gatherer has almost infinite possibilities. We are great blunderers here. We grope our way through mazes of phenomena from which no absolute truth can be taken, because absolute truth is never known except by authority, or through knowledge of all relationships. We live in a shadow-land. We see parts of nature's meaning. We are never more than a handbreadth from intolerable mystery. But we grow. We feed on the truth. It is the essence of our immortality. The future is an open highway.





"BLACK ME, THEN."



CHAPTER III.

THE BLACK GOD.

"A thousand volumes in a thousand tongues
Enshrine the lessons of experience."

—M. F. TUPPER.

THE age of swiftest acquisition for a boy is at about five. He is then a wholesale gatherer of facts. He is a living interrogation point. He is then the butt of jokes, and most frequently a general nuisance. He is too small to spank, and just won't mind. He is heedless of the things you tell him.. He never knows that the corner of the table is sharp or that the poker is hot. He never thinks to take care of his fingers when he shuts the door. He never goes around a mud-puddle in the yard. He gets flogged by the turkey-gobbler, and a thousand like things happen him. A boy suffers too much from not knowing anything, from five to

six, to have much of a good time. He does not eat his white bread just then.

The element of distrust also is frequently driven into the child-life, like a prod of cold steel. It always hurts. It sometimes kills. It is an intense pain to a child to discover the treachery of the world.

In our neighborhood there lived one Negro. Shalem was his name. He had no other that any one knew. There was nothing more to it fore or aft. He said that was all there was of it.

Shalem had a wife and two small boys. There was little disposition among the whites to tolerate this crowd. Nigger equality was the highest crime in the decalogue. Work was scarce for Shalem. But he lived better on less work than any one in the country. Father had a coal-mine; and it was agreed that the coal-mine was a suitable place for Shalem to work. It suited his complexion. Shalem's two boys were my first playmates. They were seven and eight respectively, and I was five. To say that these boys were black is a feeble expression. They were like Brother Gardner's wife, "about two shades darker than coal-tar." Their faces glistened in the sun. To me, they were indescribably interesting, because they were black and I was white. Not knowing anything about

color or "previous condition of servitude," I was open to all the influences that might come down on me from these two boys.

We had stabled our stick horses, one day, by a burnt log in the clearing, and I asked them what made them black.

They answered that God did, and that all the best people in the world were made black.

"Nobody around here is black but you."

"And nobody is first-class but us."

"Are you better than anybody else?"

"We are blacker and more beautiful; God is a black man with curly hair."

"How did God make you black?"

"He took black off of a log like this, and rubbed it on us; and we can black you with that log, and make you look like us, and you will be ever so much finer."

"Well, then, black me."

No sooner said than done. They blacked me, hands and face and neck and feet. The charcoal, rubbed with coarse palms, brought the blood from my face in a place or two; but it was a case in which the end justified the means, and I stood it without a cry.

"Now," said Pogus, the older boy, "run home and ask your mother if you are not a very fine boy."

I went home, but on the way I had a sort of creepy feeling that it was not all right. Mother saw me coming, and took fright. I ran after her. She ran faster. I screamed and yelled. After her I went, through the house and around it, down by the garden gate and back again. She fairly flew. I flew after her, and also flew all to pieces. She did not appear to me to run, but to glide over the ground and through the doors. It seemed to me that if I did not catch her I would die. I have never since put forth more exertion in anything. Every emotion of which I was capable came to me each moment. I cried. My agony became too deep for tears. I ran. I stopped. I stamped my feet. I tore my hair. I ordered her to stop. I cried for father. I told the black God to stop her. Finally she went exhausted into a chair near the wash-bowl and towel. She washed me awhile, and then took fright again. I caught her, and held to her dress while she scoured the black off. Mother then saw she had gone too far with her part of the sport, and she crooned over me with gentle words; but the agony of the fright was still on me; ugly specters filled my brain; the world turned black; my mother's face turned black, and I was about to run from her, when she caught me up and hid my face in her bosom,

and kept it there till I went to sleep. The greatest issues of my life to-day will not have so deep an influence on my nature as this little incident. It affected me so profoundly that my mental characteristics must in part be interpreted by it. A flesh-wound will soon heal, and only a flesh-scar remains. An overwrought mental excitement leaves its mark to last forever.



CHAPTER IV.

CRUELTY AND TREACHERY.

“Not at once,
In men or angels, the abhorrent plague
Appeared in all its loathsomeness. But as
In some fair virgin’s bosom a small spot,
As if a thorn had pricked the delicate skin,
Rises and spreads an ever-fretting sore,
Creeping from limb to limb, corrosive, foul,
Until the miserable leper lives
A dying life, and dies a living death:
So there.”

—EDWARD HENRY BICKERSTETH.

THE summer following the episode with the darky boys, I had my first experience with the real treachery of this old world. Nancy Perkins, the old maid, liked our house when she first came. She liked the work, she liked the folks, she liked the baby. She soon concluded to become a fixture in the family, and so she staid year after year, and I never knew a time

when I did not know Nancy. She did her work well, drew her pay, and was a kind soul with all her finicky notions and fussiness. She liked me, and never tired of telling of her success with me the first few days of my life; when the fact is, it is a wonder I did not die on her hands. If I had died, the death would have been attributed to a mysterious providence, and not to Nancy; for she did her best with me, and through this six years of my life her devotion to me never relaxed. I suffered quite a good deal because of her old maidishness; for her prim notions of propriety did not fit me at all. To fit a boy, the thing has to be cut to fit; and a boy knows a misfit as soon as he sees it. My mother did not turn my training over to Nancy, however, and so I was not warped in that direction. What an inheritance, that a child is born to the care of its own mother! What a curse must fall on any woman who relieves herself of the care of her own children by turning them over to hired nurses! She robs her own soul of one of its highest opportunities, and commits a multitude of other sins.

Every now and then I would have quite a time of it with Nancy; for I was not three years old till I learned that she was not the boss or me, and I always rebelled against any delegated

powers she claimed to have. When I was with Nancy—that is, left to her keeping—I always did as I pleased, except that of getting into danger. Then she was not slow to use force; and I was not slow to resent that sort of thing, by kicking her shins and pounding her in the face with my fists. She rather enjoyed my spunk, and made it the occasion of investing herself with greater responsibility concerning me. She was always as fussy as an old hen with one chicken, doing clucking and scratching enough for a brood of forty. I know I was a joy to Nancy's life, and I know I did not intend it. I liked her in spite of myself, but I took all her devotedness as a matter of course.

One day father came from the stable with five kittens in a sack; and before I could empty them out on the floor and take possession, father said:

"Hold on, Rodney; I have a job for you and Nancy. You must take these kittens down to the narrow bridge, and throw them in the canal. Drowning is the easiest death, and we will never be mean enough to take a sack of cats to a neighbor's. What do you say, Nancy?"

"All right" said Nancy. "They would soon come to the house, and I am not going to have them here."

That afternoon we took the kittens and started down the wood-road to the narrow bridge, less than a half mile. The water in which the kittens were to be drowned was that of the Wabash and Erie Canal, one of the greatest material enterprises in the history of the State of Indiana. In fact, it was too great for the State to complete, and it was given up, as a public enterprise, before it was near finished. After spending millions on it, the State gave it into the hands of an English company, who took it, with an enormous grant of land; and it was finally completed. This canal extended from Evansville, by way of Terre Haute and Lafayette, to the Ohio line in the northern part of the State. It was an heroic work for a pioneer age. The whole Commonwealth had great expectation from it at one time. The ditch was dug; the locks were made, many of them erected in the finest masonry; and boats were running over parts of the line,—and by the time all this was done, it was about demonstrated that the railroad was a feasible and possible thing for all these States and Territories. The bottom did not fall out of the canal, but, as a consequence, the heart went out of the builders and owners. They practically let it go from the start. Seeing it would not pay expenses, they let it get

out of repair, and in the course of a few years it went down.

The narrow bridge to which we were going was not the crossing bridge of a public road, but a company bridge, to transfer the mules from one bank to the other at a place where the exigencies of engineering made it necessary to change sides for the tow-path. These mules were hitched to a long rope, with the other end fastened to the bow of the canal-boat. The company's orders were to unhitch the mules from the tow-rope in transferring them; but in a slow movement of the boat it was possible to rush the mules across the bridge, and drive them down under and reach the bank on the other side before the boat would go through far enough to tighten the rope on the mules. It was a forbidden transaction, which had something of the dangers of a running switch. This day, as we made the last turn in the wood-road, and were brought suddenly in sight of the bridge, two mules hitched tandem were approaching the farther end of it, and the boat was slowly moving down the channel. Behind the mules was a lazy-looking driver, with a long gad. As the mules approached the bridge the driver began to ply his gad vigorously to rush the animals across and under before the boat

would tighten the tow-rope. The front mule shied at the foot of the bridge and hindered him a moment, and that was long enough to let the boat overtake him. The boat was clear under by the time the mules were in the center, and about two-thirds across they were both pulled from the bridge into the canal. They fell a distance of twenty feet. What a splash! Poor animals; the victims of a lazy and trifling driver! John Wesley believed that animals live forever. I hope it is true. If those two mules come up against that scamp in the day of judgment, he will not get inside the gates. Shame on a man who will hazard or take the life of a poor dumb brute in that way! One of these mules came to the surface, and was taken out, but it was a cripple. The other tangled in the harness head downward, and was drowned.

As the two mules went over the bridge, Nancy caught me by the hand and started on a full run to the house; partly in fright, partly to tell the news; but she made me take some long steps. It seemed to me I only touched the ground now and then. She arrived out of breath. I arrived somewhat stove up. The kittens arrived.

The question of cruelty to animals now came up, and the death of the kittens was about

to be indefinitely postponed till father made a very strong argument in favor of his first plan. So next morning we started for the bridge again. Instead of putting a stone in the sack, we untied it and poured them out from the top of the bridge into the water. Four of them soon sank; but one made for the shore and reached it. We caught it and threw it back. Three times we repeated this, and each time that kitten made such a wonderful fight for its life, and with every breath made such a pitiful plea, that my heart, steeled for the work till now, was completely broken. Nancy was taking the little thing for what would have been its last trial, for it was now exhausted and hardly able to breathe. I slipped up behind her, snatched it from her hand, and ran with all my might out the road towards the house. I was a hundred yards from the canal before she overtook me; and then I was ready to make war on Nancy if she touched me. We returned with the kitten. It showed its gratitude by becoming a famous cat.

The building of this canal required many more workmen than the country through which it was being built could furnish; and along the route—sometimes by the contractors, and sometimes by the workmen themselves—were built

log cabins and huts to shelter the men, and often their families. After the work was done, it was no infrequent thing to find a man too poor to get away, and he became a permanent citizen. This sort of thing brought an admixture of bad blood to the communities along the route of the canal. In one of these huts lived a man who had two boys and a sick wife. The cabin was in the east limits of Hazelgreen, not fifty feet away from the stone locks. The body of the lock, which was large enough to receive the boats, formed a great hollow, around which the water made its way and poured from the wasteway, falling ten feet or more into the depths below. This falling water made such a noise that it could be heard frequently from our house. I had never seen it, but had formed great ideas about it.

The day after we came from the bridge, I went with mother to help carry some delicacies to this sick woman, the wife of Jack Hardy. While she was feeding the sick woman, I went with the two boys, both older than myself, down to the lock. I saw the water rolling over the stone dam into the foam below. It was to me a veritable Niagara. The roar and froth and hollow echo of the waters from the caverns of the lock produced in me the most dreadful feelings.

What is that sublime and awful thing in the falling of water? It is a noise which has not been set to any music, but it must take its place somewhere among the harmonies. It has in it a sublimity that always moves the soul. Neither does it require the cultured ear to be enthralled by it. You simply stand still and in silence. You wonder as it sways you, without knowing why. The savage will stand by the cataract and listen to its roar till his superstitions drive him away. My childish spirit was taken up into the fearful splash and roar of that artificial cataract. In the steep embankment of solid clay these two boys had cut steps, forming a sort of stairway leading down to the water's edge. I was much attracted by this terraced work in going down, but lost thought of it in the roar of the water. To my consternation, as soon as I was down the two boys turned on me for a quarrel. One of them said:

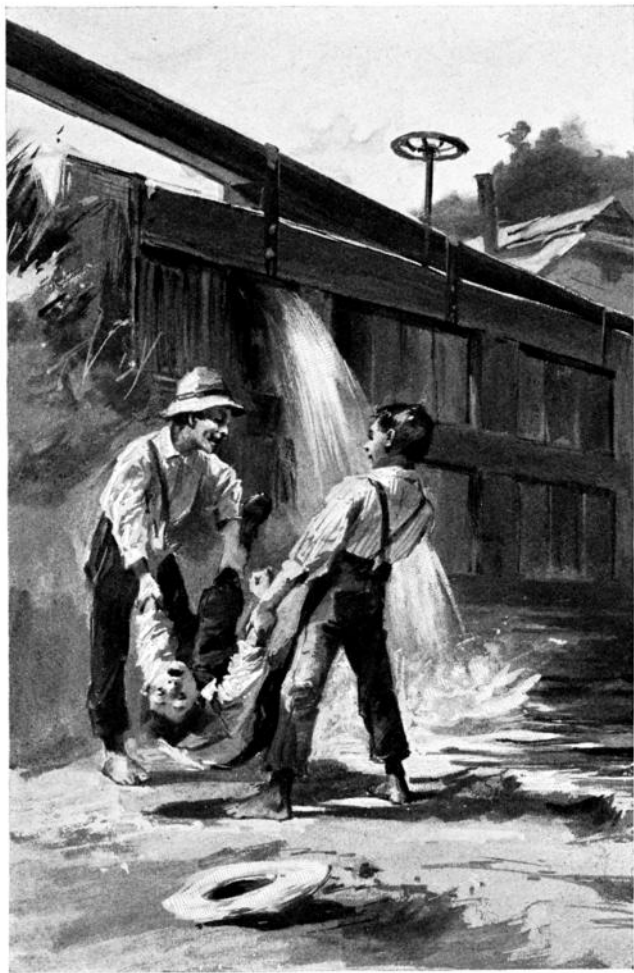
"Bub, do you want to fight?"

"Not down here, where I am scared at this water."

"Then you are a coward."

"No, I am not a coward."

"O, we will see! We will put you into this water. This place is ours down here anyhow."



"HERE YOU GO NOW."

With that, they caught me, each boy taking an arm and a leg, and they dipped me down in the water till I was thoroughly wet. Then they stood me in the edge of the canal with my back to the water, and each boy put his foot on one of mine. Mashing both my feet in the mud, they would push me backward into the water. Then they took each a foot and a hand again, and began to swing me out over the water towards the cataract. Once they swung me, and then they said:

"Now, next time we will let you go—here you go now."

That was death to me as deeply as I ever expect to feel it. I suffered a death without meeting it. With the second swing out, I knew no more. I was suddenly in a strange and glorious place—trees, birds, sunshine, happy people, landscapes of beauty, swards of green as smooth as velvet carpet, and entrancing music. I was enraptured with every vision that met my childish eyes. On a silk rug at my feet I saw, snuggled up together, the four kittens we had drowned at the bridge the day before. I became drowsy and tired, and I lay down on the silk rug, and bent myself around the four kittens, and went to sleep.

The next I knew I was at home in the high

bed, and my mother was bending over me, asking:

"How is my boy now?"

"I do n't know."

"How did my child fall in the water?"

"I did not fall in the water."

Mother did not hear my screams for help; but when she was ready for home she came to hunt me, and found me lying on the bank, unconscious. The boys told her that I had fallen in the water, and they had taken me out.

The whole affair came to me, and I told her how it was. Mother went to the door, and called father from the field. They held a short conversation at the door. Father's face turned ashen pale. He put his ax down by the step, handed his coat to mother, and started for town. Mother said:

"See about it, Reuben; but keep your senses when you see Jack Hardy."

Before he reached town his better judgment was enthroned; so he found Jack, who was half drunk. He gave him the case, and told him to go home and punish his two scamps. Jack was sober enough to know what that meant, and he followed directions to the letter; but it did no good. The fact is, when that sort of thing is in children who are old enough to know right from

wrong, it is seldom anything else than the prophecy of a bad end.

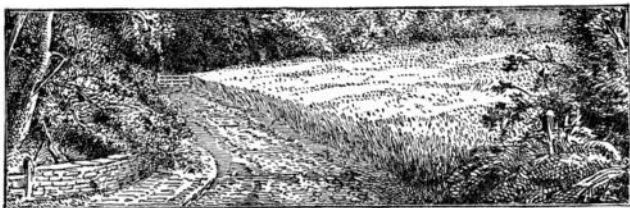
Have you any interest in knowing what became of these boys? They lived to be men. A few years ago I stood by the bedside of one of them, and saw him die fighting snakes and wild animals in the awfulness of *delirium tremens*. I saw him slam the door of time behind him with a curse on his lips. The other is now a convict for life in the Iowa State Prison.

The dread I had when these boys were throwing me out over the water was not of physical suffering. The crown of my agony was in the wrong of the thing suffered at the hands of these young villains. A few notes will express the limit of physical pain and the dread of it; but a scale of notes, reaching from earth to perdition, can alone express the possible suffering of the spirit. How the world changes! How life changes as a child emerges from the covert of the home, where it has never known anything but the forces that have been true, and steps into the edge of a world of buffet, heartless and full of deception and treachery! To have any experience in this world is to learn to doubt. Distrust becomes a part of the armor of protection to the successful. "Know your man before you trust him," is a wise business maxim.

"And after that, keep your weather eye open," is the caution that any extensive business experience would add to it. The spirit of confidence in human forces in this world may be growing stronger, but experience with men puts in us the element of distrust, and we can not help it. To doubt, therefore, has value. Those who never doubt, those who insist on believing that all men are honest, usually get stranded in the stream of life. When it is known that you trust every man, about every other man you meet will be a confidence man. Distrust this world, and hold it at bay until you can take care of your own. Successful business men have largely developed the element of caution. Do not distrust God as you distrust men. There is no treachery in him. He will not cheat. He will not take short cuts.

Children usually get their taste of the false in life by tid-bits. They move out into it by way of little eye-openers and surprises. They get it in installments. I got the full measure of mine with my first experience. Through the years I have looked on that fact as something of a misfortune. Its pressure on me was too great at too early an age. It fell on me like a dull thud, and has left in me the traces of iron. The springs and modulations of my whole life

have been dulled by it, so that on one hand, I am robbed of much enjoyment, and on the other I am too keenly susceptible to certain qualities of exquisite pain. The spirit of resistance toward those who oppose me has been intensified and too determined by it. It has left in me a shrinking feeling toward the surface antagonisms of life, and, unfortunately, it has helped to possess me with a coolness and a stoical indifference in the face of a danger that threatens death, which is certainly abnormal. At no other time since, when in imminent danger of death, have I felt the least excitement. I felt the spiritual tremor of death that day at the canal-lock, and I never expect to feel it again.



CHAPTER V.

JOE CONEER, THE CRAZY MAN.

"Sorrow that made the reason drunk, and yet
Left much untasted—so the cup was filled;
Sorrow that like an ocean, dark, deep, rough,
And shoreless, rolled its billows o'er the soul
Perpetually, and without hope of end."

—POLLOK.

"Extreme mind is close to extreme insanity."

—PASCAL.

"Since when have I shown signs of insanity?"

—CATO.

"Great wit to madness nearly is allied."

—DRYDEN.

WHILE we are under the head of the reflex power of circumstances on the character, I want to enter into another matter that influenced me greatly. It was the custom for the farmers about, to have extra help in the spring and summer seasons. One spring father hired a man for six months, "wet and dry."

His name was Joe Coneer. He was a stalwart and mighty man, and he had in him a companionable and royal spirit. The first day at dinner I made friends with Joe. Father liked Joe. We all liked him. He always came to the scratch. He was honest with his work; and in every way he was a first-class farm-hand. He worked the six months, and only lost one half-day. The peculiarity about Joe was, that at times he was slightly crazy; not to a degree that it interfered with his work, but during the months of his stay among us his mental defection became more apparent. He would sometimes whistle a tune at the table, greatly always to my amusement. One time this performance occurred when we had strange company. Some days while at work he would wear his left pant-leg rolled up above his knee, until he would blister his leg in the sun. In the morning, when he went to feed the stock, he would always hop from the house to the stable on one foot. He would never think of doing such a thing at any other time. He had a mortal fear of snakes, and would carry a club to be ready for them. He would carry this club all day while binding wheat. He would lay it down while he tied the bundle, and take it up again when going on. Joe never killed a snake in his life. One day, while bind-

ing, he came to a bundle, on top of which had crawled a little green one about eight inches long—the kind we boys use to take and put into our pockets. Joe had his club. He solemnly looked at that snake for a minute, and then walked around it and went on to the next bundle, saying: "I'll let you go." He would loan the club to me, and I would kill his snakes for him. I had in me the common impulse, and I never missed a chance. Kill a snake when you see it. Why? Because other people do. Because the ancestors of the whole tribe played our mother Eve such a mean trick. I'll not have anything to say about the theology of snake-killing; but it seems to me that man is getting overmuch revenge on these poor crawling creatures for one little piece of deceit. The fact is, Eve wanted the apple. And in the spirit of injured innocence her children have been pounding this dejected beast into the ground ever since. The whole thing lacks dignity.

Toward the close of the summer it was thought best by all parties that Joe should spend the winter in the asylum. It was mentioned to him, and in his lucid moments he would consent to go, and soon he would change his mind. Finally the papers were made out, and one

morning the sheriff and his deputy made their appearance to take Joe to the asylum. Joe was fickle that morning; he would consent, and then refuse. He baffled the officers till it was apparent that he must be taken by force. This put a serious side to things. Father used every power of persuasion on Joe, telling him that these men meant him no harm, that they were his friends, and that they would take good care of him, and show him every kindness.

"And, Joe, you know that at times your mind is not quite right, and you will be cured, and we want you to live with us again next summer."

Joe would say: "I know my mind is not right, but I can't go."

"Why, Joe?"

"Rickets, rickets, rickets—hi ho, hi ho—two hops and four snakes, and a tune to match!" and Joe turned abruptly around, and, against some resistance, went into the house.

Father and the two men followed in a quandary. Joe must be tied or no sheriff would ever be able to take him. Finally the sheriff reached the purpose to take him by force, and so ordered father and the deputy to get ready. Joe was a physical giant. Lack of mental balance seemed to have its compensation in a

most perfectly developed and complete physical manhood. Father was a stronger man than Joe, but could not tie him, and he had doubt if the three could do it. At any rate the attempt meant danger. The spirit of resistance was aroused in Joe, and he threw his hat on the bed, clenched his fists, backed himself in the corner, and declared his purpose to fight them to the bitter end. The three men were a little slow to take hold. Mother was advising against taking him in the house. To me the scene was one of horror. I was not old enough to see the importance of taking Joe away, and I had heard nothing of the plan and was not prepared for it. His vagaries to me had not reached any other importance than that of an entertainment to me. I enjoyed them. Joe was different from other men, but his antics had to me nothing deeper than the ludicrous. I pleaded openly for Joe, and was in the spirit of regarding the whole crowd of opposers as my enemies, and I had made up mind, if the fight came on, to help Joe. The sheriff saw that I was giving strength to Joe's purpose, and he ordered me to be quiet. Father sanctioned the command of the sheriff; so I kept quiet, secretly intending to help Joe if they undertook to take him. There was a change of tactics. Persua-

sion and threats had now failed, and there was left the test of the strength of the influence of one will over another. The issue was the actual breaking of the will of one strong man against that of another. Joe had shown determination and courage, and it was now to be seen if he would surrender under the command of the man whom he respected and feared. There was a time of silence—of awful silence; but long enough to shift the battle from the realm of physical to the realm of mental forces. Father stepped out in front of Joe, took the buckskin thongs from the hands of the sheriff, and deliberately laid them straight across his left hand. Then he looked Joe in the eyes till they flinched; then he said, in the spirit of intense command:

“Joe, cross your hands.”

The poor man threw up his hands and crossed them, and father tied the thongs, gently but firmly about them and delivered him to the sheriff. Joe's face as he crossed his hands is with me to this day. It was the double horror of reason dethroned and will gone. Unutterable sorrow was the expression of every motion of the poor man. But the pallor left his face in a moment. His brain was then in confusion; and he began an incoherent and senseless jabber that he kept up till he was out of hear-

ing down the woodland road. I felt that a cruel wrong had been done Joe. No one had explained the case to me. I associated the two men with the two boys who had swung me out toward the cataract. Joe knew how I felt. I could not close my eyes that night without seeing that pitiful face. Fitful dreams of the affair disturbed my slumber for weeks.

These circumstances were sobering my life too soon. It had been better had I never known them. I was beginning to learn sorrow and know its reality too soon. To this time I had many a little cry over bumps and disappointments, but they were like brief showers among the trees on a summer day. They were refreshments more than anything else. But Joe's face photographed itself on me. I do not say it threw a shadow into my life, but I believe it was not good for me.

There was no apparent cause for Joe's mental derangement. He was a noble-spirited man, and he had about him every mark of the best family lineage. No one ever knew whence he came. His family history was a complete mystery. Father was doubtful of the good that was to come to him because of the extreme pressure put upon him when he was taken, and

he was saddened that he had sent Joe from him apparently a worse lunatic than ever.

In six months Joe was pronounced cured, and he returned to us for the next summer, his idiosyncrasies gone—sobered, perhaps saddened, by the knowledge that his reason had been on the verge of incurable wreck. Joe appeared to be constantly standing on guard of himself, and but few evidences of any mental aberration could be noticed. In a few years he married a contented, spirited woman, who had in her own right forty acres of land. On this Joe built a stout, stocky cabin, with palings and fencings about; and finally the whole forty was cleared by his own hand. The fences and barn and smoke-house, and the cabin itself, were regularly whitewashed each spring; and this little home became a notable place. He became a great home-keeper and an ideal farmer. Other farms have been improved about him—large, fine houses and barns have been built in sight of him all about—but his whitewashed cabin stands there to-day in remarkable preservation; and the two old people go about their work in the fashion of forty years ago. Joe has gone past his threescore and ten; he stands tall and erect as an Indian, with a shock of hair as

white as snow; and he has also gone past the danger-line of mental wandering. Joe is to-day living with a clean mind and a great hope in his heart.

The inside of his cabin is as clean as cleanliness itself. His tall form never entered that house without receiving a wifely welcome. The love of his great heart always responded, and the two hearts made one, became a guarantee for his reason.

I want to put down a word here for Joe's wife. Any small degree of domestic trouble would have made him a hopeless mental wreck. She knew this, and she knew also that he possessed the parts of a splendid mind and heart. So she made that home an asylum of contentment. She had a deliberate purpose to make his heart glad whenever he darkened the door. Her service to this great, good man became a part of her life, and the thing she did about it made her a queenly woman. (When any honest man comes from his toil to his home, he ought to have a welcome.) The lack of it has snapped the courage of many a strong heart. It has sent many a man, soul and body, into the swift curves toward hell.

Joe, of course, was not morally responsible when crazy. I never could get away from the

feeling that Joe was good if he was crazy. Whether the space covered by his insane hours was a blank to him or not, I do not know. Whether he looked sorrowfully over the ground of his mental wanderings with the first lucid moment, and then took up the load of life, or whether he started again at the point where reason left him, I do not know. Joe acted as if he knew, but he was silent about it. There was a great longing in Joe's face all the time. He was outwardly cheerful, because after the mental storm, with him, there was the clearest sunshine of intellectual vision. His mental parts, when they were to be seen, were all of remarkable force. He could frame a proposition, put two together, and draw a conclusion with the greatest mental acumen. But all the while, when he knew himself, he seemed to know a shattered self; and he appeared to go about his work and duty with misgivings.

What a blessing is reason throned! What a slight thing will wreck an empire! The wonder is, so few people go crazy. There is so much drunkenness, so much gluttony, so much overwork, so much domestic sorrow, and life is running so much like a storm, with no sleep, and in hot, relentless pursuit of that which bursts like a bauble in the hands as soon as it is gained—

what mind-wreckers these! When the human brain itself becomes a burning phosphorous ball, never to sink to rest till it is consumed—what wonder the mastery of self-government so frequently goes; what wonder the taut nerves snap, and leave the soul to frenzy and madness! What a strain the moral excesses of man constantly put on mental integrity!

Joe would never tell, but he knew what made him crazy. His mind had gone deep into some trouble before he came to our country. He had thrown it off, for he did not brood over it; but to throw it off cost him his steady ballast of reason. It might have done him good to tell his secret to some one. One day, as we were sitting on a log in the woods pasture, I thought he had opened his lips to speak of the hidden thing; but he became silent suddenly, and we walked home without exchanging a word. I am sure of one thing—Joe's madness was not for any wrong in himself, unless it was for not throwing his burden off till it wrecked him.

The wreck of reason in Joe's case was not so great as to affect his character. The daylight of the world—a chance to build a character—was not taken from Joe.

Power of self-control—that is the balance-

wheel of reason. Whenever self-dominion goes, we are madmen. A fit of anger—is not that madness? Gather up all the finest faculties, and compute them, and what are they worth then? In what is reason better than lunacy in the moment it is dethroned? The sun of the soul goes behind a cloud then. Manliness gives way. The spirit passes through a storm just then. The man is not insane, but short of sanity. The soundest mind in a few leaps will be in the border-land of frenzy. Passion, tempest-sprung, is a wild horse without bit or bridle, on which we are tied; and we always take a Mazeppa's ride. Keep your temper—above everything, keep your temper. Good Lord, give us "the spirit of a sound mind!"

After Joe left our house, I grew out of his knowledge. I have seen him many a time on the road, in the city, on his farm at work; and at times I have surmised that he knew me as well as I knew him, but cared not to keep up an acquaintance that called up the saddest memories. Through this forty years I have not cared to renew his acquaintance. I know he is a manly man. He impressed his spirit on my child-mind. I think I know him thoroughly well. I know him on the inside. I re-name

him Joseph Greatheart. What I know of him has put a thread of melancholy in my life; but it has not had the effect to take the springs of purpose out of me, but to encourage me the rather. If I hear of Joe's death in time, I will go to the funeral.



CHAPTER VI.

JIM HANDY, THE VILLAIN.

"Envy, eldest born of hell, imbrued
Her hands in blood, and taught the sons of men
To make a death which nature never made.
And God abhorred, with violence rude, to break
The thread of life ere half its length was run,
And rob a brother of its being."

—PORTEUS.

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

AKESPEARE.

FATHER had a half-brother, Welborn Blannerhassett, who lived three miles to the northeast of us, across the canal and beyond the breaks of Honey Creek. He was a man of splendid parts. He had friends everywhere, and no known enemies. He possessed both business ability and public spirit. He was a

leader in the community, and very popular. As a man and citizen his praise was on all lips. But his wife was a vixen. She was coarse and uncouth in appearance, and a bad spirit. She was morose and scowling and dissatisfied. What possessed Uncle Welborn to marry her, I do not know. If men always exercised good judgment in selecting wives, some women would never get married at all—a statement as completely true when turned the other way. They say John Wesley married a regular old hectoration. I do n't know about that; but I do know that Uncle Welborn was sorrowfully mismated. He was refined in spirit, and ambitious for the best things; she was slovenly, with a mind full of vulgarities, and having no ambition but for her own ease. She had no capacity to appreciate him, and it was her delight to make him miserable. What he thought no one ever knew—he was simply silent. No word of disparagement of his wife ever escaped him. His provision for her was on the principle of taking her “for better or for worse.” In this case it was “for worse.” Uncle Welborn did the work in the house and in the field. She was too lazy to work, too lazy to keep herself clean. She sat in her old chair, played sick, and smoked her pipe, and got as

fat as a hog. This woman had a brother, Jim Handy—another gloomy and, many believed, an evil spirit—who wandered up and down the country, a general and worthless vagabond. Elenor—that was uncle's wife's name—wanted this graceless scamp to have right of way to all that was on the farm and in the house. For years Uncle Welborn had practically supported Jim. One day Jim was informed that he must henceforth provide for himself. That was a piece of disagreeable news to Jim. There was no quarrel. Uncle Welborn was never known to quarrel with his wife. When she railed out on him, he whistled. A thousand times he had whistled her out of court. A day or so after this notice to Jim to quit the premises, uncle had retired early, and had gone to sleep. Elenor was still up, pottering in and out, and Jim was still up, when Uncle Welborn's skull was crushed with his own ax. Neither of these two saw any sign of any one going or coming. They heard no noise of any kind. The ax had been returned to the wood-pile, and deliberately stuck into the end of a log. Elenor had been in the room once after the deed was done, and had not noticed it, she said. When it was discovered, she started Jim to our house; but he got lost, and never did his errand. He had to this time

been playing crazy for several months. He was so foxy sharp that he made a few believe he was demented. Jack Graham, returning from town, was called in, and brought father the news, and also went for the doctor.

Father took a dim path through the woods to a crossing in the canal, where a canoe was kept. The canoe was on the opposite side from him, and he had to swim the canal. He reached the house about three o'clock in the morning. Elenor was there alone with the murdered man. She had done nothing to him, nor for him. She was sitting in the corner in a sullen way, smoking her pipe. Father says:

"Where is Welborn; is he dead?"

"No, he is not dead."

Then she affected to cry. She did not cry; she only whined. Father went to the bed. There was a slow and labored breathing—nothing more. He saw the depression in his forehead, and knew what the weapon was. He went to the wood-pile, found the ax, and brought it in, and saw plainly that it had been used. By this time two physicians were there. Before daylight the skull-bone was lifted, and uncle was lucid for a moment.

Father said to him:

"How was it done, Welborn?"

"What, Reuben?"

"Your skull has been crushed with your own ax."

"I know nothing about it. Will I die?"

"The doctors say so. Have you anything to say?"

"No, nothing. I did not know I had such an enemy. I would have preferred a natural death—tried to live an honest life—coast clear—coast clear—g-o-o-d-b-y-e."

He had no more rational moments. Before the work of the physicians was finished, Jim returned, having given up trying to find the way to our house.

Neither Jim nor Elenor approached the bed during Welborn's last words. Father noticed their glances at each other, and their consternation that he should ever speak again. Is there such a thing as knowing a fact without knowing it—that is, without evidence that a court would receive?

Father walked from the bedside across the room to where old Jim stood, put his fist in his face, and said to him:

"No wonder you lost your way last night, you old scoundrel. You did that deed."

Old Jim blanched, nearly fell backward over a chair, mumbled something through his nose

and teeth, and inside of five minutes he was out in the dark without coat or hat, and gone. He broke into the woods, and was not heard of for a month. He wandered through the timbered country about thirty miles, and found harbor with another branch of his family, who proposed to unite in the plea that Jim was crazy; so no arrest was made.

All this is incidental to my own interest in what followed. Father's accusation brought in Jim the spirit of revenge. He declared openly that he would take father's life.

It appeared that Elenor's selfishness defeated Jim's purpose. He expected to live with Elenor after Uncle Welborn's death, knowing that the farm would support them both. Father's unexpected accusation to his face changed his plans somewhat, and he was afraid to return to the region of the murder to look after his own interests. Father became administrator of the estate, and induced Elenor to sell the farm, take the money, and move from the country. Where she went, no one knew. No one made any inquiry. No one cared, except as a matter of curiosity. The sale of this farm, and the departure of Elenor was a part of father's plan for the defeat of old Jim. The murder was not of malice at first. It was of laziness. Jim was too

lazy to work. In a bungling way he played crazy to keep from work. He killed Uncle Welborn as a part of an ill-conceived plan to keep from work. When he found that the farm had been sold, and Elenor had pocketed the money and had gone, his wrath knew no bounds. He had escaped prosecution from one murder under the insanity dodge, and he felt safe in the plot of another. Old Jim, by some means, came into possession of a good gun, which he carried constantly in his tramps over the country. He only gave one reason for carrying that gun. That was to kill father. He lived a week or so at a place, wherever the people would keep him. His movements were mysterious. No one ever knew his plans ahead. There was only one thing in his future,—that was to kill Rube Blannerhassett. Many friends gave father warning. There were times when old Jim would be seen coming into the neighborhood, and father would receive news of it by some one solicitous for him. Father was not afraid of old Jim in open conflict. To have the matter over, he would have preferred open war with him. This, however, would have been an unequal contest. It would have been a life of value hazarded in almost equal chances with a life of no value.

Some advised father to relieve himself and

the community by the short way known to all of them. His reply to these indiscreet friends was:

“I shall never take a human life, except in self-defense.”

Others believed old Jim was slightly crazy, and would never carry out his threat. Father's theory was that Jim was not crazy at all. The physicians were convinced of his sanity. When father boldly charged him with the crime, it was so startling a thing to his mind that he forgot to play lunatic, and blanched and trembled over the horror of being detected.

So matters went on. There was no way to change the dread suspense of things. Old Jim had the field, and all the advantages of a shrewd game of lunacy. There was nothing for father to do but to go about his business. He went armed for a time. This was very inconvenient for a business man, and, besides, it looked cowardly. It was only for a few months that father pretended to keep himself in readiness for the man who had sworn vengeance. But it was during this time that the whole affair became known to me. It came about in the following way: Father had some hewed timber to haul from the woods—the framework of a large barn. Old Jim knew this, and father thought that if

he intended to carry out his purpose, it would be at some time when he was getting out this timber.

In these trips into the woods I was taken along to hold the horses, and to put the chock under the handspike, as father, first with his weight, then with a lift, would bring the hewed timber up against the axle with the aid of a log-chain. The trusty old rifle always went along these trips. I wondered at this, because no game was found, and the gun often became unhandy. We were driving one day through a spur of Honey Creek bottom where the underbrush was densest, when a cracking of brush in the edge of a pawpaw-patch brought the rifle to father's face in a moment, with an intense watchfulness in the direction from which the sound came. I was sitting in front, at the point of the coupling, driving. I always did this, and father always held his gun in his hands. I heard the crack of the brush. I caught next father's face pallid with excitement, and behind the pallor an awful purpose.

"What was it, father?"

"I guess it must have been a falling limb," he said, as he slowly took his gun from his face, but still keeping his eye on the spot.

"Did you intend to shoot a falling limb?"

At this he faintly smiled, and said:

"I guess not."

Then I saw that his whole frame was shaking as of palsy. This great, strong man had already overtaxed himself at hard work, and had broken his nerves, so that under any sort of undue excitement, as soon as the tension of it was over, he found himself unable to control himself. This thing in my father was not strange to me, but it was out of all precedent that a falling limb should produce it; so I said:

"Are you afraid out here, father?"

"No, I am not afraid; but never mind now, my son."

I said no more; but here was a new experience. Father's heart was shut down from me. As I drove slowly home, I said to myself, What awful thing is this that he will not explain to me? I was hurt that I was shut out from his confidence. My thoughts about the matter became unbearable. As we passed the house toward the barn-plot, I made excuse to run in to get relief somehow from my feelings. I told mother the happening, and I saw in a moment she knew more than I did—that she understood the matter. Her reticence only put me in greater distress. She went to the barn-plot with me, and helped me to take the chocks

from under the spike to let the log down, and she said :

"You are not dead yet, are you, Reuben?"

"No, but I thought my time had come. I thought I saw old Jim turn his gun on me from under a pawpaw-bush ; but it was only a dead limb that fell across a black stump."

"Would it not be better to have some one else haul the rest of the timber from that wood?"

"No, no! I'll go ahead and attend to my business, and let the consequences take care of themselves."

"Well, I think, anyhow, you will have to tell your boy, here, more than he knows, and why you carry your gun to work these days. He is worked up about it."

"Well, come along, Rodney ; we will get another stick of timber, and I will tell you."

So he did, and it was a great relief to me. But from that hour there were two pairs of eyes on guard for the bushwhacking old scoundrel.

For ten years after this, old Jim ranged up and down the country. He was always to me the personification of villainy. The sight of him was the picture of all that is despicable in the human character. As the years went by, my fears of his executing his purpose grew less.

After a time, Jim became too poor and trifling to own efficient firearms. So, also, as time passed, it became more and more doubtful if he had energy enough to originate a plot of shrewdness to carry out his threat. I have met him on the road a hundred times. I suppose he never knew me, and I never spoke to him. Father would speak, and sometimes exchange a word. Assuming that we never heard of his threats, Jim would affect friendliness in a cringing attitude, and call at the back door for something to eat. Mother would feed him for the sake of peace. She had a woman's wit, which in this case, as in most others, was doubtless of more value than man's indifference and courage. Mother was wise when she declared that things were not equal when her husband's life was thrown into the unequal chance with such a man as this. Mother was not given to feminine weaknesses, but she felt that it would be a disgrace if father should ever have to take old Jim's life in self-defense. But inasmuch as the probability was that he would never have a chance to defend himself, she used a woman's art to drive from Jim's mind his belligerent and murderous purpose. Father objected to this policy; but his objection did not change it. It was a case in which a woman's insight had in it the

greater reason. It will never be known, of course; but the probabilities are that mother kept Jim from killing father.

This affair, which I believe father never intended me to know, and which I never would have known had it not been for the incident in the timber, affected me so intensely that I came to feel myself personally identified with it. The matter possessed me so thoroughly that the sight of old Jim brought abhorrence to my very soul. It grew on me, until it finally resolved itself into a kind of half-formed purpose to rid the world of old Jim. The argument went this way in my mind: Old Jim is of no account. The world would be better off without him. All his relatives wish he were dead, for then they would no longer have him to feed and harbor. They tolerate him now, only because they are half afraid of him. If he should kill father, I will always wish I had taken the drop on him. Everybody believes he killed Uncle Welborn. He is a murderer, and ought to die. I am a mild-mannered chap, and no one will suspect me. I put this down just as it was. You say there was murder in my heart. So there was. I did not count the cost. I was dallying with the ethical principle of the Irishman who said: "It is wrong to chate, but I would rather chate than

be chated." I only say the feeling possessed me, and it culminated in a fearful temptation. It came to me at a time in life and under conditions which left me with absolutely no power to throw it off. I would like to have the reader remember that I was convinced beyond all doubt that this man was not crazy—that he was a very demon incarnate—and that he hoped to escape punishment for killing father under the lunacy dodge. His first success emboldened him for the second. Father was careless, and went without protection. He was so absorbed in his business that there would have been little difficulty in any one taking his life clandestinely.

One afternoon in the latter part of May, the summer I was twelve years old, I had finished plowing the ridge field, had put the horse in the stable, had taken the long rifle, and had gone into the west woods to hunt squirrels. This was a famous old gun we kept specially for small game. It run two hundred bullets to the pound. With thick patching, we could use buckshot in it. It looked more like the firearm of an Arab than anything else. It was known to have a fearful projectile force, and when loaded rightly, it would put the bullet where the bead was drawn without variation. When

the hunter fired this trusty old weapon and got no game, it was his own fault. I had come to great skill with this gun. I was not strong enough to hold it out off-hand, but could throw the long stock under my right arm, catch my left elbow on my left hip, bend over to get in line with the sights, and kill game on the ground. From the trees I had but little difficulty in getting a rest on a limb or by the side of a tree. It was a point of pride with me not to cut the body of the squirrel with the bullet. The size of a squirrel's head was range enough anywhere. I sauntered through the woods this afternoon, given over largely to random thoughts and reflections, killing a squirrel now and then, and taking a sort of quarter-day holiday—a respite I had not enjoyed since the busy work of the spring opened. I remembered seeing old Jim that morning, in a skulking sort of way (he always appeared to me to skulk), with a gun on his shoulder, come from the direction of the Balner den, as it was commonly known—a family of bad repute, where, we understood, Jim had been keeping himself for a month or more—and he went into the timber east of Hazelgreen. Father at noon had gone west to the hill farm on the breaks of the creek, and was to return about sundown. He must travel an unfre-

quented road nearly all the way ; and it was the road old Jim came out in the morning. If Jim returned that way, he would meet father coming home. Putting these things together brought unpleasant thoughts ; so much so, that I lost all zest in the hunt, and had pushed my head and shoulders up among the low branches of a scraggy jack-oak bush in the thicket, and laid the gun across the limbs to take a rest and remain quietly in hiding until a squirrel should report himself somewhere near. I was in the thickest kind of underbrush in about forty yards of the road, and could see it plainly, having a view up and down half a quarter or more. I saw old Jim coming down the road with his gun on his shoulder, and with his hat off, carrying it in front of him. He had something in his hat. "What shall I do now?" I said to myself. He will meet father in the darkest place of the wood-road coming home. Jim could have easily been a spy to his going west at noon. I could not shake off my anxiety at the thought that the two men would meet alone in the woods ; one of them armed, and with a grudge in his heart. The sure way for my father's safety began to sway me. Through a slight opening in the trees I saw Jim plainly as he came down the roadway, and seated him-

self on an old log right opposite me by the roadside. I knew that he had been down to the house, and that mother had given him food. Through a break in the leaves not more than a foot square I had a full view, and was so situated that he could not possibly see me, unless, by noise or movement, his eye should be attracted. He took a part of a loaf of bread from his hat, and begun to crunch it. It was the part of a fine loaf we had left for dinner. That was plainly mother's bread. It was to my mind a woman's feeble effort to make peace with a villain. That huge man sat there, with his hat off, straight and still as a statue, except the working of his jaws and the going and coming of his hand, feeding himself. The sun was shining in his face. I saw his features as I never saw them before. Stalwart form, high forehead, uncombed hair reaching down to his shoulders, and whiskers as shaggy as a bushman. Things dark and devilish were in that face. Mother's gift of food was to me a humiliation. Uncle Welborn had fed that man for years, and then had been killed by him. I thought of my father's peaceful and laborious and prosperous life. And there before me was the object of all the hate I had ever known. Consequences! What are they but the forces that

move me! I pushed my rifle up over the limb of that jack-oak—cocked it, with the triggers set—and drew a perfect bead on old Jim's forehead just three-quarters of an inch above his left eyebrow, and held it there, and rubbed my finger up and down the hair trigger of the rifle! I raised my head from the gun, and watched him for a while; then drew another bead, and rubbed the trigger! Three separate times I did that thing. I did not kill old Jim because God drove me away from an awful desire. I wanted to touch the trigger—God forgive me! Did Jim's life hang in a balance? Did mine? Did the destiny of my soul hang on the fact of my rubbing that trigger without firing? In those moments the chatter of a squirrel in the branches would have touched my nerves and killed Jim. How calmly a mortal at times will walk out on the edges of eternal woe! Glad indeed I am that I did not kill that desperate man. It would have wrecked my life.

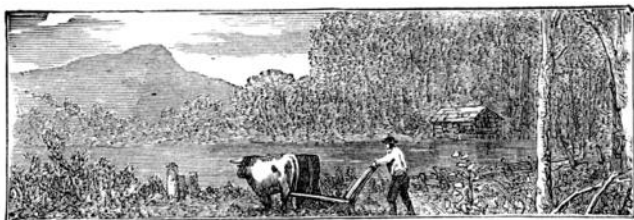
As I walked away I was as conscious of the presence of an unseen and superior Power as I am conscious that I am writing these pages. I make a deliberate testimony that God stayed my murderous intent, and that he was angry with me. In the desire of my heart I had vexed him. This is all I can say about it—only that



"I WANTED TO KILL OLD JIM."

the incident made its ineffaceable marks on me, the meaning of which I am not yet able to understand. Out of the conditions of such strife it is possible that there have come values in the chastening of my spirit, and in the sobering of my thought toward a better companionship with the great God. That afternoon I knew there was a God, and I believed in him to the degree that I was angry with him because he kept me from killing old Jim. God had actually driven me away from my purpose, but I harbored the feeling and intent of murder. I regretted the loss of the opportunity, and vowed I would never lose another. It was an intense, a burning, an all-consuming passion in me, all that afternoon, from which I found no relief till father came riding in at the gate shortly after sunset.

I had such a sleepless night that the family became anxious about me. The feeling of murder is an awful thing. Keep it out! Keep it out! It takes so much to call the spirit from under its deadening blast, so much to enthrone again the sweeter fellowships of life. It is well to know life, but it is also just as well not to have certain kinds of experiences.



CHAPTER VII.

REUBEN BLANNERHASSETT.

“My father fed his flocks, a frugal swain,
Whose constant care was to increase his store,
And keep his only son, myself, at home.”

—JOHN HOME.

WE are all civilized now. We have the pride of culture. We want it understood we are up with the times. But I shall make the contention that the remains of a savage life are in us. The hunt and the chase, by heredity, has its fascinations. We revel in the tales of huntsmen. Love for the chase and for hunting is a relic of the wild life of our barbarous forefathers. Civilized as we are, we have our fine hunting-dogs and our breech-loaders. We are more splendidly equipped than the old hunters were. What we lack in game, we make up in powder and shot. We have to invent many ex-

pedients to make hunting justifiable at all now. One modern hunter puts it in this way: "The exercise is worth the time, and the noise is worth the ammunition; and if there be any game, it is clear profit." The less the game, the greater the equipment for the business. There is plenty of hunting, but nothing to hunt; more guns than ever, more fishing tackle; and no game in the woods, no fish in the streams. These are degenerate days. There are three or four hunters to every partridge in the hedge. There are a half-dozen boys (not counting the darkies) to every rabbit in the grass. I saw two colored men, the other day, send four loads of shot after one poor little rabbit. O for the good old days before shot-guns were invented—when marksmen were not so unworthy as to resort to unfair means to capture the innocents of the forest! To draw a bead for the placing of a single bullet—that is fair. Let a rabbit jump up and run off thirty or sixty yards, stop to see if you are coming, push his ears up over the grass to listen; then if you can bead him off-hand and get him, he is rightly your meat; if not, you could see him another day—no more that day. Wild game, sir, had a fair chance in the olden time. No violation of conscience in taking it. You measured your powder from the ox-horn

into the rooster-spur charger, you poured it into your gun; then you took your tallowed patching from your left pants pocket; then you took a bullet from your deerskin shot-pouch; then you opened your old frogsticker, cut the patching from around the bullet; then you pulled your ramrod through the brass thimbles and pushed the bullet down, gave it three raps to bounce the ramrod out; then you primed the tube with more powder, and picked it in with a brass pin; then you put on the percussion-cap, and by that time, if the game was not a mile away, it ought to be shot dead on the spot.

I am of the opinion that people in an early day talked more than they do now; that is, in what was to them a profitable way. The themes were not of science or philosophy or art or the latest cablegram from across the sea, but of things within the sweep of their intellectual horizon. The family life now is silenced greatly by newspapers and books. Each blessed member gets off in a corner, and holds fellowship with strangers. The art of talking may yet be lost, or it may be taught as one of the classics.

The great log-fire in our cabin home invited to enjoyment. The day's work over, the supper finished, hickory wood-fire blazing brightly, and

the family in a semicircle around it, moving back slowly as the coals get hotter, a neighbor or two in to spend the evening, or a traveler stopped over night,—this was the time for many a marvelous recital. Tales, legends, Indian stories, pioneer struggles, hunter's exploits,—with these the moments flew till bedtime. These fireside talks frequently produced scenes of dramatic eloquence, great as was ever known in ancient academic shades. No greater power was ever given an orator than was seen in the portrayals of these early-time folks. They were nature's dramatists. So unaffected they were, so unconsciously forceful, they were able to put a thing in its best form. They never thought of these fireside scenes as occasions of eloquent expressions; but such they were. Beside them, the modern looking-glass elocutionist would be laughed to scorn. I have seen and know much of the histrionic art, but I have never seen some of the recitals of the fireside of my cabin home excelled. The material dramatized was not art or science or history, but pioneer hardship, and adventure with wild animals, of fighting with Indians, of rude sports, of love, of jealousy, and domestic tragedy. Our fireside was a stage. Father and mother, with the neighbors and strangers, were the actors. I was the small

boy in the corner cracking hazel-nuts, and watching the tragedy of life, which was real fifty years before I was born, recited on that stage. A boy in the backwoods, with healthy, sensible people around him, has exceptional opportunities. A child reared in the hotbeds of aristocracy and wealth is to be pitied.

I will give you several of these stories in substance. As I heard them they can not be put into print. The types are dead things. The tales which I have to relate shall begin with the next chapter.

I lacked the poetry of orphanage. My life came under the matter-of-fact conditions of having all the benefits of a good father and mother. My father, for his day, was a remarkable spirit. He would have been a significant force in any day. He would have been among the chief of citizens and financiers if his lot had been cast in a great city. He was Scotch through and through. He was a physical giant. These were the days when personal pride centered in muscular strength. It was pride of muscle instead of pride of brains. The best man physically in the neighborhood was always a leader and a ruler. Men in the early time were very much like the leaders of the wild herds. The leader was always a strong, courageous fellow,

who had fought his way to the front through a hundred battles without a single defeat.

In mental temperament my father was a man of action, and of few words. He was in no sense a theorist. His education was so limited that he could not cipher in long division, but he could make the most abstruse mathematical calculations without knowing how he did it—that is, without being able to tell how. All his plans resolved themselves into action. I never knew him to express a purpose that he was not in the act of executing. When once committed to an enterprise in business, he was never known to give it up till completed. Difficulties only nerved him. His business plans were to him infallible. He believed in them so thoroughly that every one of them got a fair trial, and almost invariably led him to success.



CHAPTER VIII.

A BLACK WOLF.

“My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart’s in the Highlands a-chasing the deer.”

—BURNS.

“O, what delight can a mortal lack,
When he once is firm on his horse’s back,
With his stirrups short, and his swaffle strong,
And the blast of the horn for his morning song?”

—CORNWALL.

AN aged Indian sits around the camp-fire, and regales the tribe with the deeds of his own heroism. He exalts his own life. He tells the same tale over for the hundredth time, and it never loses in the recital. In this way many an ordinary incident in Indian life has grown into a heroic deed of daring.

White people of the early day were given to this sort of narrative, yet perhaps not so much to the Indian weakness of magnifying. But in mat-

ters of personal adventure, I have heard the same thing over and over again. The first time you hear a story, it has the interest of novelty; and each time you hear it afterward, it lacks novelty, but it takes hold of you more and more. Its meaning grows into you. My child-mind was so filled with pioneer exploits, the experiences of people who lived near us, that I am sure I shall never be able to get away from them. The persons themselves, through my life, have been associated with the contributions they made to my stock of hunter's tales.

Reuben Blannerhassett, my father, first settled in Indiana, on the prairies south of Lafayette. There he kept two grey-hound dogs for the wolf hunt. He also kept, for the chase, a full-blood Bertran horse, famous for speed and endurance. The peculiar quality of this family of horses was what was known then as bottom. In his trials of speed with other horses, Bertran had become famous for his staying qualities. For these reasons he was king of the chase among horses in the locality. He was kept for that and nothing else. Having a rider with judgment, he could veritably run all day. This magnificent horse loved the chase, and always chafed like a chained lion till he was set free on the prairie after wolf or deer. He could overtake

the fleetest buck that ever ran over the ground, and allow his rider to shoot at short range. Many and familiar were the times when, with only two or three hours to spare, the young lover of the chase would loose Bertran from the stall, throw over the saddle, fasten it with a surcingle of platted buckskin thongs, put into his mouth the smooth bit of a bridle ornamented with trophies of the chase—four wolf-tails—one at each side of the browband, and one at each ring in the bit. Whenever that bridle went on, the fire would come into Bertran's eye, and he was so restless then, that to mount him was to leap with him into the air. Bertran wanted his keeper to get into the saddle, but he wanted him to understand that, after he was in it, he would need neither spur nor lash. The first note of the horn that always hung at the saddle would bring the great dogs to the scene, and they moved out into the hunting-grounds at half speed. Any day a wolf could be started in an hour or such matter, and then, with the speed of the wind, they would run a mile or two, and the wolf would turn to bay. Then a rugged battle of a minute, and all was over. The horse's head would drop to pick at the tufts of grass in reach of him; he would scent in a quiet way the carcass of the animal just taken, take a

long breath, and then turn with his rider and walk homeward as quietly as a family roadster.

One morning Bertran was saddled for a half-day's wolf-hunt. The hunter was soon in the saddle, and a turn on the horn brought the dogs bounding from the kennel. This day, horse and dogs and rider were in unusual spirits. A half-hour of brisk movement brought them into the skirts of the famous Wea Plains. As luck would have it, the dogs started, in the edge of the timber, a black timber-wolf—or as ill-luck would have it—for the dogs had flushed this old fellow two or three times, and each time he would take down the ravine and stay in the timber. In these cases the dogs would be called off. A grey-hound, as you know, runs by sight, and can not run in the timber. He laps himself around trees and bushes to his own destruction. His speed is such, with his length, that he is not able to make the quick turns necessary to miss the trees. A black wolf is about a third larger than a prairie-wolf, and he can run about a third faster than any wild animal known. It was believed by hunters that a grey-hound could not catch him.

This particular hunter, with his special equipment, was particularly ambitious; and each time this black wolf was started, he was wish-

ing that he might move out into open ground, and give the dogs a chance. But the rider was used to saying to his dogs in this case: "Come here, Heakle; come back, Bruno; he is afraid to cut out over the prairie."

This morning the hunter was reining his horse as near the bushes as possible, with a faint hope that if the black wolf started from this region of his hiding, he might be induced to cross the open country. Of the two dogs, Bruno was the elder; in fact, he had seen his best days. He was about twenty-six inches high, pale-bluish ash in color, with a fine scent, and always followed his prey with such speed as to have never known defeat. He was a dog of remarkable courage and sagacity. He had about him a wolfish aspect, so much so that, had it not been for his size, he would have been marked with the disgrace of having a few drops of wolf-blood in him. He was a pure greyhound. So was Heakle, a fine young dog, who did not really know his own speed. A prairie-wolf did not tax him. He could play in front of a deer at pleasure, and jump from side to side. He knew Bertran could outrun him, and that is all. As they expected, the black wolf started from the grass directly; but, to their astonishment, and in a daring way, he started out

over the prairie, as if intending to cross it to the timber, which was out of sight on the other side. The horse first caught sight of the wolf, and went into the air in a moment. The hunter gave a yell that brought both dogs with a great leap into the air to sight the game. Bruno got the direction; but the young dog was behind a covert of bushes, and lost time by running in the wrong direction till he got the course of the chase by the yells.

Bruno was in the lead; the horse and rider next, as if to say, "Now, you black varmint, if you go out over there, you must go in a hurry." Before the young dog caught the direction, they were in the short grass of the open prairie a hundred yards away; but with every leap in this time, the hunter's yell helped the old dog to cover his distance. This wolf had been used to having a spurt through the timber, then a rest; so, unwary of his danger, Bruno crept on him for the first half mile. Four rods between them. Horse and rider just behind. The young dog coming. Now begins the battle. Will this team fail to take the fastest game in the forest, and with a fair chance? Horse and rider urge the old dog up to two rods, but not another inch. Everything is on its mettle now. The rider is lost in the wild excitement. Bruno is stirred to

his work as never before. He runs with all the canine expectation that had never known defeat in a fair chance, so it is his first experience in a halting game. The wolf bounds ahead. The old dog gains an inch now, and then loses it.

The great horse is on fire. He scents the game, and every nerve is awake—every muscle at full play. His nostrils are dilated, the fine foam flying from his mouth and striking the hunter in the face; his powerful lungs are in complete action, and, with a heavy man on him, he leaps like a hart, and has to be held in. On they go. The old dog is urged to heroic work. "Now, now, Bruno, if you ever did go, take him now—take him now—now—now!" The wolf has gained a length, and the hunter loses hope. He turns in his saddle: "Heakle, Heakle! Come on, come on! Bruno can't get him!"

The young dog is coming; but it is a fearful distance to make up, when blue lightning leads the chase. "Go now, Bruno; go now! If you were two years younger you would get him! You are twenty feet away now, Bruno. Five more feet, and he flinches. Ho! Bertran, ho! Ho! steady now—go, old boy—go—go!" Dog and wolf are now to their limits. There is not a break or falter in the fearful race of life and death. They are all running without a sound,



A NINE-MILE CHASE.

except the hunter's urging voice—running as smoothly as the rocking of the billows on the ocean as the storm goes to sleep. The timber comes into view on the other side. "Heakle, Heakle! Here you come! Hurrah! Now, Bruno! Do n't let Heakle get him! Do n't let Heakle get him, old boy! Make him miss his jump, Bruno!" There! The wolf's tail drops, his head goes up, he whirls around; the old dog plunges at him and goes by, receiving a gash in his shoulder. Young dog and wolf clinch. Horse and rider go by, turn round. Heakle is in battle with the wolf. The hunter dismounts, and quickly unbuckles from the saddle the strap and heavy steel stirrup, ready to help with a stroke from it, if needed.

There is no need. The young dog already has his last hold, and is making up for being behind in the race.

The dismounted hunter is now holding the wounded dog from returning to the encounter; has pulled him down in the grass, and as he lays there panting, he kisses him again and again, saying, over and over: "You got him, Bruno; you got him, you got him!"

The victorious young huntsman rises to take his bearings, and finds that he is nine miles from the starting-point of the chase. The distance

startles him. He looks at his horse. There he stands—a pitiful sight, trembling in every limb. Bruno staggers to his feet. The hunter hurriedly scalps the wolf, leaving the carcass lying in the grass, and takes the reins and leads the horse home, followed by the dogs.

Old Bruno never caught another wolf. His days for the chase were then over. He never could rally himself to keep in sight of a wolf again. The wound in his shoulder made him permanently lame. Bertran had at last been outwinded. He never entered the chase again. He hacked about the farm, and had kindly care; but to his last days, if the hounds would bellow on the trail in hearing, he would stamp in his stall, and sniff the air with as much spirit as in the day when his feet were as fleet as the wind.

The young pioneer and huntsman had his regrets over his horse and dog. But he would have put his own body to the same limits under the same excitement. It may be said that things like this are lacking in the nobler elements of reason. But are they? Is not this in essence the heroic in life? Does the spirit of heroism and conquest in action always have to give a moral account of itself? May not that chase be a picture of the life we are living? Do

those who are never moved by such a spirit ever get anywhere, or accomplish anything? Those who never give themselves over to the soul's impulses, wrought into action by whatever is able to call out its energies, never reach achievements worth naming. They are of those left behind in the race of life. They are the stay-at-homes. They are the pussies-in-the-corner—sleek and fine and well fed, but without energy enough to catch a mouse.

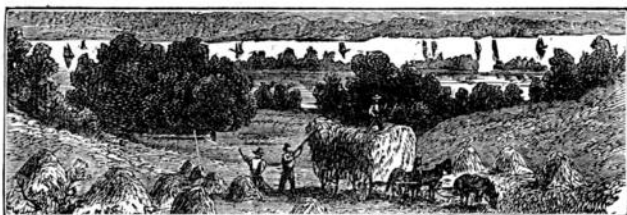
Life is a chase. The game is up. Shall we capture or lose it? What do you say? The turns life will take, and the amount of energy suddenly to be summoned, can not be estimated long beforehand. A faint heart will not win in the chase. A purpose to win which is so virile at times as to make no estimate of distance or cost is the purpose that has heroism in it, and the swing of conquest. Life is this sort of a struggle. Immortality is a struggle. Have you the stuff in you to get immortality? If you have, you shall have it. Yonder is your goal. Do you see it? Get there! Get there, if it costs you effort, and time, and dollars, and friends; if you have to burn the candle at both ends—if you die.

But suppose the goal, good enough in itself, is not worth all of this. It is so that the

object in life may not be equal to the energy and sacrifice made to achieve it. A laconic preacher once described a great genius in literature, who had thrown the force of his immense talents in a direction in which the preacher thought there was nothing possibly commensurate with the great ability devoted to it, as "a spiritual giant, sitting on the tombstone of hope, cracking hazelnuts with a sledge-hammer." There are cases in which this is true, and we are not now wholly to defend this hunter. But how are we always to know that the end will justify the means? How are we always to know when it will justify them? Are we always to stand around till the infallible certainties of prophecy declare we may take our hands from our pockets? In these cases, where the end does not justify the means—in the times when we have run a mile to crush a butterfly in our hands—is there any compensation? To be lost in the impulse of an enterprise—that is great, unless the enterprise be evil. *That wolf was not worth a good dog and a good horse, but THE CHASE WAS.*

That which is objectively gained in life may not be worth what it costs; but the effort made to get it has its value. Have I paid for things

more than they are worth, and is my life therein the loser? If by any overplus of payment the struggle of my life has been intensified in any degree, the thews of my soul by that struggle have been drawn out. My own effort has put its own sunshine into me, and in the final product I have been the gainer. Heaven!—where is it? I do not know, but I know the race I make for it will put into my spirit its substance by the time I have reached it.



CHAPTER IX.

A PANTHER'S SKIN.

"A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in—
There war n't no stoves (till comfort died)
To bake ye to a puddin'."

—LOWELL.

WHAT wild freedom and naturalness in the relations of men and women in the earlier days! I shall be pardoned if I express the opinion that men and women were better mated then than now. False ideas of social caste were not in the way then as now. "Sassiety" is frequently scandalized now over some blue-blood of a boy or girl marrying below rank. Frequently these escapades are mistakes, but they are more significantly declarations of revolt against the conventionalism of society. The barriers of station and rank in life may work

desirable things for certain families and certain classes; but they are not the better conditions for the race. The relations of the sexes, under the moral standard, should be controlled more by nature than by the cobwebs of owlish philosophy and iron-bound social custom. It is now and then the thing for the scion of titled nobility to defy the courts and his regal grandmothers, and go out and marry some buxom country lass, and put a strain of fresh, clean blood into the well-pedigreed and well-run-out family line.

It is often a benediction to the tenderly-cared-for house-flower of a daughter, reared in wealth, when she shocks her set by declaring in favor of some rough-handed country greeny—not only on the ground that there is sure to be outcome in him, but for the ill-apprehended reason that the attrition of her life against the sober, practical sense of his, will give to her the added feature of her experience and training so necessary to the full rounding of her womanhood.

Is it not so that a man of spirit is nearly always popular with the ladies? A woman, as a rule, admires a courageous and manly man. So a woman is attractive to a man in the degree that she is womanly. There are mannish women, and womanish men; but they are the

exceptions. They are variations from type. There is that indescribable sum of qualities which constitutes our ideal of woman. It is the splendid feminine *spirituelle* we call woman. Tennyson says:

“For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain. His dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.”

The man who never felt love in his heart for a pure woman is a stranger to one of the highest emotions of the soul. Woman is the feeder of the fountain of love in man's heart, by which he is made strong and good and great. No man is ever really strong until he falls down at the feet of the woman he loves.

Fond as Reuben Blannerhassett was of the society of good women, he lived to be an old bachelor; and, as would naturally follow, his social life was not devoid of an occasional escapade. What reasons these may have had for his living to be an old bachelor, I do not know. I only know that he did a smart thing for himself when he did get married. There was always an immense spirit of raillery about him when he would volunteer to give mother an account of the times he had with many a fine girl before he ever knew her. She would sit

and look into the fire while he drew the pictures—and right largely on his imagination for much of the coloring, until he came to the right place—and she would silence him by wondering why he did not take some of them.

Before the fireplace in our house on all special occasions, to answer for a rug, lay the tanned skin of an immensely large panther. Many an hour I have played on this rug, and stuck my fingers into the holes for the eyes. One night I found a hole in the head-piece above the eye. Mother knew that father had killed that panther when quite a young man, and that it pleased him to have it before him near the hearth. One night she started him by asking:

“That hole in the head there, Reuben—is that the place where the bullet went in?”

“Well, well, there is a hole there besides for the eyes. I had almost forgotten. I must tell you about that now, since your name is Louise Blannerhasset, and you are safe. That came about by going a-sparkin’. One night in the break of winter (and this was long before I knew you, my dear, so it will make no particular difference to you) I took my best girl to singing-school. We walked. The place was a mile the other side of her house. Her folks lived across

the hurricane, as we called it—a stretch of timber a mile and a half wide, which had been fearfully wrecked with a cyclone. There was no road through it, only a foot-path, to be trailed by those who knew it. It is not necessary to say to you that I was well acquainted with that path.”

“Never mind about that; go on with your story,” said mother.

“One night I was over there in peach-time. Her mother had filled the lower bureau-drawer with fine peaches; and, after the folks had retired, we went back to that drawer and opened it, but we did not take a peach.”

“Certainly, certainly, not one. I expect you to say, next, that peaches were always ripe when you went over there. Of course, I understand you now to say that in the latter part of winter these peaches were ripe—”

“No, not that; this was another time. One time I went over and stayed over night, and next morning I forgot to put my vest on with my coat, and had to return for the vest. I stayed over night with the folks in all bad weather; but I had to go in bad weather. Another morning I could not get my boots on. I pulled till I saw stars. It was no use. I had to split them down in front.”

"You were certainly a blooming youth. I can partly see now how I happened to get you. But if you make it up as you go along, you will contradict yourself again. What about the panther? There must have been some reality about that."

"O yes; I forgot. A heavy rain had fallen while we were at the singing, and the road was full of water. There must have been twenty places between there and home, where I had to carry her over the water in the road. It was an awful job, I tell you. And she was no midget. She had weight as well as beauty. The last place was a long space of water. I came very near having to put her down in the middle of the pond to get a new hold; but a smart box on my ear reminded me that chivalry without strength in a man was nothing, and I rallied myself to the heroic work of reaching the edge. My ear smarts a little yet. Is it not red?"

"Slightly, yes. But why don't you get to your panther story, some time or other?"

"I was just coming to that. I took my girl home. We did not swing on the gate. There was none. We sat on the front fence a while, and she went in the house, and I started home across the hurricane. To say that I was in a pleasant state of mind is no exaggeration."

"The dictionary has the word prolix in it—that's you, Reuben."

"Yes; but I want to enjoy that side of it as long as possible; for the other is not so pleasant. The visit had a tragic close. This hurricane was a wild, desolate region. The Indians had not camped here for several years; but it abounded in wild game—such as frequent the upland regions. As I said to you, I was occupied with pleasant thoughts, until my attention was directed to a slight noise, off quite a distance. I was used to noises while passing through the woods, and, for a time, paid no attention to it. Presently there was a scratching in the leaves somewhat nearer. My first thought was that it was my dog come to me; and, if so, he would present himself in a moment. I still paid but little attention. I saw directly that it was some wild animal. It was keeping pace with me about a hundred feet away in the bushes, and it would, now and then, throw the leaves behind it with great vigor. I was not exactly at ease; for I saw it was directing its course by mine. I kept in the path without increasing or slackening my speed. I was unarmed, except an old barlow-knife in my pocket. I was apprised directly of the whole situation. A hideous scream transfixed me. It was not so loud, but it went through me like a

knife. I pushed down my hat, and went on. There was nothing else to do. It was folly to run. It was equal folly to provoke attack. Must I be torn to pieces by this panther? It was evidently hungry. Another scream. Horrors! what a sound! Nature gave the panther its scream to unnerve its prey. What a strange mesmeric power this animal life about us has! I was so helpless in the face of the danger, and with nothing that I could do but walk along the path, and wait developments, that I actually fell to thinking of the fearful power those screams were having on me in spite of my will.

“I had known something of the mesmeric force of animal life since my childhood. I had been entertained and amused by it, but I had never experienced anything like this. I have watched the performances of a snake charming the mother bird—so intently once, that I came under the spell of it. I remember another time having climbed a rafter of the barn to examine a bat; and when I poked him with a straw, he uttered such a horrid and galvanic little squeak, that my nerves let go my muscles, and I brought up twenty feet below in the hay. More than once have my nerves been unstrung by the piercing cry of the rabbit, and in the moment of the cry it has escaped from my hands. The

dog has this mesmerism in his growl. The lion has it in his roar. Nearly all birds have it in a limited degree in the distressing notes they give when captured.

“But, alas! these were all playthings to the terrorizing awfulness of this noise. I know I am not lacking in physical courage. And I was not born in the woods to be scared by an owl. But in spite of my will toward self-possession, I felt that these two screams had taken half my strength from me, and I fully expected to have to fight that animal naked-handed, and in that condition. The thing ran ahead of me fifty yards or more, and went up a scrubby oak near the path. I knew the tree. I preferred to meet its spring from the ground, and I left the path for a point in it farther down, and about fifty yards beyond. After reaching the path again, I walked on only to hear the panther scratching the bark of the oak-tree coming down. I knew then he was still in pursuit. I walked slowly, and with firmness. To show either fight or fear meant to bring on the battle. Suddenly all fear left me, as I made up my mind to take whatever might come. I remembered God’s promise that man should have dominion over the beasts of the field. I heard no sound for a few minutes, but I knew he was

coming down that path like a sleuth-hound after me. I walked on until I knew that he was near; and I turned round and there he was, not three rods away. The issue had come, and I rushed at him with an awful 'Down, down, you cowardly beast!' and he slunk away into the brush. I turned and walked on. He followed me, and kept even along the side of the path, throwing the leaves, and appearing at irregular distances in the brush. I finally came to a smooth wagon-road, less than a quarter from the house. I knew every foot of the ground, and I decided to run. And I did not stand on the going. Under headway, and feeling pretty safe, suddenly my dog went past me like a shot, and did not return till morning. I went into the house, and slammed the door so hard that it waked all the sleepers.

"Once inside, I had the comfortable home feeling. Verily, there is no place like home. I was so exhausted with my nervous strain that I went to sleep on touching the bed; but I was up next morning by daylight. I cleaned my rifle with tow and hot water, molded fifty new bullets, loaded the gun finely, and made for the hurricane to hunt for that panther. The old dog, who seemed to have had an experience, went along. For that day I followed the dog, hop-

ing he would give me some clue to the place of the beast. I wanted sight of that animal for a minute or two in open daylight. I spent from daylight till dark of the next five days hunting for that panther. I traversed, I thought, every possible place of hiding for twenty miles around. I was encouraged by news of his screams at night. I heard none of these, for I was not out when I could not see the bead of my gun. One morning I was encouraged in finding the carcass of a pig he had evidently devoured the night before. By Friday I became weary of the fruitless search, as it seemed to be. My tramps through the woods were without variety; for so intense was my desire to get sight of this animal, that I refused shots at the finest game, for fear the report of my rifle might drive him farther away.

"It was about the middle of the afternoon on Saturday that I turned my steps homeward out of the big bend of the Wabash bottom, intending to give up the hunt. I had not gone more than twenty steps when the dog struck a trail that excited him. He would only follow it in a walk, and with a sniff and a growl very unusual in him. There was no wagging of the tail, and he evidently did not enjoy it. Whatever this is, I said, it is big

game. I followed him slowly down into the black land, across about two hundred yards of overflow bottom of the heaviest sycamore and swamp-elm. We passed through a thick covert into a clump of low-limbed black-walnut trees. The dog suddenly stopped, and began a low growl, which ended in a whine. His actions distressed me; for he seemed to know where the game was, and was unwilling to give me any clue to it. He would follow the trail out from me fifty feet or more, then quit it and return to me with his hair standing straight all around. He refused to go forward when I urged him. My blood was up, for I knew I was in for something more than usual. I cocked the gun. I kept the dog in front of me till I saw from his eye the game was not on the ground. There it was, in the huge fork of a walnut-tree not twenty feet from the ground, only the head and shoulders visible. I felt for my hunter's knife. It was in its place. I drew a bead on his left eye, but as I touched the trigger he moved his head slightly, and I was not sure of my shot. He threw his head up—gave two or three savage snaps of the jaws, then reeled over the other side of the limb, and was out of sight a moment; then he came crashing to the ground. I began loading, but there was no movement. I finished loading,

and approached the place where the animal lay; and I was a little too exultant to be cautious. The body had stopped quivering, and I could detect no breathing. Certainly that bullet had gone through his brain, and the time of my reward had come. I was in ten feet of where he lay, and saw the movement of his eye as he caught sight of me; and quick as thought he whirled on his belly and leaped into the air, and was upon me. I had no time to aim. I threw up the gun with my left hand and he caught the gun-barrel in his teeth; and the gun-stock received the blow of his left claw; but his right fore-claw came over my left shoulder, while one hip and the other thigh received his hind-feet, each talon lacerating my flesh. I put my knife into him in a moment, and he fell over dead. I found in a minute that I was fearfully wounded. The blood began to run down my back; but how badly my flesh was torn there, I could not know. My shoulder-blade felt as if it had been lifted from my back. The blood spurted from both hip and thigh. It looked as if I must bleed to death. I put my hands on hip and thigh to stop the bleeding. My shoulder wound soon stopped bleeding, and so did my hip; but the cut in the thigh had severed an artery, and I could not stop it,

only as I held it with my hands. The nearest house I knew, in the direction of home, was two miles. I left the game and my gun in the woods, and undertook to make the distance.

"Before dark I reached the cabin of John Hennesy. John did not know me at first, and he said :

"'Great God, man ! what is the matter? You are covered with blood.'

"'I got my panther, John, and maybe he has got me.'

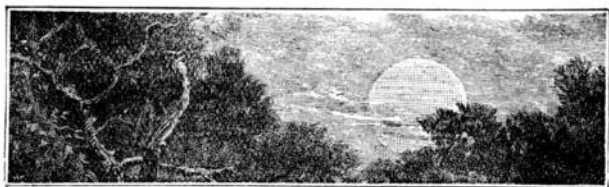
"'Why, Rube Blannerhasset! you are so bloody I did not know you. Come in. Here, wife, help this man. I knew you had been hunting that varmint ever since he interfered with your sparkin' business. You were bound to have things out of the way of your crossing the hurricane. Did you miss your shot? Rather an unlikely thing for you.'

"'I could only see his head, and he moved it just as I fired, and it turned out that I had to shoot him with my knife. That is how I got scratched. Go for the doctor, John, and let him fix these wounds, and then I will tell you where he is, with the gun.'

"John was off in a minute, and in two hours the doctor was there. The neighborhood was there, and they held a jubilee over the dead

panther. During the time my wounds were healing I tanned that pelt with alum and wood-ashes. And you have made a floor rug of it. They say in New York that would be considered a luxury. A wild panther-skin rug on our floor is quite an amount of style for backwoodsters; and we can only afford it because I went to see that girl—long before I ever knew you, who are now Louise Blannerhassett."

"It was an ill wind that blew a little good," said my mother; and the candle was blown out for the night.



CHAPTER X.

WITCHES.

“When the fire out-doors burns merrily,
There the witches are, making tea.”

—WHITTIER.

IT is not very strange that in an early day many people should believe in witches. Their rude minds never had more than the touch of a half-civilized life. They were in no sense responsible for being ignorant of the reflective values which education brings. It was only natural, therefore, and to be expected of them, that they should have some explanation of the occult and mysterious mental and physical forces which had their full play among these strong-minded and strong-bodied, but uncultured people. It was then as it is always—some one mind, coming to a conclusion and proclaiming it, makes converts, and gets itself on the

forefront of attention; and it holds the day, though born of superstition—itsself a superstition. It is frequently so that a whole community comes to believe the vagaries of a single mind. Shall we ever be free from these perplexing moral and psychic forces that have such marvelous interplay between the life terrestrial and the life celestial? Is it desirable to get rid of them, except in the sense of driving the dominion of mystery before us as we advance in the knowledges? This is the only world, so far as we know, where the instincts of the animal are linked with the aspirations of a God. And it may be that this is the world in which God has linked his two codes—the physical and spiritual. We do not know but this is the procreating ground of the universe. But we do know that we are here in the edges of what we believe to be the spiritual world, and that we frequently lose our bearings and follow the *ignus fatuus* into the swamps. These mysterious laws, concerning the operation of which we yet know but little, were hung about with superstitious notions then, in a greater way than now; and they produced a class of phenomena peculiar to the time.

The spirit of investigation into the ground of things was not as keen then. The earlier years

of a nation's life are of the poetical cast rather than the scientific. The poetical spirit personates all forces. The scientific spirit has no use for a personal pronoun.

The explanations given certain facts, as these people knew them, were the best the mind could do for itself, lacking knowledge. The mysteries of life do not get rid of the facts of life; and the physical laws with which we are acquainted do not explain all facts, or account for all facts, by any means.

Of course I believed in witches with the other folks. My idea of a witch was a toothless old hag, visible and invisible at will, and possessed with power to torment people with whom displeased. I never saw a witch; but like others, I have suffered a hundred deaths in expectation of seeing one. Until I was quite a boy I supposed I had saved my life several times by running from them. The witch stories I heard when I was a boy were grim-visaged affairs. There was a particularly peculiar character in the country, who was not so much a vagabond as possessed with a penchant for going from house to house, staying over night, and regaling the people with his talk. He thought himself a great conversationalist. He was not a bore, or a sponge, but a stayer over night. He did

not expect an invitation to stop with people. He would walk in, take off his hat, and, when the meal was ready, take his seat at the table. It never seemed to enter his mind that people might not want him, or that it could possibly be inconvenient to keep him. He was a glib talker. You had hardly time yourself to think whether you wanted him or not, he talked so incessantly. From the time he entered the door, till he was out of sight, he talked. Most people enjoyed him. His intelligence was above the average. He knew it, and presumed on it, and no doubt regarded himself somewhat in the light of a philanthropist. Into the monotonous life of many an early home he went, and furnished it a little variety from the humdrum of daily toil. He was a walking cyclopedia of country news. He answered the purpose of a local newspaper. He was like the interlude in a Church hymn. He gave you time to get your breath, and that in a realistic way; because you could hardly get in a word edgeways. Mother's opinion of him was, that he liked a change of victuals, and that, while he was not lazy—that is to say, lazy—he could stand a vast amount of rest. Timothy Copenhaver was this man's name, and his forte was a witch story. He either believed in them or not, as suited the

occasion. He could spin them out of his own brain like webs from a spider. Whenever I knew he was to be with us over night, I managed to get to bed and asleep before he got started. In the times I failed in this, I fought witches all night in my sleep. Mother saw this, and managed to help me get to sleep. But I suffered greatly under this man's witch stories. In memory of my own suffering, I want to enter here my protest against telling witch stories to children. The child-mind is too pliable; it is too wholly unprotected, and is not able to detect the difference between the real and the mythical in human speech. It takes all these apprehensions as realities, and broods over them, and conjures pictures more horrid, and adds to them, till the young life is a flood of fears.

Now, I want to contradict my preaching, and tell a witch story; but its features will be of the milder sort, and I give it partly for the business there is in it, and as characteristic of the time. The spring I was seven years old, we sold our improved farm, with the intention of going farther west. Father made a trip of inspection, and returned without finding a satisfactory location. Three miles south of us was a farm of two hundred and forty acres, of great natural richness and beauty, owned by one Tom

Dorkey. Dorkey believed in witches. The witches had always had entirely too much to do with his affairs. For many years, off and on, he was bothered. His baulky horses were bewitched. That was his interpretation of it. The ordinary interpretation of a baulky horse, however, is a baulky man. The witches would get into his cows, and make them give bloody milk. They would ride his hogs into the woods, and run them wild. The witches would spoil his wife's soap. They would attack Dorkey personally. They would put splinters into his eyes. He could never go to Manning's grocery without being kept till late in the night, and then be put on his horse with his face to the rear. They would pull the corks out of his whisky-jugs and upset them—a most cruel and grievous offense this. They would take him out of his bed at night, and ride him over the country, barefooted and freezing. One night they hitched him to a gate-post, and went off and left him. Where he was he did not know. It was a strange and peculiar place. He thought he would mark that gate-post with his teeth, so that he might find it the next day. He arose next morning to find he had been trying the bed-post with his teeth. The witches kept getting worse with Dorkey, and he made up his

mind to move. He was looking around for a buyer when father met him. The trade was soon made, and a fair price was agreed upon. To clinch the trade, father paid him three hundred dollars. This was before getting a deed. After the trade had been made a few days, the witches with Dorkey had been getting better, he said, and he was about to "back out." Things then were in such a shape that if he did, father would probably lose his three hundred dollars. I do not know precisely how that was, but one foundation for the fear was that Dorkey was tricky, as well as superstitious. So it came to pass, as the witches got better with Dorkey, they got worse with father. It was known that he took more interest in the witches in this case, than in all the tales he had ever heard Copenhaver spin. He wished no man any harm, but he would venture to wish that Dorkey would have another bad spell. He would lie awake at night, and wish that that very night the witches might give Dorkey another twist, so he could get his deed. This man Dorkey had the constant services of a witch-doctor, Elkin Snider. Snider was too lazy to work, but a little too sharp for the majority of people in the country. He made a splendid living out of their superstitions. He had already impover-

ished Dorkey. A witch-doctor, you know, can not charge, and be paid a regular fee. You just put all the money you have in your outside coat pocket—on the left side. If there is any reserve, mental or financial, Ananias and Sapphira-like, it will not work. The witch-doctor puts his hand in that pocket, and takes out a sum each trip. The amount is never to be counted, even by himself. One morning, after the witches had been distressingly quiet with Dorkey for more than a month, father mounted his horse and rode over to see Snider. He rode up to the gate, and called the doctor out. He told him he had bought Dorkey's farm, and that he was about to renege, and that he needed to be doctored for the witches till he was made honest enough to stand by his contract, or refund the money paid. Father handed him five dollars. Snider took the money, and, without looking at it, put it in his pocket, and turned abruptly around, and walked back into his cabin, and shut the door. Father saw that his interview with Snider had ended. He was puzzled and displeased. But there was not much help for the situation. Here was one man a professional hypocrite; another engaged, to say the least, in a little sharp practice. There was a sense in which both understood the other per-

fectly. Neither believed in witches. Both had pecuniary interests in the beliefs of other people just then. As his money had gone out, father wanted a little more light on the subject; but he did not get it. He sat in his saddle at the gate a few minutes, and then he said, in a rather commanding way:

"Hello, Snider—hello!"

Snider came to the door again, and father said:

"I just want to say, that if things do n't turn out all right, your hide won't hold shucks."

Snider, in a very solemn way, made a great salaam of a bow, and shut the door in his face again.

There was nothing for the sharp practice man to do, but to turn his horse and go home. But he was full of puzzled reflections. He thought of the Negro's remark, that "A white man is mighty onsartin." He could at least say there was something in the witch business. He had five dollars in it, and probably three hundred more. He had no doubt about that five dollars doing the work, unless there was a ten-dollar interest on the Dorkey side. Of that he could not be sure. Some things time alone will tell.

Snider went over to see Dorkey that after-

noon. He prognosticated around for more than two hours. He did a vast amount of mysterious maneuvering. He burned cobwebs in the fire, and noticed that they did not make a blaze. He lit a candle, and burned rosin in the flame, and noticed that the smoke went west in the room. He examined Dorkey's finger-nails, and then he began to look so serious, that the deluded man became alarmed, and began with his questions.

"How is it, Doc? How does she stand?"

The great doctor hesitated, but finally said:

"Bad enough; this is the worst case I ever saw. Do you want me now to be plain with you?"

"Well, I do n't want any more torment. I have had enough of that from the witches."

"I might as well tell you. If my superior powers do not save a life when they may, then I am unworthy of my gifts. Dorkey, the witches have planned to kill you; and if you do not cross the Wabash within sixty days, you will not be alive. Your safety is in getting out of this combination. Beyond the Wabash you will have peace. Mark my words, Dorkey; mark my words!"

The trade was closed, and the balance of the purchase money paid over, and Dorkey was

across the great waters in due time, and was never bothered with the witches any more.

Is it right to work sharp practice on a man—to play on his credulity to induce him to be honest? I do not know. That is an ethical distinction too fine for me. I leave that to the ethical professors. I put down the facts, which, I presume, are of more interest to psychology than to moral science.

Inside knowledge of this little history, as it occurred, had, to me, the value of relieving my mind of all fears on the subject of witches. I could thenceforward enjoy Copenhaver, and sleep after his monstrous recitals.



CHAPTER XI.

DANIEL AND THE GREAT DIPPER.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."
—PSALM.

THE summer I was eight years old, we moved to the witch-farm. The money received for Hazelgreen place had been put into it, and there was quite a sum left to invest in stock. We learned shortly that the Great Northwest, which was then Wisconsin and Minnesota, was in need of stock cattle. The condition out there was that of a newly-settled country, without its first equipment of stock. We decided to buy and drive into that region. For making this trip we had additional reason that mother's health was breaking, and it needed recruiting by rest and travel, and outdoor life in summer. When our physician heard of the enterprise, he

said: "Go, by all means." From fall till spring found us busy in preparation for the expected trip, to be taken the next spring and summer. There was one covered wagon, with an ox-team to haul the heavier equipments for camping—such as tents and provisions, and camp-stove and bedding, and the hundred smaller things necessary in a company of seven persons in all. The ox-team became the leaders of the herd—three hundred head in all. We also had a mule-team hitched to a spring-hack. This hack had double covers for mother's protection.

The day we started, I was made the owner of a little five-year-old yellow-roan horse, with a new bridle and a saddle and whip. Father says:

"Rodney, he is yours, and you are to ride him to Minnesota, and drive cattle all the way."

We were then in an hour of turning into the road. I led my new possession to the fence and mounted, and was as proud a boy as ever held a rein. Up to this time I had never known anything like regular employment. I had worked a few whole days, and was, with all boys, impressed with the dignity of constant labor. Here was a thing in which I could do a man's work. So, with all the ecstasy of my first possession on me, I undertook my first great job. For three

months from that morning I never slept in a house, and never lost a day. It was my business, with the help of a quaint-looking shepherd-dog, to bring up the rear. Father, with the men, skirted the sides, and kept the cattle in the highway. The men took charge of the cattle at night, in which it was required that some one be awake all the time, to be ready in case of storm to keep the cattle from wandering, and in case of fright to protect the camp from the massed rushes they were sure to make. My business at night was to sleep. I attended to that faithfully. The men say that a storm one night blew the tent over, and the pelting rain poured into my face for three minutes, and I did not wake. That is doubtless apocryphal. The poetry of this journey and work was gone the first day. What a long, weary road it was!—day after day, with that dog as my only companion, and with one of the men dropping back to hailing distance occasionally, and with an occasional glimpse of the wagons a mile ahead, and all the way between a long line of cattle, only two or three deep in the road, trudging along like the trained soldiers of an army. My business was to keep up the laggards, and, of necessity, I must perpetually nag the lazy brutes, who would get out of sight behind if not urged. That little roan-horse

turned out to be the quintessence of laziness. I wore out my cowhide the first week, and was refurnished with a spur on each heel. Eight hundred miles of this sort of travel I had; and I was not large enough to get on my horse out in the prairie without lengthening the stirrup-strap, and then taking it up again after mounting. After a few days I took the journey as a matter of course. I spent my time nudging up the same lazy brutes, which not only invariably dropped to the rear, but took the same side of the road, day after day. I would whip a certain one on a particular spot for a day, then I would change the spot. I finally learned the art of getting bullets from the shot-pouch in the ox-wagon, splitting them half-way with my pocket-knife, and pinching them over the new whip-cracker of each morning. I was astonished at the amount of persuasion there was in that bullet. The lazy things began soon to dread me, as they would a bald hornet, for that bullet raised the same kind of a welt.

Out of the lonesomeness and monotony of this long journey I got three things. I became as skillful with a cattle-whip as a Texan cowboy. I became a great roadside observer. In cattle and horse and dog there was no variety. But there was endless variety of view in going

over a strange road. There were different kinds of soil, and rocks, and shrubs, and flowers, and trees. Every turn in the road had a new picture. Many a long, weary day was lost in the newness of view which nature gave. To get sight of a body of water was always a great attraction. To know that we were to travel up the bank of a river for a few miles was a paradise in prospect. A river-road is not a track along which people go to get somewhere. It is an art-gallery. You see landscape paintings there by a master. The eye never tires of the view. Now a gulch and a shallow ford; now a bluff of rugged rocks; now a great bend in the river, with ducks scudding away up its waters; now a plunge into a dense overgrowth of trees, where the shadows stay through the noontide; now the bursting of a great spring from the rocks, and running across the road to dash into a spray among the fragments and boulders below; now the kerplunk of a turtle from a log; now a great, pearly-sided beauty showing himself above the water; now the shrill notes of a kingfisher; now the sunshine laying a sheen of gold clear across the river,—all this had endless charms for my soul.

It was the loneliness of this journey, the solitariness of my work, and the vexing and

patience-taxing nature of it, that, first of all, drove me to look about me for some relief and diversion. I found it in the voices of nature. From the Wabash to St. Paul I can see every turn in that road to-day. Necessity often puts upon us a habit. One time it is good—another time it is bad. In this case the habit has been a benediction to my life. It is the habit of observation of roadside beauties. And by beauty we mean all that is quaint, or picturesque, or sublime. To this day it is a positive delight to me to travel any country-road for the first time, for the changes and for the freshness of view it gives.

There came to me also from this trip the quality of stick-to-itiveness. The power of persistent and continuous labor is not natural to a child. The most industrious boy wants relief from any sort of work directly. The habit of continuous labor, so necessary in the world's work, is an acquisition. It is the requirement of grim necessity overcoming the weariness of the flesh. It may have been that I should have had an occasional day of relief from that monotonous work. And, I believe, father saw that the work given me was too severe on a boy unused to it. With every chance he had, he came to the rear, ostensibly to help me bring up the

lazy ones, but really to keep me company for the few minutes he could spare from his place with the herd. There was not a night in camp he did not look on me with pride. There was not a morning that I did not go out with the bravo of his good cheer, and the tonic of the men, who declared that I was doing all the work. I was half made to believe this, because I could seldom see the men at the sides, and it appeared to me that I was driving that great mass of cattle alone. On rainy days the rubber suits went on, with storm-cap and leggins complete; and frequently from the driving rain we had to stop the march and turn the cattle under the lee of the hills, or bunch them in the prairie, and guard them about till the storm was over. Jonah was thankful for the gourd. In the blast of the rain I was certainly thankful for the rainsuit; but I had no release from the job I had undertaken to drive clear through. This was characteristic of my father's dealings with me till I was grown. Afterwards, a few years, there was in me, for a time, a spirit of resentment against the severity of what seemed to me then, all work and no play. Father was surcharged with business energy. He did not spare himself. He was not disposed to spare others. His temper was to put all who had to do with him

on their mettle. He was not a hard man either. Capable men under him as workmen admired him. He could not tolerate laziness. He had no patience with a dolt. He had success in life, and he merited it. He followed no visionary schemes. He knew as if by instinct what it took to get honest results in any direction.

My school-days were not neglected. I had really more odd spells to myself than I then thought; but my time beyond that was not really my own. The busy press of work on the farm and with the herds would more than take up my time through the year. I had not the little liberties enjoyed by other boys in the neighborhood. Frequently it was so that the Fourth of July could not be taken. We were always loaded up with an immensity of work. But I am very sure that I was not kept in the press of the work for mercenary purposes—my work saving so much in hired help—for my father was at the farthest remove from the mercenary spirit. He was a money-maker. He loved the excitements, the push, and the risks of business; but he did not love money for its own sake. He was not a miser. To his family he was lavish to prodigality, for the times, and often in unexpected directions. His investments were not always of the wisest kind; for his domestic impulses mastered

his judgment now and then, and in this respect there was a marked contrast with his business ventures. They expressed the fact to which he never gave expression in any other way, that he was living for his family. His whole life-work was a revelation of that fact. He did not see some of the larger things of the world, such as its philanthropies for the mass. He was not public-spirited in the broadest sense. But for his family he went beyond self as fully as ever Christian gave himself in complete surrender to Christ's cause. He did not see much farther than his family. The limitations of advantage in early life prevented any broader view. His devotion to his family was the prompting of his affection. It held him through the vicissitudes of his life. It was the fountain of his strength and power. I can see now that it was his purpose and ambition not to let me go into the world empty-handed in property values, and he did not wait till he died to express that purpose. I can see now, also, that he was all the time aware that money possessions alone would result in a curse instead of a blessing. I can see now that he bestowed more care in giving me the personal investments of industry and economy, with the added faculty of patient plodding, than in the bestowal of all other things. Since I have gone

beyond the smoke of his chimney to do for myself, I have always been able to toil away from the year's beginning to its end, and keep sweet over it. I make record here of this greatest inheritance of training from my father. He did more for me than he knew. His work in building into my life this thing, accomplished that in which modern educational methods most seriously fail.

My father, after all, was, in the highest modern sense, an educated man. He had the faculty of putting himself into a special line of work, and of holding himself there for a lifetime. He put his whole thought and energy into it so that he knew his business, and he taught what he knew in the laboratory of practical life to those to whom he was responsible. The world to-day has no greater need than for this sort of workmanship. The world has gone daft over societies, and clubs, and conventions, and general by-laws, and public position, and sociological problems, and political parties, and ballots, and eloquent sermons, and addresses. We tithe mint and anise, and neglect judgment and the love of God. Old-fashioned child-training does n't count. It has gone everlastingly out of date. That small-sized business has been turned over to nurses, and kindergartens, and Sunday-schools, and day

schools, and later the colleges and universities. We are personally so busy that we can not afford to look after that small household item, and we hire it done. We let it out in job-lots; that is, we sub-let. The Almighty has an arrangement with mortals by which he proposes that one man married to one woman shall take charge of a number of these little immortals, and be responsible for them. And the fact that he has quickly put a limit on the number given to one man and one woman signifies his judgment that the two are not ordinarily competent to take care of and do a first-class job of training one more than that number. Those who think that this work is a limitation of their powers, and that they had accomplished larger things if hasty impulse had not enthralled them, laugh in the face of God's estimate of their abilities.

But I am not to preach to you in telling you stories of my childhood. I only wanted to say here that my father, in my training, made probably the most that could be made out of the stuff. This from his side of things. My mother's work on me was of another quality, and more fundamental. She had a woman's view of the higher humanities and the love of God.

We sold our cattle at highly remunerative prices to the Norwegian settlers who had recently

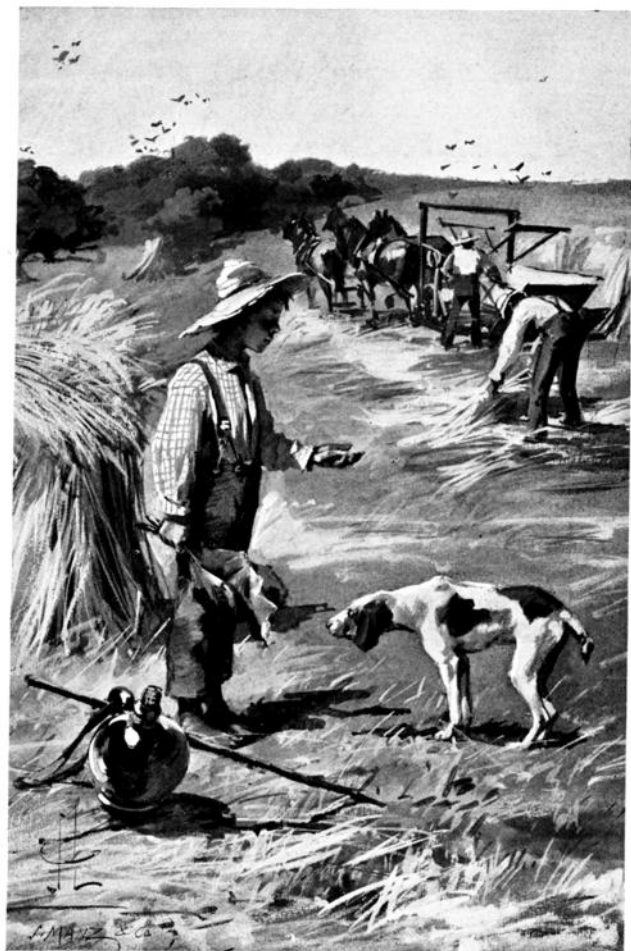
taken possession of parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota, and were still living in sod-houses. In the latter part of the summer we returned, satisfied that our eyes had not in all the journey seen so fine a farm as the one we bought from the witch-ridden Dorkey.

The spring following, there was a fine prospect of harvest; and as a declaration of war against the old cradle and sickle, a newly-invented McCormick harvester was purchased. It was a rude affair compared with what we have to-day. It was as heavy as a sawmill. It rattled like a threshing-machine. Less than four horses could not move it, and when it went at all, they had to go in a trot. The whole neighborhood was suspicious of it, not having seen anything of the kind before. The common sentiment was that it would no more work than a machine of perpetual motion. And there were some plain declaratious of opposition on the ground that it would abolish the whisky-jug and the harvest jamboree. This, it was agreed, could never be done with men who knew their rights, and no man would ever get his grain up in that country without these two things. If this new-fangled affair worked, the harvest would be over in a jiffy, and there would be no time for a drunk

and a good time. One glorious June morning this holy terror was put to work; and the fences around were lined with the whole male creation of the township, come to see the fun. Now and then, as the men would stop to blow the horses, or oil, or give the binders time to get out of the way, one of these fence-rail gents, who prided himself on his level head, would walk up to the machine, look at it, then walk back a few steps and spit. He would repeat this performance unconsciously till the machine would start to its work. The only effect it seemed to have on him was to excite his salivary glands.

A nine-year-old boy, of course, did not see all of these things at the time; and they are reported here in perspective—they are the complexes of truth.

One event that morning was to me real and of lasting remembrance. It was my business to get water to the field for the men. My dog, Daniel, was a constant companion. This animal came to our house the fall before, out of a home, and I adopted him. For years following he was my fast friend—the best I had in one sense; for if I abused him in fits of anger, he would lick my hand the moment I wanted to make up. Daniel could not talk, but he knew nearly everything I said. In some things he knew



RODNEY AND DANIEL.

more than I did. This morning he was unfortunate. He had gone into the uncut wheat and was after some kind of small game; and not being used to harvesters, the first information he had was the sickle whacking at his tail; and before he could get it out of the way he got it whacked off twice, or nearly so—the first time clear off, and the next four inches two-thirds off, so that the piece hung to one side. I took the piece that was cut off and carried it around with me for a while, and tried to fasten it on with mullein-leaves and inside strips of hickory-bark. Daniel was inconsolable. I then tried to cut off the clipped piece; but I lacked courage, and the dog was unwilling. The tail finally healed and left the cut piece on; but that part was always at a positive angle to the other part of the tail.

This mishap made Daniel the object of constant remark. I believe he knew how it looked, and was humiliated by it. For the next five years I seldom met a stranger but what I had to answer the question: "What is the matter with that dog's tail?"

Over the alarming variety of answers these strangers received, I came near losing my "reputation for truth and veracity."

Daniel was an honest dog, but after the accident his spirit seemed to be somewhat broken.

His speciality in the hunt was the opossum. He would take them from under logs and from old stumps in the day-time, and at night his delight was to run them up bushes so small, that I could bend over the bush till he could get at them. I have climbed persimmon-trees, and have shaken the lubberly things down to him. A part of the first experience I had in taking this kind of game was not very pleasant. The dog caught it as I shook it from the bush, and, with a slight shake, to all appearance, it was dead. I wanted to save the pelt, and took the dog off, and took it by the tail and started home. Presently I felt that caudal curiosity tightening around my wrist. I let go my hold, and tried to jerk loose. I got scared, and jerked so hard I fell down, with the "possum" on top. Daniel, thinking the fight was on again, pitched in, and with the first nip, the "possum" waked up, and made his best fight; and I was not able to get out from under till the fight was over. They had it out right there over me. I got up, scratched and scared out of my wits, but otherwise unhurt.

The fame of my dog in his specialty brought me quite a number of invitations from other boys to go with them at night for the training of their dogs. I went one night with two not

very reputable fellows, each older and a third larger than myself. We had caught two very large ones, and were ready to go home. We were sitting on a half-decayed log, and there came up some little contention about who should have the game. In these special training times I had been getting the catch, the other boys feeling well paid if their "pups" could get the hang of the business through the older dog. These boys proposed to divide the game with themselves, with the argument to me that I had a better chance to get more than they had. And to end the matter, suddenly, without provocation, one of the boys whirled a large opossum into the air, and brought it down over me with such terrific force as to knock me sprawling into the leaves. With this, both boys broke into the dark, in a great guffaw of laughter, each taking an opossum and making for home. My dog came to me presently, and we went home. The stroke was such a fearful one, that the whole structure of my left lung was jarred and damaged, so that I have carried a weak lung to this day, and have been a great sufferer. I kept the event to myself, and meditated revenge. But a fortnight from this time that boy took acute pneumonia, and died in twelve hours. Before he died he

asked to see me. I went to his bedside, and he said:

"Rodney, I am going to die. I want you to have that opossum-pelt. It is out in the wood-house, stretched on a board."

Was this his way of repentance? When he offered me the pelt, did he mean all the rest? Was this a way Providence had of telling me that I need not go into the revenge business, or take the weight of such responsibilities on my blessed shoulders?

I had another vivid experience, growing out of the fame of this dog in his specialty. I was given a respite of two half-days and a night between them, and I took Daniel with me on a visit to a couple of cousins, who lived fifteen miles away in the river-bottom. One of these boys was older, and one younger than myself. We went for a night-hunt in the heavy timber in the bottom. I was not acquainted with the region, and hesitated to go far from the road or the river bank. The two boys declared they knew the whole ground, and boldly led the way into the heart of the woods. We went chasing to and fro, and were having great success; but it was not long till I did not know my bearings. Presently the younger boy said, "I do n't know which way home is, no more nor nuthin'."

The older boy declared his knowledge of things, and boldly pushed on; but it was not three minutes from the time he found we were lost, till we saw that he was trying to find his way out of the woods. As soon as we found we were lost, our zest in the hunt was gone. We were not tired. We were not hungry. We were not cold. We were lost. We did not know the way home. That fact changed the whole aspect of things. The dogs were in pursuit of other game, but we did not follow them. The enjoyment of that night-hunt hung on a thing we did not appreciate till it was gone from us. Our bearings—that was one thing; the hunt was another.

When we are done with this hot chase of a life, do we know the way home? In the things we have pursued, have we been successful; and all the while have the points of life's compass been clear to us?

We called the dogs in directly. We had now more important business on hand. We traveled for an hour or two, and we were evidently going in a circle, for we came to a small tree we had cut, when we thought we were miles from it. We tried every expedient to find our direction. We knew the dogs were not lost. They were better off than we were. We tried

to drive them home, and each cur went in his own direction. We remembered that in the evening the wind was in the northwest, so we built a fire to see the direction of the flames and smoke. That was a failure. The smoke would go first in one direction, and then in another.

We knew that in the bottoms the moss grew on the north sides of the trees. We went down on our knees to feel of the roots of the trees. It was no use. The moss was either all around, or there was none at all. My dog came up to me while I was down at the root of a tree, and put his nose into my face with a questioning look, as if to say, "Have you treed something?" I felt humiliated. That dog knew the way home. As compared with my dog, I had an overplus of reason, but very clearly an underplus of instinct. There can be a state for mortals wherein it were better to be a brute. Than to be what I am, an immortal spirit, and not know the way home when the hunt of life is over, I had rather be a dog, or a stone, or a stick, or a snake, or anything I can think of.

The highest pleasure of all human activities depends largely on fundamental things that seem, in a sense, to be separate from the human interests themselves. If these things so necessary to our enjoyment or success in life go from us, either

by carelessness or neglect, we shall be engaged in none other than works of folly. The happiness of this life depends on a knowledge of the way out of it when we are done with it.

We had come to a point where we were wandering around aimlessly among the trees, trying to make an estimate of how hungry we would be before we should be found and taken out.

One thing we knew—we wanted to go north to the river, and to the road on its bank. Which way was north? We needed another item of knowledge to complete things. We were in the condition of the two Irishmen in Texas. They left their camp early in the morning, and hunted aimlessly all day with a compass in pocket, and feeling safe over the fact. When the sun had gone about down, they laid that compass on a log, and one said: "This is east; this is west; and this is north; and this is south;" and the other one said: "Good enough; and now where is the camp?"

We said, "Where is north?" We came to a slight opening in the tree-tops, and we saw the sky clear. All these years I had remembered the few lessons in star-gazing father had taught me as I sat on his knee outside the door of the Hazelgreen cabin, in the gloamings of pleasant evenings. He had pointed out to me the great

and little dipper, so that I could find them any night when I had command of the sky; but what could be done in this timber? I had enough hope that I might see the great dipper, to look out through a slight opening of the trees. There it was, standing out as brilliantly as stars ever shine. I gave a yell, and the dogs broke into the darkness in quest of game they supposed to be near. Lewis, the older boy, said:

"What's the matter now, Rodney! Better wait till we get out of here before you take a fit!"

"We will go out now," I said. "Come here a minute—you and Ambrose."

The boys came and stood behind me. One said:

"What do you see now—a 'coon, and what do you want with him?"

"No; do you see that bright star just in the edge of the leaves of that hackberry?"

"Yes."

"That is the North Star."

"O pshaw!" said Lewis. "I don't know where we are; but I know that is nearer south than north."

"Now, you two boys listen to me, or I will leave you here in the woods. I am going out of

here. Put your heads as close to mine as you can get them now, and let me show you. Do you see four large stars out here, nearly in the form of a square—the upper ones slightly farther apart than the lower ones?”

“Yes; what of that?”

“That is the bowl of the great dipper.”

“Dipper fiddlesticks,” said Lewis.

“Now, do you see three large stars running out from this bowl, and making a curve away into the top of that sycamore?”

“Yes; but yer handle is on the bottom of yer bowl,” said Lewis, in reply.

“Maybe that is the way they make dippers up there,” retorted Ambrose, beginning to yield the point, or beginning to catch at a straw, I do not know which.

“Now, you see the two outer stars in the bowl of that dipper are in a line with that great star yonder, and that is the North Star. Come this way now about ten feet. Do you see four smaller stars almost in a square, as you look to the left of that dead snag, and then three stars running out from them to the North Star?”

“No.”

“Look awhile.”

“O yes, I see it!” said Ambrose.

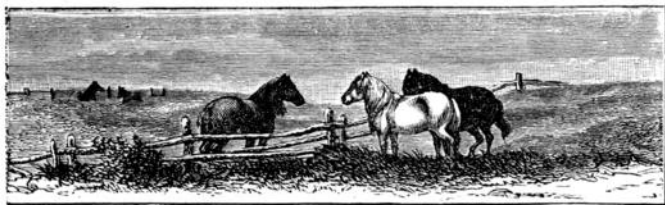
"So do I," said Lewis.

"The stars in the handle of that point toward the North Star."

I had carried my point. Lewis, now, by right of the sovereignty of superior age, became the leader of the expedition out of the woods.

What a difficult matter it is to trace a star through the tree-tops at night! Lewis cleared the way, and Ambrose cut a joint-pole by which I was led, so that I had one business—that of keeping my eye on the star. We came to a bayou. I stood on the bank and watched the star, while a boy ran each way to see if there was any way around. They returned after a time, reporting no way around. We must wade or swim. Lewis started in and waded across, the water up to his breast. In the middle of the bayou, he asked me if I saw the star. Ambrose, with the water up to his chin, asked the same question. When I was in the water up to my neck, both boys on the other bank, simultaneously asked me if I saw that star. For two hours we groped our way on the other side, and at the last we came to the river-road, and were at home in half an hour. The folks at the house were getting ready to go in search. We were tired then. We were wet and hungry, and we were wiser and less presumptuous.

How great are the things to attract and interest the mind in this overshadowed world! And it is not out of harmony with the fitness of things that we enter into all that they have for us; but like the North Star from the woodland, we need to keep our eye on the realities that are so great that no change is apparent from any point of view. The movements of the planets, we are told, are double. One is the motion around their own axes; the other is in the planes of their movements with the other planets around a common center. Life has two focals of influence: one is the hunt, the other is the compass-point for service after the hunt is over. The orbit of this life has its attraction and value; but we are in the sweep of that larger orbit from time to eternity. This is a momentous fact. It is as if we had been taken by one hand to be lifted to that city which hath foundations, while the other has been left free to hammer the iron, or push the plane, or drive a nail, or hold the plow, or garner the grain, or execute the law, or wield the sword, or dig in the mines, or guide a ship, or write a poem, or build a palace, or carve a statue, or train a child, or save a soul.



CHAPTER XII.

ANIMAL CHARACTERISTICS.

“Thus, then, to man the voice of nature spake :
‘Go, from the creatures thy instruction take.
Learn from the birds what food the thickets yield;
Learn from the beasts the physic of the field;
The arts of building from the bee receive;
Learn from the mole to plow, the worm to weave;
Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.
Here, too, all forms of social union find,
And hence let reason, late, instruct mankind.’”

—POPE.

TO learn and know the characteristics of animals and birds, tame and wild, is an education in itself. It is a kind of acquisition not received from books. It is laboratory-work. The small attention given now to this sort of knowledge, and the little importance attached to it, is not to the credit of our educational methods. Mr. Darwin strongly hints that these are our kinfolks. If this be so, then a knowledge of

animal life is necessary to an understanding of our own. Reason is not a distinguishing feature of human life. Reason is a thing of degrees, and the animals have it. Animals learn by experience as we do. They may not have the sub-reflective intellectual element, but they grow wiser as they grow older. They have memory, sorrow, courage, ferocity, strategy, deceit, reason, conscience. I put these down, because they are all well known to every country boy in all the land. One pound of plain observation is worth a hundred pounds of psychological theory.

A school-teacher, boarding at our house, was one evening explaining to father how it was that an ox knew that grass was green; and that a man knew that grass was green; and that a man knew that he knew that grass was green; and that an ox did not know that he knew that grass was green—and that was the difference between the animal and the human mind.

Father said :

“Do you see old Daniel lying there by the fire?”

“Yes; what of that?”

“Do n’t you believe he is feeling good?”

“Yes; for he is probably neither hungry nor cold.”

“How do you know that he does n’t know he is feeling good?”

"The point is not there."

"Then how do you know that he does n't know that he knows that he is feeling good?"

"Because the animal mind does not possess that double reflex of power. It can not turn any such an introspective somersault."

"Neither can a wheelbarrow climb a tree. But that does not settle the issue. I have been outwitted so often by this animal life about me, that I do not think very much of my mental superiority. My distinguishing features must be in other things. If this lower world of life, as we call it, had language as the storage and expression of thought, that might put into it the principle of progress; and man himself would be astonished, and put to his wits to keep ahead. There is a rudimentary language down here now, that has in it more than man has ever learned of it. The animals know more of our language than we know of theirs."

"I think you are correct there, Mr. Blannerhassett," said the pedagogue.

"Then who is the smartest? Animals know much of what we say to them. My cattle all know me. I go into the lot in the morning, and they follow me to the edge of the lot and ask me for a wisp of hay. They say plainly as any thing: 'Give me a wisp of hay.'"

Snifkins, the itinerant shoe-cobbler, was there that night, patching our poor soles. He seemed to wake up all at once, with a sly twinkle in his left eye, and break into the argument with a regular landslide:

"There is nothing at all remarkable about that, Rube Blannerhassett. I went down into a lot the other day, where there was a bunch of cattle, and I had n't the least acquaintance with any of them. There was an old bull down there, who not only followed me to the edge of the lot, but he lifted the gate off its hinges, and raced with me clear down to the house in the most familiar manner possible. He might have asked me for a wisp of hay if I had stopped long enough; but I did not want to keep the folks waiting for dinner—and—I—just hung one-half of my coat-tail and a part of my pants on the bull's horns, and went in the house."

The cobbler then subsided into silence for the rest of the evening. Father rallied from this sally in a few minutes, and proceeded with his argument to down the school teacher.

"I saw a two-year-old steer once that understood German. I was taking a bunch of fifty head from one of the lower counties home, and stopped over night with a Dutchman. During the night his cattle broke their inclosure,

and were mixed with mine in the morning. I separated them, as I thought, and started on; and after nightfall that day, the Dutchman overtook me, and said I had one of his steers. His Dutch was up. I gave him assurance that a thing of that kind would be made right; so next morning he pointed out his steer. I told him where I purchased that animal, and what I paid for him.

"He says: 'I call dat sterc to me, and de oders vill never mind vat I sed.' I consented to that test, of course. He began the strangest sort of cattle-calling I ever heard, and that steer put up his head, and came running to lick the Dutchman's hand for salt. I surrendered on the spot, traded with him, paid him the difference, and more, because he had me; paid him for his time, and his bill over night. The steer I left was a dead match for the one I took.

"There is a difference between the flap of a pigeon's wing after an acorn, and the flap of that wing in fright. The last will set every wing in the flock in motion. Wild geese in their migrations through the sky are organized; and when they feed, they make one of their number a sentinel on guard; and when they are through, he feeds while they watch. One honk from the sentinel puts every head up, and another puts

them on the wing. We are all familiar with the peculiar sign of the mother quail, that sends every little broodling into the nearest tuft of grass, and you may put on your specks, and you will never find a one; but you can see the mother bird playing broken leg and wing so perfectly, that you half suspect it is so, even when you know better. A colony of bees knows more about geometry than most people. An ant-hill in the barnyard illustrates the principle of self-government in a better way than any known form of human society."

"You may be right," said the pedagogue; "but what do you call that?"

"I have no name for it. The thing itself is greater than the name. It is part of the mystery of life. It is a school in which we shall not graduate soon. There is more in it than in half your colleges. *Turn a boy out among these things, and he will learn them faster than in any school.*"

"Are you opposed to the schools, then?"

"No. The schools are good and necessary, unless they undertake to monopolize the business of imparting knowledge. Shall nothing count in a child's life except the things he gets from a printed book?"

"I do as you did to the Dutchman; I sur-

render," said the teacher; and the conversation closed.

Animals soon learn that a moving object catches the eye quickly, and they make use of it for their own protection. A rabbit will lie in the thick grass till he is kicked out. One morning I was waked before day to go to the hill-pasture to look after the grazers. I had gone through the bottom, crossed the creek, climbed the bluff on the other side, which was so steep that I had to pull myself up by the bushes that grew up out of beds of matted ferns; and when I reached the summit I stopped a moment for breath. A vision of beauty was before me. Over the knolls of the high grass-land lay a hundred fat cattle, their glossy sides yet wet with the night-dew they had not yet risen to shake off. Behind me were great stretches of timber; and this elevation was above the tallest monarchs. For miles up the valley could be seen patches of the silver stream that flowed almost immediately below me. The gray streaks had gone from the east, and the borders of the sky were lit up with crimson and orange and gold, the last prophecy of the morning. But the finest lines to all this beauty were just before me. Not more than twelve feet away, on the

body of a small blue-ash tree, lay as pretty a little gray squirrel as my eyes ever saw. Not a muscle moved; but I was so near that my eye caught the breathing. I tried to trace the outlines of that squirrel on the tree. On one side I could, but on the other side, from whence came the shadows of the forest, the squirrel and the bark of the tree faded perfectly into each other. The frightened little animal was as still as death till I went near enough to lay my hand on it; then it dashed up the tree with a great clatter. I went home that morning with a song in my soul. All the reality of that scene is with me to-day. It is my own, to remain mine forever.

It is conceded that the fox-squirrel is the smartest little animal of the forest. He is as foxy as a fox, and, besides, he is brainy. In Harper's famous picture, "All Sorts in our Class," the artist does well to put the fox-squirrel up head. There is where he belongs in the animal world. With a single hunter he stands more than even chances for escape. He knows the difference between a live hunter and his coat and hat; and he can be depended on to keep on the safe side of a limb. I found a fox-squirrel one afternoon cutting hickory-nuts in a tree about fifty feet from his den. I got a shot, but so close was he to the limb, that I judge I only

scorched the hair of his neck or shoulder. I was taking my time for re-loading, as I knew he could not get from that tree to the others by the limbs, and the dog would get him at the roots if he went down; but in a moment he came part way down the body, and ran out the longest limb toward me, and from its extremest tip he made a spring, aiming to strike me directly in the face. I dodged him, but he went past my head with a brush, and before I could rally from my astonishment, and collect my wits, he was away, and up the den-tree and safe. He escaped in the only possible way. It was a daring and dangerous leap—a game of bluff, if you please—but it worked. It was a *plan*, finely wrought out in only a moment of time, under the most intelligent apprehension of the circumstances, and with no little knowledge of human nature; and it was executed with remarkable precision, and tact, and courage, and strategy.

A boy out with a gun is an untamed vandal. He shoots to hear himself shoot, and kills things he ought to let live. For a number of years two bald-eagles had nested in a very large but half-dead oak-tree that stood on the knoll of an open cattle-pound by the side of the reservoir. At the time of this incident the young ones had

been hatched and fed till they had grown too large for the nest, and they had pitched off into the underbranches of the neighboring timber. This I did not know till one afternoon I entered the woods, coming up from the lower bend of the lake; and I saw one of the lubberly things sitting on a limb quite a distance away; and with no other object except to kill something, I made a careless shot and broke its wing. It came to the ground, and when I approached it, it went floundering away under the trees, snapping at me, and making great cries for help. Help came. There was a swoop of heavy wings, and great talons piercing my hat, cutting my head, and leaving me bareheaded. When I saw the mother bird she had risen fifty feet among the trees, and was turning to renew the attack. I struck at her with the gun as she returned, missed my stroke, and fell sprawling into the leaves. She was emboldened by my discomforture, and by what certainly appeared to her a speedy victory. She flapped herself into the tops of the trees for an attack fiercer than ever. I could do nothing with the gun. The battle was on, and there was no time for any sort of preparation, even to the picking up of a club. There was nothing to do but to stand up and fight, naked-handed. I was not in danger of my life, but of being fearfully

wounded. From the dip she made in the air I could see that she intended to strike me squarely in a battle of life and death. I braced myself and she dashed into my hands, with beak and talons buried in my wrists. The blow knocked me over; and as I threw her from me, it seemed that my wrists were cut off, and both my hands went with her. She was over me again in a moment. I was on my back, with my boots in the air, doing some tall kicking. She made several charges on my boots, and I did some dexterous turning to keep the impromptu fortification next to the enemy. So the battle went on—only for a few moments, I suppose; but it seemed an hour. The wounded eaglet had gone into hiding and become quiet; and with the fury of the mother bird assuaged by this, she flew out through the tree-tops and was gone. I was willing to call it a drawn battle. I had been ready to quit from the start. I was suffering with my wounded hands and wrists, but I was thankful I was not dead. I went home with nothing for the day's hunt but what I got in education. I think I needed that particular scourging. Afterwards I could have killed her; but in admiration of her courage and splendid fighting qualities, I let her go.



BREASTWORKS NEXT TO THE ENEMY.

The next summer these two eagles nested in the same tree. My respect for the female since she gave me such a fight, was so great that I took profound interest in them; and as I spent the summer largely in the fields in sight, I had an opportunity to watch their movements from the early spring days to late August, when the young and old ones were not easily distinguished. First, there was the rude packing of dry sticks and willow branches and thorn-brambles into the decayed fork of the oak-tree; then the love-making, the nesting, and the great flight of the birds. It was a common thing to see them about eight o'clock in the morning start into the sky, and quickly fly out of sight, and then, swift as a bullet, they would drop down again, and sweep away to the dead trees standing in the water on the farther side of the lake. What a fierce, wild spirit they had! The eagle takes first place among birds. It was a fitting thing that the conquering Roman legions were led to victory by the eagle emblem in pure gold. The eagle is the adopted American bird, and is finely expressive of the American character. What boldness, what daring and swiftness of flight and endurance, and, withal, what a high spirit!

The fable has it that an eagle one morning made a visit to an owl in the underbranches of the forest.

"Good morning," said the eagle. "I have come to make you a friendly call, and to ask you if you would not like to take a fly with me into the morning air to-day?"

"I am glad you have come to see me," said the owl; "but I do not greatly enjoy the mornings; I prefer the splendid melancholy and silence of these shadows."

"But, my friend, the sunshine is so much better than the darkness. The day is better than the night. The day was certainly not made for this hiding, and the night was not made for activity, but for rest. It appears to me your tribe is coming, more and more, under the thrall of darkness. If your ancestors had fought against this drooping love of sitting on a limb in the shade, your species had not been so owlish to-day. For your race there is yet time to retrieve. Spurn the darkness. Kiss the sunlight. Leave this dismal swamp. Take a whirl or two each morning into the upper air."

"You are certainly a vivacious bird," said the owl, sagely. "I know you belong to a species greater than mine, and I do not care for a controversy with you. I have heard your screams

overhead, and have spent no little time in comparison of my contemplative and philosophic spirit with yours; and I have not been able wholly to commend either my own course or yours. I only know that, through heredity and the manner of my own life, I have a special adaptation and liking to these shadows."

"I am aware that you are in my power," said the eagle; "but at present I am neither hungry nor belligerent. My contention is that, as birds of prey, your species would be greatly helped and advantaged by getting out of the swamps. Come, take a fly with me into the heavens."

"I am honored with your visit, and I accept your courtesies," said the owl. With that they pitched through the tree-tops into the air, one screaming, the other blinking his eyes.

"This is too bright for me," said the owl.

"Come on," said the eagle. "It is better farther up. This first glimpse you have is like the blinding of the snow. You will see glorious beauties directly."

"My wings are getting weary, and I must return to the shade," said the owl.

"Come up higher, and you will reach the fountains of the pure air," said the eagle.

"I am blinded in this light, and I bid you good-day," said the owl, as he turned in search

of the shadows; and the eagle went on to meet the sun.

When circumstances are greater than the creature, there is degradation. It is so with the human spirit. To surrender to them is to perish. To conquer and make use of them is to live forever.

The most interesting period in the nesting of these two eagles was after the eggs had been hatched, and the old birds had begun to feed their young. Then were they fiercest in fight, as I had already learned. Then were they most skillful in taking the finest fish of the lake. Then was there a daily clatter of young and old over the nest. The young ones soon became too large for the nest. From down and pin-feather they had come to full plumage. One day a crisis came. It occurred in eagle language and life, and I translate it here.

A fine fish had been brought from the waters, torn to tidbits, and put into the mouths of the young ones, and the mother bird then said to them:

"My children, have we not taken good care of you to this day?"

"Yes, yes," said both the young ones.

"Have you not had the best fish of this lake,

with young rabbit, and quail, and grouse, and pheasant for your food; and have we not sheltered you in the storm, and stood vigil over you at night?"

"All that, all that!" said the sleepy squabs.

"Well, do you know you are getting too large for this nest? Besides it is not for an eagle to lie in a nest and be fed. You are about grown now, and grown eagles know how to fly. See here now, come with me;" and with this she bounded into the air, and filled it with such vigorous calls that quite an amount of spirit was shown by the eaglets. They stood up in the nest, shook their great wings, and made crying complaint; then they tumbled back into the nest to keep out of danger, and let well enough alone, as they had wanted for no good thing till that hour. Then the mother bird became enraged. She snapped her beak over them till they cowered into the sticks. She tore the nest from under them, and left them clutching to the bare tree. She pushed one off, and it went floundering toward the ground. She was under it in a moment, and carried it a thousand feet into the sky, then let it go. What a tumbler! Half way to the ground it got its balance, and made an angle for the ground a half mile away, and lay panting, with wings outstretched, on the

meadow; but for the first time in its life it felt the thrill of the eagle spirit. During this time the male bird caught the other eaglet, and flew with it into the sky, and let it go. With this struggle in the air, the eagle spirit was awakened, and to fly became with them a consuming passion.

I would rather be an eagle than an owl. To choose a high course, and pursue it, is to master all circumstances. The contemplation of high thoughts and purposes is exalting, and it is a sign of victory. To be fed and cared for, and to grow fat, is to remain a squab. We never accomplish what we never undertake. There is no success without effort. Strength and confidence come of effort. We know our faculties and powers by experiment. To reach the great end of life, we must get beyond the idea of physical protection. The young eaglets really were as safe in the air as in the nest. The brooding wings were to see that they did not fall; but they were of much greater value in teaching them to fly. It were better for the young eagles to be dashed to death on the ground than to remain in the nest. To make no trial of powers, is to court the extinction of the species. Eagles do not tolerate a broodling if it makes no heroic effort to fly. We see in this the meaning

of effort and struggle. The world expects young people to undertake something. In honor, it does not care what. Eagles do not care which way the young ones fly; but they will slay them if they do not try to fly; and in great reason, for in that case they had better be dead than alive.

Linger around the home-nest till the powers are plumed, and then dare and do. Choose an individual struggle with the world. To be a dependent, is to become a weakling, sooner or later. Have you the stuff in you to plan your own life? Then cast everything in the issue to achieve or die, and you will not die. You shall have life, and a place here and for evermore.

Naturally we expect wild animals of every species to save themselves by flight when pursued. This is the rule, except with the skunk. He comes toward you at sight. He is a very confiding and friendly little animal. If you are anywhere about his den, he would rather be near you than not. He will meet you half way any time. He will walk between your legs, and put his fore paws against your boots like a pet cat. You would think he had known you always, and yet you do not feel like offending him. You look for him to see his mistake directly, and run away and mind his own business; but he still

confides in you. You do not feel like letting him know that he is officious. You hesitate to kick him, or hit him with a stick, or even kill him on the spot. You keep quiet, and wish he would excuse himself. You call him all the pretty names you can think of, and slowly walk away, all the while feeling peacefully uncomfortable for fear he will be mean and troublesome. And if you make your escape, you do so with an exhilarated feeling, as if you had gone into some high region, where the air was full of ozone. This has an application to life.

One autumn day I went into the hickory-groves north of the reservoir to lay in my winter supply of nuts. As I was tying my horse in the edge of the grove I heard the crack of a rifle, and I looked up to see two men turn a beef on its side from where the gun had dropped it, and with a knife they bled it there on the ground. This was a familiar sight to me, and, without further attention to it, I turned into the woods near by, and began to fill my sack with nuts. The ground here was literally covered, and it became a question as to how great a weight I could fill and put across the saddle. For three or four hours I worked away, and hardly looked up. The butchers had loaded

their beef and gone; but they had done a thing not allowed by the owners of cattle on the prairie. They had killed this animal where the herds could get to the blood and scent it. It was understood that a thing of this kind should not be done, because it brought about quite a number of unfortunate and unprofitable conditions. Cattle turned upon the open prairie are not disposed to range everywhere. With care they can be made to keep a limit of territory, say of two or three miles around, and this without herding. The leading cattle-raisers of the country had an understanding about the ranges of their herds; and, with a sort of squatter's claim on his geography, each stockman would take his herd, great and small, in the spring, and let them get their habits to certain waters and certain salting places, and their disposition was then to keep in the same bounds the whole summer. The stock did better in this way, and were much easier to find in the fall. There was one dreaded thing that would break the value of this nature's law. The scent of fresh blood of their kind would mix all the herds, and throw everything into confusion. It would produce great restlessness for days, and it brought on mortal combats among the bulls. A stray heifer directly came grazing up from the water's edge, and pres-

ently she scented this blood. She began bellowing in a fearful way. In five minutes there were a dozen animals on the spot; in ten minutes there were a hundred—all bellowing and sniffing the air and horning the ground. The noise now went out over the prairie, and the herds began to rush in from all directions. In a half hour there were a thousand head of cattle there.

What awful language of sorrow this scented knowledge of the death of one of their kind will bring from a drove of cattle! What lonesome and unpleasant feelings it produces! To those who never heard this sound, it can not be described. Distant thunder is sublime, but it is never so awful as this. Thunder is the expression of inanimate power—this is the voice of life in its own death-wail. When a large number of cattle get under the spell of the blood-bellow, they are for the time simply unmanageable; and the oldest herdsmen will mount their horses and ride out of hearing till it assuages itself. This day I could no longer endure the sound; so I tied my sack, and threw it over the saddle, to ride away. As I mounted I saw old Emperor, the leader of our own herds, coming across the prairie, with large numbers of our own brand following him. He was a great red-roan giant, near two thousand pounds in weight; and his strides

shook the ground about him as he came. I tried to head him off. He paid no attention to me, and I had to get out of his way. He horned his way through the packed mass three hundred feet deep, throwing them to each side as if they were so many small fry, till he stood with his nose at the spot—and such a defiant and awful roar! It rose above the bellow of the cows and younger cattle as the hollow echo of a storm in the mountain gorges rises above the shrill whistle that only brings the snow and sleet. The cattle kept coming. The canal, two hundred paces to the north, was here a boundary for the prairies above us, but the cattle from them were, by the score, now swimming the water and mounting the tow-path, only to plunge their dripping sides into the long grass and make for the scene. To my consternation, I saw the great bull of the north herds, King Lear, push his head up over the bank, then come into full view, and leading a hundred others, rush pellmell for the place. The thing sent a chill through me. King Lear belonged to a herdsman in the Birch Valley, who was careful not to let him cross the water; but this bellowing for the first time brought him over. He was fully as large as Emperor—a dark brindle, with stripes around the sides like a tiger, and with long, shaggy hair over his eyes,

and half hiding thick, stocky horns that had stood the test of a hundred battles. I knew what was coming. These strange bulls, meeting here, would fight to the death. I threw my nut-sack into the top of a bush and urged the horse through the crowded mass, if possible, to keep them from meeting. King Lear had the start of me, and in no time the two animals were sniffing the air opposite each other over the spot where the beef had been killed. No sign of grass was now to be seen. The prairie-sod had already been pawed and horned away, and the earth had been thrown out more than a foot deep. The two bulls caught sight of each other. From each there was a roar of defiance, a lashing of tails, and a straight charge. The clash shook the ground; and each animal recoiled from it with a snort of blinding pain. Emperor threw his head into the air, and the blood shot from his nose. It looked as if he had met defeat at the first onset. I remember I cried. I could not stand and see him killed; and with the fool-hardiness of a boy I rushed in to separate them. I might as well have been in Guinea for all the good I did. I rode between them. They were about to charge under the horse, and I had to get out of the way. The battle stopped the bel-lowing, and the mass moved backward, and I



EMPEROR AND KING LEAR.

rode round and round the maddened bulls, trying to get Emperor's attention and drive him away. The truce from the first charge lasted but a few seconds. They moved sideways, came together, and locked horns for a trial of strength. What fearful, wild animalism! Nothing more terrific in Spanish delights or Roman amphitheater was ever seen. Emperor's sharp horn went into the temple of the brindle bull, and with the faintest flinch he rushed upon him and rolled him on the ground; and, missing his second stroke, he threw himself to his knees. Both bulls came to their feet with horns locked; and both were furiously maddened by their roll in the sod. In the clash, now, Emperor's left horn was suddenly snapped short off. This broke the lock, and both went to their knees. I cried again. Must I see the king of our herds killed before my eyes? But Emperor's courage was not gone, nor his strength. He was first to his feet, and he dashed into his foe before he could straighten himself for the charge, and rolled him clear over in the sod, and, with a ferocious plunge, he sent his sound horn full into King Lear's side. With that I shouted in savage triumph. Since the world was, it has made a difference whose ox is gored. King Lear did not get up. He bawled. Emperor shook his bloody head as if disdaining

to strike again a fallen foe, and slowly walked away. King Lear bled to death in half an hour. I made haste for home, and before night we had Emperor's broken horn tarred and bandaged. This battle became the news of the country.

I have in mind, also, a case of conscience and character. A part of my work for a few years was to drive and manage a four-horse team. The two leaders were match-horses. They were fine and likely and spirited. They made a better show than anything on the farm—so we drove them on Sunday. They were fine steppers with red tassels in their brow-bands. They would dance in the harness, and pull, if everything was all right with the driver and the harness, and the grade was moderate, and the load reasonable; but they were easily rattled, and when rattled they would not pull a pound.

On the near side at the wheel was a great black horse of fine proportion, and generally true; but there was a limit to his reliability. On the off side at the wheel was an old bald-faced sorrel horse we called Tom. Tom was not a beauty. He would not go on the market at all. Tom had a swayed back, an ungainly jaw, and a Roman nose. He had a large-jointed, flat leg, and the ugliest kind of feet, that looked as

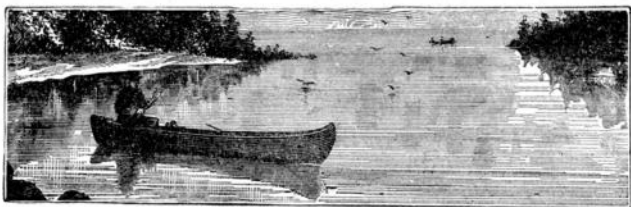
if they had just melted and run out over the ground. He was pathetically ugly. But the stay-chain was always on old Tom's side. There was no need of any stay-chain on the other side, for his end of the double-tree never went back. Tom was an honest horse. He was always ready, always willing, always even-tempered, and would pull at a heavy load uphill whether the other horses pulled or not. If old Tom ever had a wicked delight, it was to pull a balky horse down under the wheel. Father used to say to me: "Now, Rodney, if you get in the mud, and you are about to stick, keep the leaders out of the way, and put the bud to old Tom." Time and again, when the leaders would flinch, I have mounted Tom's back to give him a little more weight; and I have put my boot-heels into his sides, and felt the stay-chain tighten as he would catch a long breath for a pull; then the traces would twang, Tom's muscles would turn into iron, and the load would move. Because of his sterling worth, Old Tom was a family favorite. He was not for sale at any price. We kept him till he died, and we all went to the funeral, and gave him an honorable burial deep under the sod, where the crows could not get at him. If ever horses get to heaven, old Tom is there; and he is willing to pull at

any heavenly load. If holiness there be on the bells of the horses, old Tom will be girded with bells from fetlock to mane.

There are people like my leaders. They are more showy than trusty. They are beautiful, but not reliable. They are good for a parade and to cut a dash. They are coach-and-four people. For a steady pull and a heavy load they are not worth anything. Usually about the time old Tom got the load out of the tug of it, the leaders in my team would link in, and, for a rod or two, nearly pull the tongue out of the wagon. Old Tom would take a long breath or so, and go quietly along about his business, as if nothing unusual had happened. The leaders, after taking hold at the wrong time, would quiver, and snort, and pant, and dance for an hour. A stranger coming along the road would give credit to the wrong horses for pulling the load out of the mud.

The bulk of the work of this world is done by solid pulling. And for this sort of work there is not much credit given at any time. In the steady going necessary to achieve it, there is not much chance for show. And the people who do this kind of work are seldom recognized as leaders in society. A few fine-conditioned people are always belaboring these slow pullers for their

slowness. The fine folks are more generally reformers and philanthropic in spirit. They have fallen in love with humanity (in the abstract), and they take an advanced stand. So did the leaders in my team; but they did not do much pulling. Do you know it is one of the easiest matters to take an advanced stand on great questions affecting a community? There is more reputation and glory to the square inch of merit in it than in any other position one can occupy. So there are people who make a dash in the closing hours of a great and patient work, and carry the laurels from the steady toilers, with those who do not know them. Usefulness and honesty are the broadest terms expressive of character. They are the sum of the most admirable qualities. When an honest man speaks, God listens. When an honest man comes to die, God says: "Get ye ready, my ministers; an honest man is dying. Gather the hosts, and go down to the gate. Open wide the portals, and when he comes, shout ye, shout ye, and bring him to this coronal of universal praise!"



CHAPTER XIII.

FISHING SCRAPES.

“Just in the dubious point where with the pool
Is mixed the trembling stream, or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hollowed bank,
Reverted, plays in undulating flow,
There throw, nice judging, the delusive fly;
And, as as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game.”

—THOMSON.

WITH a friend, last spring, I went fishing. I had a twenty-five-dollar fishing-rod. I had the finest and most tempting bait. It was the right month in the year, and the right time in the month. It was the right sort of a day—a fresh, balmy atmosphere, and with the air so still that there was not a ripple on the surface of the waters. I also looked at the emboweled man in the almanac, and saw that the signs were right. I fished all day, and never got a nibble. I doubt if there was a fish in a mile of

the bait. Seines, and traps, and dynamite—these have played havoc with the fish. If Isaac Walton were living now, he would die of a broken heart.

Some visitor at Niagara wrote that you could get the use of a pole and a line there an hour for a dollar. You could get some bait for a dollar. You could also get a man to show you the best place to fish for a dollar. But there was no use, he said, in paying that last dollar; one place was as good as another—they did not bite anywhere. It makes no difference now where you fish. These are degenerate days.

The things that I tell you here are rather fishy; but I am to record the facts. Our house was a half mile from the Wabash and Erie Canal, the great enterprise before mentioned, extending from Evansville, northward and eastward, three hundred and seventy-four miles to the Ohio line. It was begun in 1832, and completed in 1853, at a cost of construction of over six millions. It never paid the hundreth part of one per cent on the investment. It went to decay, and to the fishes, soon after it was first put into running order. Its waters were alive with every variety of fish known to the rivers and lakes of the region. And in turn it became a great hatching-pool to stock the creeks, and more especially the reser-

voir, which was its feeder at this point. Water-moss grew along the edges of the bed three or four feet out, and there was an equal space of clear water in the center. I have seen this open space black with fish for hundreds of yards in length.

One afternoon, when I had finished the first plowing of the corn in the bottom field, about three o'clock, I took an old rusty hook, and tied to it a string four feet long, pinched a bullet over it above the hook, tied the string to an ungainly pole, and, with angle-worms for bait, I caught in two hours a string of fish greater than I could lift into the wagon. The beauty of this fishing was in the fact that I could see the fish, and I disdained to put down the bait, except as the larger ones would be near to take it. I caught more than ten pounds of fish with one worm.

My first fishing alone, however, was for catfish. These are not a game fish, and you can put on your muscle and throw them into the trees behind you, if the size of the fish befits the feat. A catfish can make the greatest resistance to being pulled out of the water of any known. It is better to fish for him with a cork. He takes hold of the bait in such a bull-dog and definite

sort of way, that you can take your time to surprise him with the fact that he is snared. You can fish for catfish, and if they do not bite freely, you can take a nap between bites.

My place this afternoon, I tell you about, was at the first fork of a great tree that had been chopped into the lake, and whose top reached out into the deep water of the slough. It was a day for yellow-cat. I had taken quite a number of small ones and had re-baited, and had lain down on the log for a nap, really wishing to be let alone, and purposing to let the next meddler take the bait or snare himself. I had just gotten myself into position, when there was a great surge at the pole under me, and with my effort to get hold of it, before I could gain my purchase, another surge pulled me into the water. I lost my hold; but as soon as I found I could touch bottom, I made for the pole again. The strength of that fish, making for the channel, brought consternation to me. Time and again in my efforts to pull him ashore, I nearly lost my wits in the immensity of his plunges. In spite of myself, before he became worn out, he had taken me fifty feet out into the lake, where the depth of the water gave me little or no purchase. For a long time that day it was a question whether a boy would get a fish, or a fish

would get a boy. I got the fish after more floundering in the water than I had bargained for. He was a twelve-pounder.

One of the favorite methods of fishing in these days was with a spear or trident. The three barbed prongs had a handle ten feet long, and to this a cord was attached to return the instrument after striking the fish, or in case of a miss. The largest fish in these waters was the pond-fish. He could only be taken with the spear. He would sink himself in the mud and let a seine go over him, or he would break through the meshes like a dart. This fish is fond of playing and feeding in the shallow, muddy water, flushed by the spring rains. He could only be found in the flooded grass, or in the elbow-brush, where a freshet had thrown the lake beyond its boundaries. Your stroke with the trident must be directed by the waves he produces on the surface as he moves, and he must be held firmly to the ground till he is over the struggle. I have taken out these fish nearly equal in weight to my own body.

The buffalo was altogether the finest general purpose fish of these waters. He is a good feeder, a good fighter, and a good grower. In

May and June great schools of these fish came up out of the deep water to have a romp in the shallows. Frequently, from these herds, hundreds of pounds can be taken before they take fright. When they become aware of the presence of an enemy, the fun is over in a minute. Finding himself pursued, the buffalo makes a sound of fright that can be plainly heard, but can not be expressed in letters. It is more nearly like the muffled working to and fro of the bottom of a tin pan than anything else. Make as great an effort as possible to sound the letter B with your mouth shut, and you approach it. The leaders first sound this alarm. Then hundreds take it up with an answer somewhat different. The noise must be the sudden explosion of the air-sack into the water. With your head under the water, this noise is like distant thunder. When you are fishing for buffalo and hear this sound, put up your tackle and go home.

The black bass was our game fish. For the true fisherman they gave the finest sport. They were too quick for the spear. To take them with a hook was a fine art, which but few possessed. They were a prey to the nets and seines; but this is business. There was neither sport nor skill about it. You bait your

hook for a black bass; but you catch him, not with that, but with "guile." You must know him and his haunts. You must know what sort of a fish he is, and when he gets hungry, or you may fish in the waters full of him, and never tempt him to your snare. In all our country there were only two skillful fishermen for black bass. There was a tradition that they did not bite for boys at all. In this particular, I know, my blood was up. I quit fishing for all other kinds. The two men who knew best how to take them never took company. But, after much persuasion, I was one day permitted to become a silent partner with the crack fisherman of the region. Of course there was much of his work that could not be imparted by words, or even by seeing him do it. Experience is the only school-master. Two things I did learn: one was, do not try to land your game straightway; the other was, keep still. Successful fishermen go alone. A noisy crowd never caught game fish; they catch minnows and turtles. Absolute silence is an essential with the black bass. The knock of the oar on the boat, the jar of your heel on the bottom, a cough or a sneeze, will send them out of reach in two seconds, no more to return for that day. They go at the least noise, and they go to stay.

The third day from my solemn day's watching the crack fisherman, I took my outfit and little boat at the first sign of morning, and rowed down the arm of the lake, and then a mile west to the mouth of Splunge Creek. The orb of the sun was half way up over the tops of the bottom trees on the other side of the lake, and was beginning to build a bridge of orange and gold across the stretch of water to the western shore, and the ducks and geese which had taken to the center of the lake for the night were beginning to move towards the shore for feeding, when I tied my boat to an old snag about fifty yards from the edge. The water here was in a slight current, and about three feet deep. I had taken every precaution. I had crept to that place, using one oar, and with all the stealth of an Indian. I had on three articles of apparel—a hat, a shirt, and a pair of pants. I had a long, slender willowy pole, and a line of tested strength. It was made of homespun flax-thread. I had forty-three splendid silver-sides in the minnow-bucket. The silence was oppressive. I could hear my heart beat, and it came near jumping out of my throat, as I was holding my breath baiting the hook with the first minnow, when a mallard-duck, with a great clatter and quack-quack, flew out of the

covert of grass near by, and went scudding away across the smooth water. The thing so startled me that, with a nervous twitch, I dropped the minnow overboard. A great whirl in the water a moment after showed the game present. I baited again, quicker than I can write it, and threw the hook out. It had not gone two feet under the water until it was taken. Swish—sciz-z-z! went the line, out to full tension, then back, and around the boat; and five minutes were gone before that monstrous bass was taken in. There was no waiting for the game that morning. The water was alive with it. The fish in the water seemed to regard the snared ones as making sport for them. They would play about the victims till they were taken into the boat. A thirteen-year-old boy at one end of the pole and a six-pound bass at the other—what majestic sport! Did your nerves ever feel the thrill of this sort of excitement? There is no human sensation like it. There is more nervous exhilaration in it than in a shock of electricity. A fine fish, worth the taking, is able to send up the line and over the pole into your arms and nerves a dance of indescribable delight. This morning the fish quit biting at nine o'clock. I was weary with my splendid catch; but I had a hundred pounds of as fine fish as were ever taken



A HUNDRED POUNDS OF BLACK BASS.

from any place. This exploit made me king fisherman that summer. I had suddenly become famous. I enjoyed the notoriety, because my boyish mind was filled then with that sort of thing. Of ambition, I had never thought. Of philanthropy, I had never learned that there was such a thing. Whether I was a sinner or not, I did not know, and did not care. I had never yet thought of giving a moral account of myself. No human demand of that kind had ever been made on me. I do not believe the good God had made any, for his reckoning with me came later on. I only knew that I loved fishing better than bread. The sport was a delight to me for its own sake. Call it what you will. Name it the remains of savagery, to which heredity clings—no difference. It is fun to fish when they bite.

The lake containing these fish was artificial. The embankment that held it was a mile and a quarter in length, and of immense proportions. Five hundred Irishmen worked at it for more than a year. One contractor had the north end, and another the south end. During the time of the building of this dam, a strife arose between the contractors. The man on the south was paying seventy-five cents a day for able-bodied men. The man on the north was short of hands, and

offered eighty cents, and soon got nearly all the men. The man on the south nursed his wrath two weeks, and offered eighty cents and a jigger of whisky. The north works were vacated. As a standing offer it took from him his imported help as fast as it would arrive. Whisky was the drawing card ; but it cost the south contractor his life. In a drunken *melée* he was killed by one of his men. Then the northern man secured the whole job, and finished the dike without whisky.

During the time of this whisky contract the Irish camp at night was an awful pandemonium. The one dram each day was a whet to the Irish appetite that afterwards knew no bounds. The night-camp was an inferno. Many a poor man lost his life in its drunken brawls. There being no burial-grounds near, it was their custom to take their dead comrades with them to the works each morning, and lay the body in the embankment, and before night it would be buried thirty feet deep in the earth of the great construction, there to await the resurrection morn. During the day these plodding builders would not forget to mention the virtues of the deceased. In place of a priest, their fulsome praises of the dead were made to answer for a funeral service. About the same things were said of each man ; but they were put in terms strong enough to

satisfy the living that splendid things would be said of them, if any one of them should be killed, and as like as any by the very man who might swing the club to crack his brain.

Next day after Jimmy was killed in the "Irish dance," the men would put his wheelbarrow where they could all pass by it, and each man paid his respects to the memory of the dead.

"Poor Jimmy!"

"Jimmy was a good boy, Jimmy was."

"Jimmy was a game man, but he had bad luck last night."

"Jimmy was a foine man with a shovel, Jimmy was. No man on the works could hold a candle to Jimmy. The works will suffer, the works will suffer."

"Jimmy was as plucky a man as ever yese see. He would pick his man at the drop of a hat."

"Yes, poor Jimmy was too free that way. So he is dead to-day."

"But Jimmy was a good Catholic. He had no priest to shrive his soul; but the Holy Mary will be merciful to Jimmy when she knows the grit in the man."

In the course of a few years this lake filled with the myriad life of the finny tribe, and attracted idlers to its banks for an easy living.

The land immediately about was largely owned by the Canal Company, and these idlers took a squatter's claim, built cabins, and were spending a free and easy life. They were pre-empting the best fishing-grounds, and making a monopoly of the business. They were turning the Sabbath into a day of hunting and sport. They were gambling and running houses of infamy to the ruin of scores of young men. They were killing the cattle of herdsmen for meat, and were becoming insolent of what they called their rights.

It came to pass that the land-owners of the region, to get rid of this bad citizenship, decided to cut the embankment, and let the lake into the river. The law formally protected the company; but the whole canal scheme having failed of its purpose, there was no utility in the lake, and if cut, in case of resuscitation of the canal project, the lake could be restored at an expense of a few hundred dollars. There was a plot to cut it out, but it was a plot in the interests of decency and good morals. The time set to cut the embankment was on a certain November night. A particular wild Irishman—a land-owner, professing friendship—gave the plot to the fishers; and, unexpectedly, these forty or more men, when they had reached the place for the cutting,

found as many or more fishermen, armed to the teeth, and in possession of the embankment. Shovels and pickaxes were of no service against pistols and shotguns; so there was nothing to do but to retreat in good order, if possible. The hot-headed among the fishermen were urging war on the spot. They proposed to make use of the advantage. The land-owners scattered and dismounted, and stood behind their horses. The cool-headed among the fishermen were disposed to be peaceable. In one sense they had the advantage; but to make use of it would avail little. In an attack in the dark they could not hope to kill many of these law-breakers, and there would be a hereafter. The fishermen were disposed to parley. Under the shadow and covert of a thick grove of walnut-trees, the land-owners had quietly gathered for council, and had decided to ride off, leaving the men in possession, when the leader of the other party called out in the dark:

“I will meet your spokesman, and he shall not be harmed.”

The leader of the citizens thereupon walked out with four others, and held a consultation with them. The fishermen said they were there to protect their property interests. They admitted the count of bad morals and thieving, and prom-

ised to lead in a reform. The parley closed with an agreement that the lake should stand two years, to give the fishermen time to wear out their nets, and then the dike should be cut. But at the end of the two years the fishers were better equipped than ever.

On another blessed November night, at the late hour of eleven, the old clan met at the place of its former defeat, armed to the teeth, and with trusty pickets and scouts to guard the workmen while the embankment was being cut through. Before daylight there was a stream running through, two feet wide and eighteen inches deep. Before night next day, the crevasse was fifty feet wide and ten feet deep. What a fearful torrent and flood of water rushed out to flood the low-lands beyond! What multitudes of damage-suits followed! Several arrests were made for the destruction of public property; but nothing came of them, except a number of fat attorney's fees.

All this is incidentally preliminary to a great fishing time. After the water had run about half down in the lake, some parties staked the crevasse, and kept the bulk of the fish from entering the river. They had finally to resort to the bed of the creek, which was three miles or more in length, and to an occasional bayou, and

to an original shallow pond covering about forty acres. With the approach of winter the water froze over, and on the ice fell an eighteen-inch snow. The fish were so packed in this confinement, and so shut off from the air by this covering, that when a hole was cut in the ice, they rushed up to it like pigs to a trough. They could be taken out with any sort of snare or sharp instrument. The common tool used was a pitchfork. The news of this sort of fishing soon spread over the country, and the creek and pond were lined with men with teams, and hundreds of tons were taken within a fortnight. I cut a small hole in the ice near an old log, and in two hours and a half took from it fifteen hundred pounds of fish. Alas! there was no skill in this, and there was no luxury in it. The whole community was surfeited with fish. Besides, the goose that laid the golden egg was slain. I have had a thousand regrets about the destruction of this beautiful lake of water. With that, my fishing days were ended.



CHAPTER XIV.

"WILD OATS"—TWO CROPS.

"Stinkingest of the stinking kind,
Filtth of the mouth, and fog of the mind,
Africa that brags her foyson,
Breeds no such prodigious poison."

—LAMB.

"Take the open air,
The more you take the better;
Follow Nature's laws
To the very letter;
Let the doctors go
To the Bay of Biscay;
Let alone the gin,
The brandy, and the whisky."

—ANON.

ONE afternoon, I was sent out over the neighborhood to invite hands in to help raise the new barn-timbers next day. I had made my way partly around, and passing through a wood-lot, I fell in with a boy who had been to Hazel-green in the forenoon, and had purchased a new style of Star-plug tobacco. He was chopping

wood and chewing tobacco, especially the latter. He was very much in love with the quality of his plug. He could take that thing from his pocket, and put it to his lips with more than ordinary gusto and manly dignity. I thought I never met a boy with as fine manners. He showed me how to swing an ax, and to strike the timber at just the right angle to throw the chips. He gave me quite a number of samples of how a boy did who was able to put on airs. I borrowed a chew of tobacco. This fellow was a liberal soul, and offered it freely. He urged it on me. Tobacco-users, they say, are all free-hearted. They will divide the last chew with a fellow-mortal, though he be a stranger. And they take to themselves great credit for this trait, as if they were some sort of superior beings, made so by the possession of the bent of this appetite. The whole guild is more or less self-deceived by that thing. That is not free-heartedness, or liberality, or a desire to benefit others, but a desire to divide a certain amount of filthiness and sin with others. Mortals are given to deceiving themselves with the notion that, if others are involved in similar weaknesses and sins with their own, there is a divided responsibility. This high spitter of a boy, with all his airs, was not exactly easy with his fresh plug,

and he sought to involve another boy for companionship. He succeeded. He made me feel like a child in his presence, and then made a fool of me. I took a chew, and went on. There was a pretty girl at the next house. I had my pockets full of sweet notes from her, and another was due me. I intended to go in there and make myself agreeable; but before I reached the gate, I was having some very disagreeable feelings. I halted at the gate, made my errand known, and, with very little courteous ceremony, I turned down the path that led out into the woods toward home. I walked in the path alone for a while, and then, using the path for direction, I made it from tree to tree. I saw things green, and I saw things black. Then I turned completely blind. The world would whirl half way round with me, and then whirl back. The path before me would wriggle like a struck serpent, then come up before my eyes and scatter itself, till I could not find it. Several times the path scattered itself among the tree-tops, and I could not go on without it. While holding to the trees, I had the sensation of slipping up to the tops, of turning to a turkey-buzzard, and of soaring into the sky, and vomiting filth and carrion over the fields. I would get about a mile high, then I would turn to a jackass, and go thundering to

the ground; and with an awful thrash I would bring up at the roots of the tree where I started. I remember at the time wondering at that. After one of these flights, I could see the path again for a few yards ahead; then the green and the black would return, and the path would sift itself out through the tree-tops, and I would take a greater buzzard-flight than ever, turn to a jackass, lose my powers of flight, and come to the ground with an awful thud. Alighting seemed to knock me into my senses for a few minutes. I made this trip three separate times. You say I was sick? Yes, I was really sick; but it was doubtless good for me that I got such first-class entertainment out of my first chew. It induced me to go out of the business, then and there. If the nausea of the poisonous narcotic had come into my system by tidbits, I might have been a tobacco-user. But, soberly, will a weed that throws the body and brain into that sort of furor be of any value to either? Some one has defined a cigar as "a little roll of tobacco, with fire at one end, and a fool at the other."

I do not fully understand how I came through my boyhood days sober and respectable. Since I am not a drunkard, I am certainly not a creature of circumstances. Environment some-

times works its opposite. It produces disgust, and throws one the other way. The laziest man in all our country raised a remarkably industrious boy. The healthful influence of opposites, however, is only exceptional. The law of an evil life is in the direction of the sway of temptation. The old Lanning grocery in Hazel-green was a standing woe. It was a miserable shanty, with a rude counter along one side and across one end, and on this counter was the great whisky-barrel, with a faucet and a tin-cup. The drinking of rum, the debauchery, and bloodshed of this hole, no pen will ever describe. In the name of the wreck of all the playmates of my childhood, except two; in the name of every broken-hearted woman in that community; in the name of every child born with the alcoholic life in its veins; in the name of a community overcrowded with weaklings because of rum, I put down an indictment against that Lanning grocery. I put down the work of one little doggerly. I put it down because my soul loathes it.

1. Under one proprietor it has made a thousand drunkards.

2. More than twenty of these have died with *aelirium tremens*.

3. A thousand women, and as many more

children, have been brought into wrongful and cruel suffering.

4. Lanning's children, five in number, all gone to the bad.

5. The business of the community robbed of its strength, and the enterprise of it driven out.

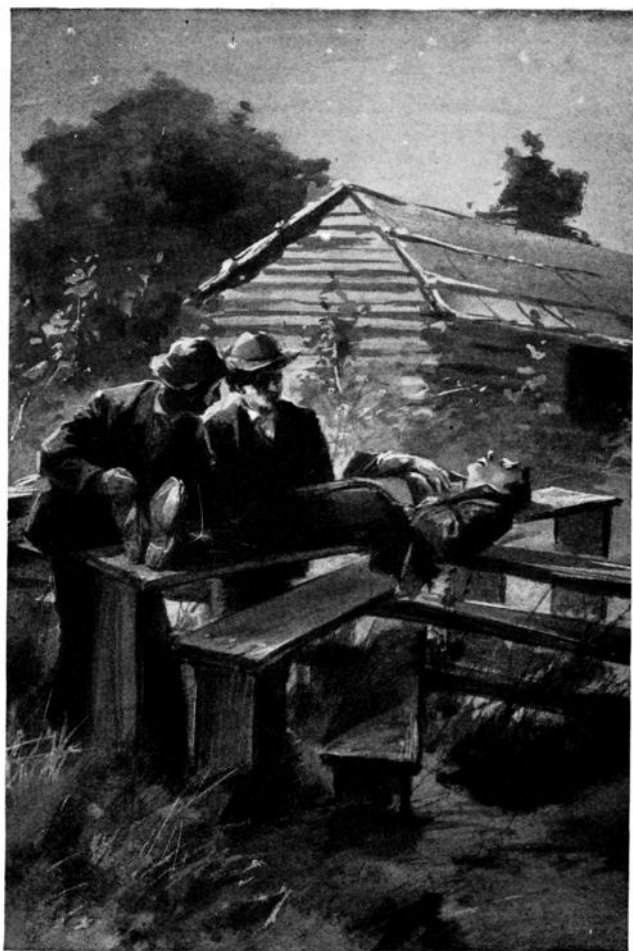
6. For Lanning himself, an old age of despair and abject poverty.

I was under the influence of liquor once. Three of us, one Christmas eve—Dan Banner, Lewis Hardy, and myself—went to Hazelgreen, and made the following investment. We had no thought of doing such a thing, until we were in the atmosphere of the place. We had gone to make our usual Christmas purchase of candies and toys:

Three glasses of beer,	15 cents.
Three " "	15 "
Three " "	15 "
Three glasses of wine,	30 "
One glass of whisky for Dan, . . .	10 "

We bought some matches and nails. We had no purpose in this, other than to give an air of business to the transaction. We went out of town noisy. We threw the nails against a barn, and made a fearful racket. On the road home, Dan took offense at some small matter, and

wanted to fight. Rather than not get a fight he would try both of us at once. We were not in a fighting humor, and were surely not in fighting condition, and we persuaded Dan to put that thing off a day or two. We stopped by the roadside, and wasted our matches trying to start a fire with green-oak branches. Lewis tumbled into the leaves, and was soon in a maudlin and insensible state. I took in the situation, and, with Dan's help, we loaded him up, and started down the road to Lewis's house. We had gone about twenty feet when we had a head-end collision. The ground was frozen and rough, and we both stumbled and fell. Lewis gave a pitiful, quivering whine, as his head went into a deep rut, and as we could get nothing further from him, we thought we had killed him. We felt for his pulse, and did not find any. We carried him down to his mother's house, and laid him on the top plank of the steps, made for crossing the rail-fence in front of the cabin. His mother was a widow. We could not bear the thought of taking in to her the dead boy. We straightened out his legs along the plank, and tied them together with Dan's big bandana. With my handkerchief we tied his wrists together across his breast. We put a chip on each eye, to keep them from the hideous open



"WE PUT CHIPS ON HIS EYES."

death-gaze when his mother should find him next morning; and we left him there in the cold silence of that wintry night. We left him, somewhat consoling ourselves with the idea that his body, fixed in that way, would be in shape for the coffin. This was long after midnight. I went home with Dan for the two or three hours till daylight. In a silly, whimpering way, we talked of going to the funeral next day, and tried to think of the future of a boy who died drunk. I was first to come from under the influence of the intoxicants. What fearful physical depression and headache! What awful moral humiliation! What smitings and agony of remorse! There was a slight mental relief in the knowledge, without going to make inquiry, that Lewis was not dead. But physical death to myself, or to the other boys, under natural circumstances, would not have been so awful as this occurrence. I had been so familiar with drunkenness in others, and had so loathed it, and now it had touched my own life with its damning disgrace! Without feeling that the other boys were greater sinners than myself, I resolved to break their companionship. I resolved never again to enter Lanning's grocery. I started home, and the thought of meeting my parents, filled me with horror. What account could I give of myself?

We had not thought of drinking until we entered the grocery. But why did we do such a thing? I searched for mitigation and excuse, and found none. I seriously, for the first time in my life, contemplated not returning home. The thing was not done in a corner, and the news broken to my mother would put despair into her life about me, and break her heart. I saw, through the dark contrasts of that morning, how my mother's pride had been centered in me. Every stitch in my clothing had been taken by her diligent fingers. The blue-and-scarlet wool-muffler around my neck had been finished by her needle the day before, and tied about me with a kiss. I could stand my father's chastisement, if it came; but I could not meet my mother's sorrow. The news reached them before I did; for it was high-noon before I had made the journey of half a mile. When I entered the house, there was silence, and there was silence in that home for days. I could see that they were wondering if this was the beginning; if all their hopes and plans were to be blasted. They showed me the greatest solicitude. Mother especially was more than usually attentive to my wants. I never saw the glory of this home-love till then, and it seemed to be burning me up. Instead of wrath, I had kindled

love, and it was about to consume me. No word of rebuke ever came from either of them. After some days of this chastening silence, father said to me:

"Rodney, I had rather bury my boy, than to know that he would live to become a drunkard."

Mother said:

"If you want to kill your mother, take another drink in Lanning's grocery."

I told them that if they could trust me at all, they should never have another hour's anxiety about that. Then the shadows fled from that home, and the coming days brought a blooming paradise.

The man who sells liquor is a scamp. The man who buys and drinks it is a scamp. That drinkers are simply unfortunate people, with good, clever hearts, is sickly sentimentalism. Drinking, when its consequences are known, is always the product of a bad principle.

Not long ago I was in conversation with a famous physician, who had come from the sick-room, and he said:

"I have just been trying to patch up the body of an old toper."

I said:

"Do you prescribe alcohol?"

"I seldom use it in my practice."

"Why?"

"Well, there is no place for it as a necessity of life. It supplies no force to matter. It has no new matter for organized tissue. The animal tissues can not assimilate alcohol. It is a product of death, not of life. It is one of the ghosts of putrefaction and decay."

"What is the first effect of alcohol on the system?"

"It quickens the action of the heart. This it does by weakening the contractile force of the arteries and minute blood-vessels; but languor always follows this increased and unnatural work. Chloroform will do the same thing. Alcohol is only slower."

"What is the next effect of alcohol on the system?"

"Functional muscular change. The lower lip usually gives the first sign. Then there is loss of use of the limbs. The most effective way to ruin the muscular power is to introduce alcohol into the system."

"What do you regard as the next stage?"

"The mind is in chaos. Reason is off duty. The stomach also revolts, and there is vomiting. The animal instincts are supreme, and there is finally insensibility."

"What gives the toper his red nose?"

"That is a delicate question; some people have red noses who are not addicted to alcohol."

"I am aware of that, doctor; I am after a diagnosis of the toper's nose. The other folks never neglect an opportunity for explanation. Each one of them tells you how his proboscis came to be in that condition; and he tells it glibly, as if he had familiarized himself with it."

"Then I will tell you. It is the effect of alcohol on the blood corpuscles. The frequent weakening of the contractile force of the small blood-vessels affects them so that they do not return to their normal condition after the immediate effect of the alcohol is gone. The blood-vessels become irregular and congested. Cutaneous excitation passes away at first; but finally the vascular supply remains to tell the tale of a constant debauch. The abiding effects of intoxicants shows on the nose first because the circulation in the nose is feebler than in most other parts of the body. Alcohol has done its damage elsewhere.

"The reduction of arterial tension by alcohol is also the cause of roaring in the head, often experienced by drinkers. Indeed, the permanent effects of the alcoholic life are the most serious. It were serious, but not so greatly so, if surface excitement, and uncertain muscular action, and

the maudlin foolishness of a crazed brain, were the only results. Alcohol produces an excess of fatty globules, causing fatty degeneration of the heart. It also produces an excess of the connecting tissues—affects the liver, and brings on abdominal dropsy. It is also the fruitful cause of Bright's disease; and of course *delirium tremens* and death."



CHAPTER XV.

AN INDIAN LEGEND.

Over wide and rushing rivers
In his arms he bore the maiden;
Light he thought her as a feather,
As the plume upon his headgear;
Cleared the tangled pathway for her,
Bent aside the swaying branches,
Made at night a lodge of branches,
And a bed with boughs of hemlock,
And a fire before the doorway
With the dry cones of the pine-tree.
All the traveling winds went with them,
O'er the meadows, through the forest;
All the stars of night looked at them,
Watched with sleepless eyes their slumber."

—LONGFELLOW.

ONE bright, brisk morning in June we turned the cattle out of the pound in the edge of the timber, and drove them westward more than a mile to the sweet grass on the high ground of Fort Harrison Prairie. We started them north-

ward as we had done many a day before, and they went lazily feeding over the short grass toward the marshes of Lost River, two miles or more away. The cattle knew as well as we did how long it would take them to fill their paunches, and about when they would get thirsty, and where they would get water. By ten o'clock they would reach the lowlands, and go tramping knee-deep in mud through the sage and elbow-brush to the edge of the sluggish stream that had hardly channel and current enough to know where it was going. They would fill themselves with water, and stand in the stream midsides deep, without moving for half an hour. An ox full of grass and water is the laziest thing on earth. These cattle, after cooling themselves, unless they got a scare, would hide in the deepest shades along the water-course till the middle of the afternoon, and would then come browsing over the prairie again. Our work for the day, therefore, was not finished till near sunset. Herding cattle is a lonesome, lazy business, if it is skillfully done. There is no profit in it unless skillfully done. The cattle, while feeding, must be let alone. To be forever bunching them is to fail utterly.

We knew our business, and the next thing to do was to get ourselves out of sight somewhere

in the shade, and take things easy for at least twelve mortal hours.

Our horses were sniffing the fresh air of this June morning in a restless way, wanting to be turned loose to their own feeding. Father was mounted on a dark, dapple-bay printer horse, which was seven years old that day. The morning sun shining on his glossy coat showed him as spotted as a leopard. He was a nervous, fretful creature. He was not vicious or tricky, but so high-tempered and full of life that only a splendid horseman and rider was safe in handling him. Whoever mounted him found both his forefeet in the air to be off like a flash. No slow-poke was ever on Jerry's back. When your foot first touched the stirrup, you had to mount or quit trying. Jerry was not averse to being ridden—he only meant to say by this wild impetuosity of spirit: "I will carry you like a cradle, and as fast as the wind, if you can get into the saddle." To be carried by this great horse was worth an effort. The fine nervous spirit of the animal under you was like a tonic to the system. I had been on this horse, and had held my breath, and let him fly over the prairie. He was not my horse, and I was a little jealous of him.

I was riding a powerfully built sorrel mare,

five years old, who answered to the name of Croppie. She had known nothing but the saddle from a colt. She had been trained specially for cattle-driving, and was finely adapted for its quick spurts and short turns. She was high-spirited, but in a different way. She had never known defeat. She was ill-natured almost beyond endurance—certain she was to nip me, when I mounted, unless I held her head the other way with the rein. She believed in her own rights and powers. Among fifty horses she would master the whole of them. She scorned a fence, and during a night she would lead everything in her field into mischief. Over the prairies and along the roads I had tried the crack animals of all the boys of the country, and she easily led them. But she was always mad about it. She ran with her ears back. She seemed to enjoy being mad at everything about her. I often wondered if she knew her beauty was marred by the tip of one ear being frozen off when she was a foal, and if that had not made her ill-natured. This mare was my property. I was afraid of the speed of Jerry, and jealous. The two had never been tried together in a test of speed; but I had sent them both separately over the smooth sod, and had tried

to gauge the speed of each by the swish of the air, and by the way the tufts of grass flew by me. Jerry looked as if he could outrun Croppie. For a mile heat, I was sure he could; and if ever the test came I intended to stipulate the distance.

Father says:

"Well, my son, the cattle will now take care of themselves till we need to put them in the hurtle at night, so we might as well hunt a shade and hobble the horses on the grass."

"Where shall we go?"

I was looking wistfully down a stretch of prairie with as smooth a surface as ever nature makes in the wilds, towards a cottonwood-tree standing alone in the open space not more than a long quarter away. I was on the point of saying to father, "Watch Croppie run!" when he startled me by saying:

"I can beat you to that cottonwood."

"Come along then," I said; but before the words I had lashed the mare in the flank, and the third jump I was leading the horse a length. My mare did not need the whip to do her best that morning, but I gave her the lash each jump on general principles. I came out three lengths ahead. Each turned outward in a short curve

and brought up under the cottonwood. The two racers put their noses together, and father said:

“Hi, ho! your little sorrel hoss can run like a jack-rabbit.”

I paid no attention to the slightly disrespectful banter. I knew I was riding the queen of the turf. Nothing more was said about the race. We turned the heads of the horses westward, and went at a slow pace down a narrow dip in the ground, and up on the high bank which overlooked the Wabash more than a mile each way. The tulip-trees were in full bloom, and their branches were hanging over the banks till the tips kissed the water. There were shrubs of every kind, and such wild profusion of flowers that the air was redolent with their perfume. Across the stream in the low ground, where the river had thrown its alluvial for generations, great sycamores and walnut-trees towered till the tops were level with the eye as we stood on the summit of the prairie. The sun was throwing a monstrous silver sheen on the water. The finny tribe were snapping up every beetle that was so unfortunate as to strike the current. Spirits of Beethoven and Handel and Mendelssohn, keep silence here! The birds in these branches are bringing from their

throats a chorus of songs greater than all your oratorios of art. O, the ravishing beauty of that place! The greatest dullard would have been hushed into silence by the scene. This aroma of leaf and bud and exuding trees is an enchantment, but it is real. If this does not enter into your life, what does? To walk over a carpet of cowslips and blooming buttercups is to have the sweetest thoughts, and to have new messages of beauty enswathe the spirit.

There may be things in these visions of the beautiful in nature that the morbid soul never sees; but to the soul able to read nature, it is all very real. There is not the first glint of hallucination about it. Invisible currents of magnetic charm come from the trees and the flowers. To resist such a charm is to be a great sinner. What free course the spirit has! What broad fellowship the heart feels! What catholic sympathies the soul breathes! Nature is a mesmerist in her quieter moods, and she is wholesome in her violences. Her lessons are all spontaneous. There is no plan or premeditation, no getting ready for an onslaught of pedagogy. There is a simple, clear voicing of the truth in monosyllables. Nature is the greatest teacher of childhood. Purity, sincerity, brotherhood are poured into a child's soul

through its avenues of beauty. Nature is never weary, she is never impatient; she never scolds, so that you are afraid to go again. Nature is willing to wait till the fullness of her beauty is able to show itself in the developed forces of your own character. She does not expect to change the spirit radically or momentarily. Her hand is most delicately plastic. Nature is not a hard teacher; she woos and woos until the heart's strife is calmed in her presence. The things done for the soul by the trees and brooks and sky are not formally recorded. They simply do their work and want no credit. To teach useful things, and reveal herself by degrees—this is nature's business. Nature is coy of a thousand things. This wrought universe is largely a mystery yet. The human mind has only come into the edges of the great unexplored. But nature says, If you will come into responsive association with my moods, I will not hide my heart's love from you. Follow the bees, and be taught industry, wisdom, government. Go into your garden and tend it; but listen to what the flowers say to you, and the voices that speak to you out of the shimmer of the morning and evening light streams, and then go up to gleam at you from the stars. Go out under the covering of the night when the

dew is falling, uncover your head, and let God bathe your brow with nectar, and claim you for his child. We have no use for any theology which denies nature's teaching. We have never felt free to deny it a spiritual existence. Nearly all that is real about it must be spiritual. These evanescent and changing forms of matter do not constitute its reality. When the soul of a child responds to the opening of a flower, it is drawn by something more than the organic chemistries. There are real spiritual forces at play on the spirit there. So it is that the things most completely natural are the greatest character-builders. A biologist is not so deductively. He has deciphered great laws from a multitude of small things; and the least sinful of all the idolatries is to become a worshiper at shrines built in the woods, or on the prairie, or on the ocean, or in the angry bosom of the storm-cloud. A boy in the country lives close up to a lot of facts, and the real substance of all his experience comes to be a part of him in manhood. Their intent, greater than we usually give credit for, is to influence his nature. The things a boy gets from nature are not spread out before him all at once. They are not ostensibly spread before him at all. He opens his eyes and sees; he hears, he touches, he tastes, he smells; and all these sensuous

awakenings abide his own time for subsidizing and reflection. What he needs is given him in fragments, without his being able at the time to see how they go together. From the many pictured pages he may not see the profound harmony and unity until he is able to correct all spiritual aberrations in the sober, settled experiences of mature manhood. Man matured is the best known illustration of the correlation of forces. All nature is conserved in the countryman come to town. The trees and brooks and landscapes have an immortality in him.

So the wild life of my childhood had this deep philosophy to me. The same conditions to-day would afford me a great and instructive companionship. I am yet frequently driven to go out into the thickest woods, and stand under the overarching trees, and feel their sympathy and stillness and seclusion, and let them take all the bitterness and soreness out of my heart, so that I can feel at peace with the world again. I can not get so near God in this great crowd. My heart aches for the woods. O the woods, the woods!

Father had removed his hat, and was looking out over the water in reverent silence. There he stood, six feet two inches—his black hair, now at

forty, turned to an iron gray—smooth-shaven face, thin lips, decided Roman nose, reddish blue eye, and as keen as a hawk's. He had in him all the marks of a fine Scotch ancestry. He was not a philanthropist with broad views, but a typical American. He was a money-maker and a lover of his family. He gave the energy of his business life to my mother and myself. He was a proud man that day. I believe he was proud of me; not because I beat him in the race, but because of the awful purpose I showed to come out ahead. It would have been the same if he had beaten me; and he really intended to do that, but he did not have the horse-flesh under him. He saw, I think, that there was some of his own spirit in me, and he was proud of it. Nothing of this did he say; he simply looked out over the water.

The horses reaching for the prairie-grass, reminded us that we must unsaddle and let them graze. He took two hobbles from the loops behind his saddle, fastened them around the fetlocks of the horses, then slipped the bridles and let them go. We turned into the shade of some apple-trees, which were now laden with the settings of fruit.

"This is the famous Indian orchard," said father.

There were five large, thrifty trees set in a semicircle, opening to the south. The elevation of the ground in the center was artificial, and there were plain traces of the wigwams of the savages. I soon found some arrow-heads, and the upper and nether stones of an Indian meal-mill, about worn out, and for that reason, doubtless, cast away there.

"Did the Indians plant this orchard?" I asked.

"Yes; they brought the seeds from Pennsylvania. Here the tribes were permanent enough for this sort of business. There is a beautiful legend about this orchard, and this piece of ground in the center."

"What was the legend?"

"I do not know that I can tell it as it was."

"Try it, father; try it."

"I will tell it as I heard it, and if it is not all true to fact, it is true to nature.

"This, you see, is a surpassingly beautiful spot. So will you find that the camp-grounds of these 'children of the forest' are usually famous for beauty of situation. We are charmed with this beauty, and the Indians were attracted by the same things. An Indian encampment is an infallible index to the finest point in the country.

"This orchard gets its name from the legend.



WIGWAM OF LENA AND NEMO.

These trees were planted and cared for by the heroine of the story. Eighty years ago there was here an Indian village. You see that this is the only place within miles where such a view of the river can be had. Here the tawny savages fished and hunted. Here, on the clear ground, the squaws raised Indian-corn. On these stones they ground it into meal. On other flat stones they baked it for their lords, and took a little for themselves, if there was any left. Here Indian boys were tanned by the sun darker than nature in birth had made them. Here they became skillful with the bow and the sling. Here the young warriors would come from the hunt, throw their game at the wigwam door, and go down to the river there and bathe their weary limbs, return to the camps, and recount deeds of valor for the hundredth time.

“Among the women of this village was one unlike the rest. She was a young, fair-haired, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon. She was prized for her superior knowledge in tent-making, for her skill in tilling the soil, and for the fact that she had added refinement to every rude Indian art. The Indians of this country, as you have already learned in your school-books, contested every inch of ground against the approach of the white man. From the Eastern Coast to the Mississippi

might be called conquered territory. But the Indian left a bloody and blackened road behind him. He has faded before the white man, because the white man is a man of destiny. As the Indian retreated, he burned and pillaged white settlements, and carried off with him women and children. This beautiful, blue-eyed girl in the camp of the Delawares was taken when a child from a burning cabin, after its father and mother had been massacred. The girl had never known any other than this sort of life.

"When it became apparent to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that she must, in self-protection, guard the far West from the encroachments of a foreign power, it became necessary to make peace with the Indian tribes of the region. To do this, there must be shown a vigorous policy toward them. Pennsylvania furnished a thousand troops, to which was added a company from Virginia, who marched into this Western country to treat with the strong tribes up and down the Ohio. Finding an army coming west, many of the people of the States, and from the settlements, who had relations or friends who had been captured by the Indians, came west to search for them.

"The campaign was under the command of General Boquet, who succeeded finally in hold-

ing a peace-council with the representatives from the Delawares and the Senecas and the Shawnees. After the pipe of peace had been smoked, and after much parley, they pledged themselves to bury the hatchet, and to bring in all the white captives as far west as the Wabash. The Shawnees were sullen and morose in this council, and they were the strongest and most warlike tribe; but they finally consented to bring in all the white captives. Red Hawk was their chief representative and orator, and his voice was law among them.

“By the stipulation of the peace treaty, all the white captives were to be brought in by the next spring. Runners were sent to all the villages to carry the news of the treaty, and with them went an order to bring in the captives. A fearless and swift Shawnee brave was dispatched to the villages along the Wabash. His course was a direct one. By the rising and the setting sun, by the moss on the trees, and, when neither of these were available, by an unerring Indian instinct, this young warrior, just now approaching manhood, made his way across pathless woods and broad rivers, and through dark forests, where even the Red Man had seldom been. He would take his food with the arrow and bow from game so unused to being hunted

that nothing tried to escape him. He plucked wild grapes from the burdened trees, and drank water from sources that none but the wild animals had ever known. At night he slept on the ground, with his two arms for a pillow, and with nothing for his covering but the emerald mantle of an American sky. Day after day he traveled through wood and over prairie, till, at last, in the afternoon of an autumn day, he stood yonder across the valley on the knoll by that cottonwood, and he saw the smoke curling from the wigwams of this Delaware village. Through the glint of orange and crimson leaves he saw the waters of the Wabash for the first time. The day before, a mountain-eagle had swept in front of him, and he had put an arrow through it, and had plucked its finest feathers for his hair. A broad belt, richly wrought with beads, encircled his waist. In this belt was a scalping-knife and a tomahawk. A tanned deer-skin was thrown over his shoulder in old Roman fashion. His ankles were wrapped half-way to his knees with the strings that fastened his moccasins. In the rich gloaming of that autumn evening, clad in the finest Indian costume, stood Nemo, the hero of this legend, before the wigwam of old Wakarusa. This aged chieftain (after a vesper-song from the blue-eyed Saxon

girl) had been rehearsing for more than the hundredth time stories of his own bravery; and, flushed with the excitement of his own tales, he saw a shadow fall into the door of the wigwam. He looked up, and there stood, not three paces away, a hated Shawnee. Old Wakarusa raised the war-whoop and grasped his weapons. The young Shawnee stepped back a few paces, drew an arrow from his quiver, fixed it in his bow, and stood waiting. The Delaware chief advanced with tomahawk till Nemo had drawn his bow to transfix him, when the blue-eyed Lena rushed between them, and shouted to Wakarusa:

“O, my father, slay not the stranger. He only asks for food and shelter, and he comes on a peaceful mission.”

“Does a Delaware parley with a Shawnee?” said the old man.

“He is an enemy,” said Lena “but he is tired and hungry, and asks for repose. Did a Delaware ever refuse these even to an enemy?”

“The old chief threw down his tomahawk, and welcomed the young brave. Lena placed food before the new-comer, and then gave the old chief his venison. After the silent meal, Nemo took from his neck a string of shells, on one of which was engraved the Great Chief; and on another a pipe of peace; and on another

was engraved Nemo himself, leading a white captive to the home of the Great Chieftain. These symbolics were plain to Wakarusa. He knew that the Shawnee had authority from the whites to take Lena to the settlements. Lena listened attentively, but she could not understand it all. She knew she was a pale-face but she had never seen another than her own. She had an indistinct and filmy memory of her childhood. Her mother's face would come before her now and then, like a passing shadow. She had a confused impression that she had been in war and had fled from fire. She was looking in the face of the old chief, and she saw consternation there, and she said:

“‘What is it my father? Has the Shawnee brought you bad news? Have the Delawares been defeated? Has the Great Spirit forsaken us?’

“‘My child,’ said Wakarusa; ‘you are the fair one among a thousand. You are as pure as the snow, and dear to me as my life. I took you from a burning building after your father and mother had both been killed; and O, how many moons I have been a father to you! And now the pale faces have sent for you. I know the consequence of keeping you here. You are not a Delaware. The wigwams of your people are far toward the sunrising.’

“‘Why should I leave you?’ said Lena; ‘I know no other father. If there are people of my blood, I do not know them and will not be like them. This wigwam is the only home I know. Must I leave it?’

“‘My child,’ said Wakarusa, ‘waste no words. You know not what you say. By the time of the morning light be ready to go with this young Shawnee. He will not harm you. He must give an account to the white man for your keeping. Wakarusa’s heart is broken. The prairie-grass will grow over his grave in a few days. My eyes are now dim, and I shall never see you again, my beauty.’

“In the gray dawn of next morning Nemo led Lena through the dew of the grass over the prairie sward where we left the cattle an hour ago. He led her toward the sunrising along the way of the pathless forest. Other captives were brought to Nemo, and he became their guide in the long journey eastward.

“Nemo gave his finest care to Lena. He wrapped her in his own deerskin in the chill of the night. He fed her with the best parts of the venison. The Shawnee moved and won the heart of Lena. They were betrothed; but the white captives were delivered, and Lena with them. Nemo returned to his people, but there

was a great purpose in his heart not to lose his fair-haired Saxon. The flesh of his own dark cheek was not a curse, and he claimed her with a silent oath before the Great Spirit, and with his approval. *Lena's childhood had fixed her character.* She knew nothing of her father and mother, and her brothers were as strangers. She had no taste for the delicate living and rich luxuries of the civilized. Her heart was never drawn from her Indian lover, and she wept for the glorious beauty of her home on the Wabash.

"The written statutes have but little control over the affections. The laws of Pennsylvania forbid this admixture of blood in marriage; but it did not prevent the mutual love of these two children of the woods. Under cover of the night Nemo escaped with his betrothed into the forest, and they undertook their long journey to their home on the Wabash. After the two were far beyond the bounds of civilization, with the primeval forest two hundred miles deep all about them, these plighted ones were married by all the forms that nature knows anything about. There, in an open space in the woods, they swore to each other a lifelong fidelity. The wild fawn came to the edge of the thicket to attend the wedding. The bear growled consent.

An eagle flew above them, and screamed a welcome. This was to them mostly a silent, glorious journey of joy. They had to go cautiously, sometimes traveling only by moon and stars through the hunting-grounds of the Miamis, who were the mortal enemies of the Shawnees. One evening before sunset, as they were passing by stealth through a dense growth of oaks, suddenly three Miamis were upon them. Nemo leaped behind a tree, and the Miamis began tying Lena's hands. Nemo put an arrow through the foremost. The next Miami thought to keep Lena between himself and her lover, but Nemo clipped a ringlet from Lena's hair and sent an arrow into his brain, and he dropped dead at her feet. Nemo sprang from behind the tree, and the two warriors stood for mortal combat. Nemo's arrow missed its goal, and two tomahawks whistled in the air. One now fought for love, the other for hate. Nemo received the Miami's blow on his left forearm, dropped his tomahawk, caught the knife in his belt, and put it into the heart of the Miami. Three scalps were taken, and the two traveled by night till they were out of the Miami country. When Nemo and Lena reached this spot the summer was gone. The snow covered the earth, and the bleak north-wind whistled about them. The wild-geese and the

waterfowl of every species had gone south, and the river was frozen from bank to bank.

"The Delaware camp had been broken up, and old Wakarusa had been buried yonder in the prairie-grass, but the mound above it had not yet sodded over. Neither asked the other what to do. Nemo with his tomahawk cut ten smooth poles and stood them together with an opening at the top; then placed them around with others; then covered this frame-work over with bark, and outside of this they thatched it with the tall spears of prairie-grass that stood above the snow. They built a fire in the center. Nemo rubbed together two pieces of basswood punk till they took fire by friction, then he blew them into flame with his breath. Nemo's trusty bow supplied meat of turkey and deer, and here they lived and loved till spring broke upon them as we see it to-day.

"Lena had brought apple-seeds in her wallet from the orchards of her people. She planted them here around her wigwam. This rude hut was her home, and she garlanded it with flowers, not neglecting the grave of her foster-father. Her garden here was just such as this soil will give to diligent hands. It was to her the gift of God. Nemo was a warrior, but from his wife

he had learned to know God also. Rare combination, he was a worshiper and a brave.

“For the length of many moons, here Nemo and Lena lived with the wolf and the panther and the bear for their companions—with the birds for their friends. This paradise of nature was their home. Their canoe was like a thing of life on these waters, and the sweetest fish to be caught from any stream Lena roasted over the coals in her tent. They were a law unto themselves. They saw the truth, and followed it. They answered the voices of nature; so they paid no penalty, and were happy.

“A child was born unto them—a beautiful, bright-eyed boy. This child was brave and tender-hearted. Lena clothed him in the finest buckskin, and wrapped him in furs on wintry nights. She would weave his hair with the feathers of the red-bird, and in the beauty of spring she would deck his brow each day with a coronal of flowers. Lena was a happy woman.

“One autumn day, as the sun was beginning to touch the tops of the trees in the lowlands here, Nemo was sitting in the door of his tent, while Lena was preparing the evening meal, when his eye caught a moving object making its way around that drift yonder, just this side

of the bend in the river. Nemo's eye kept trace of the moving thing as it came around the drift, and crept close to the bank, and came up the stream, until he could see that it was a canoe containing five painted warriors. The canoe stopped in the eddy at the bank yonder, and five braves crouched into the willows, and began single file to ascend the bluff. Nemo sprang for his weapons and shouted through his teeth, "Miamis!" This was answered with a war-whoop, and the Miamis came rushing toward the wigwam. In their rush their arrows were missing their mark. An arrow from Nemo's bow killed the leader, and another the next, then the three were upon him. In the desperate encounter he took the life of another Miami, and an arrow pierced his own breast, and he fell dead at the door of his tent. Lena in consternation took the child from its couch, threw it into the arms of her enemies; then caught the scalping-knife from the belt of her dead husband, and took her own life before they could reach her,—thus preferring death to dishonor.

"It is said the surviving Miamis buried Nemo and Lena both in one grave out there beside old Wakarusa. The legend goes on to say this child was taken down the river to the Miami

tribe, grew up among them, and escaped to the Shawnees and was the companion of Tecumseh at the time of the treaty with General Harrison; that he fought in the battle of Tippecanoe, and finally died by the side of the great chief in the battle of the Thames. Thus endeth the legend. It is known to all the tribes. It is a standard in Indian folk-lore. The Shawnees believed there was an enchantment about this place, and their maidens thought it a priceless privilege to make a pilgrimage to the grave of the virtuous and heroic Lena.

"It is past noon and we have not eaten," said father.

The place seemed to me too sacred for hunger, and I went out to the summit to see if the horses were in sight, and when I returned he had unrolled the delicate lunch mother had prepared for us. We minced at it. Father had been so wrought upon by his own story that he had no desire for food, and he then laughed at it. We talked another hour of the Indians. I dug into the tent-mound—found other trinkets of beads and carved shells and arrow-heads—placed the find in the packsaddle—then we caught the horses and rode back over the prairie, where we found the cattle ready filled for the kraal. We reached home an hour after night-

fall, and a queenly woman gave her husband and son a royal welcome.

My thoughts and feelings about the Indians were largely shaped by this legend and the Life of Daniel Boone. Neither of them is quite true to life. One overdraws the picture, and the other does not do the Indian justice.



CHAPTER XVI.

SUNSHINE.

"A worm! A god!—I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost. At home, a stranger,
Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
And wondering at her own. How reason reels!
O, what a miracle to man is man!
Triumphantly distressed! What joy! What dread!
Alternately transported and alarmed!
What can preserve my life? or what destroy?
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave;
Legions of angels can't confine me there."

—YOUNG.

UP to this time, along these pages, I have been trying to present dispassionately some of the very common yet very natural forces that influence child-life. I have not been in search of the vicious and the good; but of the good, bad, and indifferent. I have purposed to make record of some things which have never yet given any moral account of themselves, and

with the feeling, all along, that just such things as these will appear finally to have great significance in the character. I do not believe that the smallest events in the life of the commonest child are simply facts and nothing more; that they are simply bones without life. Whatever touches a child, touches a life; and to touch a life without influence, is an impossibility. It were an interesting study at least to inquire into the action and reaction of the non-ethical forces. In the scale of all the influences it is not utterly futile to ask where these little things belong. There may be a large philosophy in a lot of small things.

To trace the laws of the moral nature and the hand of Providence through one's own dawning intelligence, is a difficult introspective work; but it is not egotism. I have spoken in my own name and authority. I have used the first person, singular number, the more freely because I knew that I was not to record remarkable, but natural things. If anything profitable or edifying shall come out of my childhood annals, the world need never lack for literary material. We know only the surface lives of one another. The real history of the commonest human life would be a remarkable thing. Mortals are not possessed of the data for such a work. An auto-

biography, even, could not be a work of that nature, because the human spirit has not sufficient knowledge of the springs of its own activities. Others do not know us as we know ourselves; and we do not know ourselves as we are, or as God knows us. It has not been my purpose thus far to designate a product, but to point out streams of influence; and to do this without the least intimation that I believe myself now only the composite shape into which I have been squeezed by these streams of influence. An event may have influence without having the mastery. The first condition might be healthful, and the last destructive. The sovereignty is within. The human spirit must be distinguished for evermore from all purely natural things, for at bottom it is a great solitary. To be a man is to be distinguished from nature; to be an individual is to be distinguished from one's fellows. The man who has been built into the mass, like bricks into the building, stands or falls with the mass. The man who has been built alone can stand alone. These are the Daniels and Nehemiahs. They are like Moses and John the Baptist. They are the Alexanders and the Cæsars and the Hannibals. They are the incarnations who have kept themselves from absorption. The essential thing in this world is

personality. It is this that conquers and uses nature, rules kingdoms, re-shapes the world's policies, and drives back the moral death-damps from the face of society. The personality represents vigor, and vigor means duration—it means immortality.

There may be something in phrenology, but the bumps do not make the man—the man makes the bumps; though it is confessed he must have a sensuous world against which to bump himself. The point is in the distinction. The potentials are within; and they are creative. The universe without is the exponent of the soul's highest powers. There is nothing little or small that can possibly happen a deathless spirit. Any force capable of influencing a human being is a character-builder; and it does not go by without doing its work in one way or another. It is not relevant to ask a mortal to show that force in its final product. He might be able to do so; but more likely he is not able, because he is not God. The soul in eternity will be impressed with the fact that it has been this way. The world ground will be upon it forever. Whether outward and upward, or downward, this life will have made its mark. So then also with each small event.

I rise up to-day to be satisfied with my childhood. I suffered somewhat from ignorance and superstition, and from boorishness, and from lack of opportunity as it is now understood; but I had compensations in country air for my lungs, and wholesome food, and I had time in solitude to make the acquaintance of nature and life, and I had a home.

It is said that nations have their spontaneous age, which is followed by the reflective. The same thing is true of the individual. I have learned since my boyhood that the most serious time in a boy's life is from the time he begins to think that in a few years he will have to take responsibility on his own shoulders. The certainty that he must get beyond the smoke of his father's chimney, and choose an individual struggle with the world, is of more serious concern with him than the particular work he will undertake.

The world is not very considerate of a young man's feelings. When he comes to be about grown, it begins rudely to put a man's boots on his feet, a man's coat on his back, and a man's hat on his head. It expects him to stop his whimpering and undertake something. So, at such a time, he begins to take measurements of

himself and of the world. He becomes a vexed questioner of his own duty and aptitudes. He is more or less alarmed in the presence of an obligation to arrive at a life-long conclusion. It will never do to stand still, and let the world go by. This intellectual turbulence, however, in a young man beginning his career, is rather a favorable sign. It signifies a determination not to live at random.

It signifies an intention that the debits and credits of life shall balance. It signifies a knowledge that to begin life as a shirk is to close it despised.

I am not sure but the reflective age came to me sooner than usual with boys. From my fifteenth year father hardly exercised paternity over me, as I understood it in childhood. It was companionship. I had already come to better educational qualifications; and it was a part of my work to make all his business calculations requiring figures. I became, therefore, familiar with his business life and methods, and naturally took great interest in them. In the intervals of my school-work I was his constant companion in the field and among the herds, and in his buying and selling. I was the confidant of all his plans for money-making. In our work there were many hardships. We were

out in rain and storm, and we went winter and summer. There were weary days and whole nights of travel. There was great personal exposure in much of it, and, to me, these times had their discouragements; but I was held up and urged on by his unflagging interest and zest in the business; and in the face of many a hard job he would say to me: "This is a hard job; but there is money in it, and the money is for you, Rodney." So I learned that it was, as in after years a rich patrimony of money came to me. But the richest human thing I ever coveted was the mantle of my father's royal spirit.

What I should undertake as a life-work was naturally and wisely, I think, left an open question during the years of these annals. It is time enough to climb a mountain after you reach its base. I never lacked neighborly advice as to what I should make of myself. In these gratuitous offerings it was always assumed I could make of myself whatever I preferred. The thing would come out to order, of course. It had not in their cases, but it would in mine. The folks who have traveled the journey of life part way, have usually made up their minds about things as they have passed along. They have opinions. They think they have taken in

the situation. They pride themselves on the reliability of their own experiences. Yet these my counselors were not all in harmony with each other. I saw them along the way before me; some light-hearted, just getting started in life; others farther along, and weighted, like a ship to its guards, with the load; others had gone to the summit, and were trembling down the sunset side to the grave. In certain ways I saw crowds going; in others so few that the road would be lonesome, at least for lack of company. I saw people in each other's way, jostling and pushing each other out of the road and down the precipices. I saw others, who had formed partnerships and had difficulties. I heard much bewailing over the lot of others, who had taken the wrong road. I saw people in all stages of prosperity, and in all stages of adversity. From the lives ahead of me there came a bedlam of sounds.

And yet they were, as a rule, in the attitude of regarding me as in my leading strings, the upper end of which they must hold, to keep me from bumping my precious nose. It is not strange that young people have little relish for taking advice. Some of these people who were brimming over with advice, were possessed with the wretched weakness of never being able

to make up their minds in their own cases. They were not lacking in patient and profound analysis of their own mental aptitudes. They sought the advice of all their uncles and their cousins and their aunts, and then they stood around in the great open threshold of life, until it was too late to take anybody's advice. They recruited the ranks of the great army of the undecided. A few of them are living to this day. What their business is I do not know, and I have known them from childhood. They have not pushed out to sea, neither have they anchored to shore. They are idlers, with nothing to do. Breathing, with them, is spontaneous. They expect somehow to get provender, and they expect animal nutrition to take care of itself; but they do not expect to take any responsibility or to do any work. They appear to be without an idea, unless it is that they have come to the wrong world, and they are trying to repudiate their surroundings. They taught me at least what my life ought not to be.

I do not know a time since I was old enough to think about it at all, that I lacked confidence in my own future.

Among the honorable pursuits, one's life here is not taken under the calculation of nice chances. There are reliable features and cer-

tain results to any manly life. So surely true is this that to fret is to sin. Success or failure is not settled by the toss of a copper. Success is as natural as can be. This is not a chance world. There is no such thing as accident. Good luck is an evil angel with despairing wings. Success in life is not measured by results but by the things that bring about the results. You stand on the bank of a great stream and you see the foam on its surface, and the leaves and driftwood in its eddies. These attract your eye, and may be the first things to rivet your attention, and partly because they are surface things; but they lead you directly to see, and, above all, to feel the sublime and resistless volume of the current. Any human life may have such volume in it as to be practically resistless. The river will sooner lose its channel than an honest life its course. The river will not lose its channel, because it makes its channel. It will reach its destiny. So will the soul purposed in high things reach its destiny through all the changes of human circumstance.

My greatest lessons were from life. I saw a purpose to win in the wolf-chase; I saw the glory of high aims in the eagle's flight; but the greatest inceptive lesson of profit of which I

can make any estimate, was my hunt with the two boys in the bottom. The next day I saw its spiritual parallels, and I have never been able to get away from them. I had no religious creed, but I believed in God and in the immortality of the soul. I could see, therefore, that for place or position or wealth, no man could afford to be beaten on his spiritual side. For about fifteen years, I am sure, I opened my eyes to see, and then I began to shut my eyes and think. I was an honest, if not an earnest seeker after the truth—the real truth, as distinguished from phenomena. I was in constant contact with the common religious life of the community; but, unlike the great majority, I could not accept all that I saw and heard. It was a time for the reign of the pulpit ignoramus. Now and then a Simpson would come in reach, and sway the people into charmed and rapt attention to the concerns of the eternal world; but the common pulpit pabulum was a conglomerate of narrowness and bigotry. There was so much ignorance in it, not only of the Scriptures, but of the commonest facts of history and human nature, that a large share of the common sense of the community stood out in revolt against it. Some of the poorest excuses for manhood were the greatest mouthers of piety. There was

among us a numerous sect whose preachers were great disputants. They were ready for a debate day or night. So it was that the key to the religious life of the country was the school-house debate. Here the religious (giants!) pigmies met and contended over the very shreds of doctrine, as if heaven or hell hung on the issue. The community would divide itself. Each side would take unfair advantage of the other.

And in the rising religious strife would be manifested all the worst passions of bullyism. Religion in the community became not a life; not the showing of any likeness to the character of the Nazarene, who went about doing good. It was a system of disputations.

I was not able to draw the line between the reality and this, its travesty. So I became a scoffer at religion as I saw it. I said, if that is religion I do not want religion.

There was also another side to the religious forces about me which did not produce so great disgust; but it brought greater perplexity. My mother was a member of the sect called Methodists. This fact, of course, had its predisposing effects on me; but it did not explain the things I heard and saw.

Two words will define an early Methodist.

Faith is one, and zeal is the other. The faith of these people ended in superstition, and their zeal ended in furor. I could see how the intensity of these two qualities became an explanation of their swift accomplishments under the most adverse circumstances; but I could not see their relevance to the Christian life. These people had no learning, but they certainly had originality. They had a free-hand movement and spontaneity of life which gave offense to precedent-loving people. Their preachers were usually men of energy and self-reliance, and they were rich in religious enjoyment. Now and then there was a brother more noisy than edifying; but these wandering itinerants were, as a rule, men who had directness of aim.

They never shot at game over the hill. They preached as if they believed the light was in their candlestick, and they never allowed things to go by default. But how rude and uncultured! The only compensation I can see in it was, that, on that account, they may have had some adaptation to preach the gospel to plain people. Certain it was that they were not waterlogged with a fastidious taste about deviations from the rules of good grammar or rhetoric. They were more intent on the content of the message than on language, or manner, or the graces of oratory.

These Methodists were a furious set. They were swayed by great gusts of revival, that, like a cyclone, took up everything in its bosom. It did not appear that such mercurial spirits could hold together. It looked as if the material they worked on would all be used up as soon as the world should become civilized. They delighted in a species of religious intoxication, many of whose manifestations were intense and violent. Bad effects, mentally and physically, were coming from them. In some cases there was loss of consciousness—mental blindness—mental deafness—lasting for hours. There were not only leapings and shoutings which were natural, but out of taste as expressions of the joy of intense natures under the impulse of religious fervor, but there were now and then violent contortions ending in hysterics. There were frequent cases of insensibility. All conscious rationality was gone. Naturally, it is expected that the human spirit will have some quickenings of movement in the face of its destiny; but without question, these revivals had damaging features about them. Abnormal physical states were sometimes produced by them. I saw these things, and it put an end to my interest in the meetings. They stood between me and the

truth. But the preachers gloried in these phenomena. They declared they were the power of God; and now and then a man would use all his art to bring them about. He would court the greatest crudities of worship. What strange notions about seeking religion they had! In a sweeping revival, there was an overgrown young man seeking religion. He was at first at the altar on his knees, then down on his face on the floor, then on his back. The contortions of his arms and legs made it a little unsafe for the workers around the altar. They pulled his boots off each night, so that his kicks would not injure the shins of the saints. One night he was in a fearful way, but was not converted. The pastor said to him at the close:

"John, you must not be discouraged; you pray on, and God will bless you."

"O! I am not discouraged," said John; "I thought I was about to get through there once to-night, but I gave out."

Some of the people would meet angels on the way home; some would have special revelations from heaven; others would recite marvelous mental visions, which they believed to be from God.

An aged colored woman attended the meetings in a certain place, and was convicted of

sin. She was unlearned, but of strong propensities both physical and mental. She was wrought upon, and became an earnest seeker. She conceived the idea that she was to be converted in a boat on the water. The itinerant, in his rounds from house to house, in the interim of the public services, called to see her, and found her sitting in a wash-tub praying earnestly. The preacher said:

"Dinah, I do not believe it is necessary for you to punish your body that way. That will do no good."

"O, Brudder, I's gwine to be converted in dis here way," said the colored woman.

The preacher left her mourning. Next morning she came to the meeting, and told the following experience:

"My brederin, I tells you how it was. I prayed way into de night, most nigh to de mo'nin. By an by de water begin to come up in dat room! Dat tub begin to go out at one end, and den it begin to go out at tudder! It float roun in dat room! De moon shine down in dat water! After a long time mo', a little white dove cum fru de winder, an lit on de bow ob dat boat, and sed, Peace to di soul! An den I knowed I was converted."

I stumbled over things like this. That was an hallucination, evidently. I could see no truth anywhere near such things. My mother did not know about these matters, and she would only say that was the human side; and then she would hold me more than she knew by her calm and and holy life.

This colored woman was a truly religious woman ever afterwards. This was the perplexing thing about it. These phenomena would not please me by showing wholly bad results. The profane would become reverent; the licentious would become pure; drunkards would become sober; and many were evidently lifted into better lives.

For four years I stood confused in the face of these incongruities. In a morning meeting I heard my mother say that she knew that the peace of God was possible for the human heart, that she had daily communion with the great Father, and was a very happy woman. That I believed. I was glad I could believe something. I had then three articles to my creed. The being of God, the immortality of the soul, and the reality of my mother's faith.

Might it not be that these people were honest in that they were ignorant of many of the com-

plex laws influencing mind and body, and were putting a wrong interpretation simply on these phenomena, which were natural and psychological, and not at all miraculous? I had a little experience one morning that gave me a clue to the religious trance. It was before breakfast, and I was not well; but, whittling a stick, I cut my finger. A slight matter indeed; but as I was holding my own hand for the bandage, I suddenly became sick and lost consciousness. I had fainted; after a boast of years that such a thing could not come to me. The particular thing about the occurrence was the peculiar sensations and intellectual quickenings I had on coming to consciousness. The clearest and sweetest and most remarkable intellectual visions of a life-time centered in that moment. I could wish for their return, did I not know they were produced under abnormal physical conditions. This mental experience was suggestive of meaning to me sometime afterwards, when I heard an honest but mistaken trance revivalist say: "If the Lord ever takes you into a trance once, you will pray to be taken again."

Some one has defined nightmare to be a state in which the nerves of motion are sound asleep, and the thought-centers are fully awake. Som-

nambulism is almost the opposite. It is a state in which the nerves of motion are awake, and the thought-centers are asleep. A trance has been defined as a state in which some departments of the mental stimuli are dormant and asleep, while others are awake and active. Those in the trance state are likely to be awake along the line of the prevailing disposition. If the trend be religious, and the subject be ignorant of the reflex influence of the mental and physical powers, it then takes but a small vein of the superstitious to lead the subject honestly to the conclusion that God has been making a special and most favored communication.

It came to pass that these psychic and mural forces which are of such interest and perplexity to my religious thinking, began to disassociate themselves from the real questions at issue. At the last, and truest and best of all, I became aware of my personal accountability to God, in the sense that I saw and felt my sinfulness; and I sought and found the riches of an unmeasured peace.

One more thing I will put down here. After five years of heraldry and courtship, I won the heart of the most brilliant and beautiful country-

girl in four counties. I married her. It was the smartest thing I ever did. We have gone down the years together, and there has been sunshine—sunshine.



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