

glorious in his strength. When free from his malady, he was a very pleasant companion, being fond of gaiety and wit, and provided he found himself with people who sympathized with his tastes, and quickly took the sense of his

bons mots, he was often brilliant. One would never have supposed, on seeing him thus joyous in company, that perhaps the next day he would be overcome by sickness, unable to stir, or to raise his head from the pillow.

*Pierre Millet.*



## HUNTING AN ABANDONED FARM IN CONNECTICUT.

“**W**HY would n't the Gundlestone placesuit this man?” he would ask, or, “Say, why wouldn't the Bradstock place be exactly the thing for him?”

He would generally stand with one foot on the hub of our wheel, in a leisurely way. Sometimes he would whittle while he talked, and he and my conductor would discuss the matter back and forth, and endeavor to settle my destinies between them with small interference on my part. In the beginning, at least, I could not find it in my heart to repine at these or any other delays. The blessed peace of the country was all around us; it was the season of apple-blossoms and lilacs; an inclement winter was only lately over, and I had left behind me, as the latest reminiscence of New York, a journey on the elevated railway, which, in its odious overcrowding, was an epitome of all the false and wearisome conditions that made an escape from life in the metropolis seem desirable.

I did not repine at New Canaan, for instance, the objective point of my first day's journey. It is a trim, thriving village of brick and wood in the American way, an hour and three quarters from New York, and even nearer when the connection northward from Stamford is close. My companion in that region was a poet and ex-journalist, who had put into successful practice the theories of a healthful, natural, beautiful rural life, which so many profess and so few act upon. He was carrying on mixed farming on twenty-five acres of well-improved land; his farm-house scarcely differed from others of the older sort except in its tone of yellow ocher, and in the touches of a refined, highly civilized taste within. He had restored an impaired health, and he was cultivating the muse, I think, with greater success than ever. I do not pretend that he had found the secret of perfect happiness,—for human life is everywhere, as we know, a state in which much is to be endured and little enjoyed,—but he certainly had secured many of the rational essentials to it.

His home looked down from the top of one of those characteristic ridges four or five hundred feet in altitude which here run parallel to the general formation of the State, and make a succession of north and south valleys. Pleasant maple-shaded roads followed most of their crests, and these we proceeded to explore very thoroughly.

It was an indication of a certain ambition that a bare-looking house on the edge of the village, with ten acres of land, was held at \$10,000. I could have taken with gusto the very first country-place to which we came. This consisted of thirty-four acres of good land in grass, and a very respectable suburban house, with, behind it, the original one-story farmhouse. The modern house could have been redeemed from its Philistine effect by some deft touches, and the other would have made a capital studio, work-shop, or play-room for children. The buildings were a little sheltered from the north by the crest of the hill and a charming apple-orchard, and in the distant view one had the white spire of a Norwalk church, and Long Island Sound. This property, twelve minutes' drive from the station, was held at \$5000. One could have sold off a number of other residence sites from it, though, and thus brought one's friends about, a thing that is always to be thought of in a practical way, considering the loneliness which from first to last remains the most formidable objection to the whole experiment, and perhaps really the only important one. I know Thoreau has said, “Woe to that man who needs a friend!” but I speak from the point of view of a natural human craving for neighborly help in need, and neighborly relaxation in time of mental dearth.

We saw a poor little house, with a wet cellar and a moderate patch of ground, for \$1800; another better house, but no larger, with 75 acres, for \$4000; and then a very attractive fourteen-room house, with 60 acres, which the owner had lately bought for \$2000 and would sell for \$3000. This was the keynote of an upward tendency in prices with which I



was constantly to meet. Only one deserted house was seen that day, and this in a most charming site, on a grass-grown road, with large maple-trees before it. It was only waiting to be pulled down and replaced by another — falling to pieces of old age, as all houses and men must do at some time. The state of the gray shingles which sheathed the whole exterior was its most astonishing feature: they were worn and softened away till they resembled feathers, and the house seemed covered with a gray plumage instead of wood. Within the house lay an old shoe,—a woman's,—as if the last tenant, at whatever remote date she had departed, had shaken off the dust of her feet upon it forevermore. The land of this farm was rented, however, and was still held at a proper sense of its value.

This was not yet the country of “abandoned farms,” but it has seemed useful to set down a few such data for comparison. Here one was so near the metropolis that he might go daily to business there if he liked; but I did not find, as I went on, that greater remoteness brought anything like the proportional drop in prices that might have been expected.

Wilton, on the Housatonic railroad, leading northward from Norwalk, was the first place properly on my list of abandoned farms, as described in the official catalogues devoted to the subject. But perhaps the reader does not know about these catalogues. I have found that many well-informed people, even those with a business interest in knowing, do not. So I will explain. At the time of unusual farm depression three or four years ago, when the abandoned farm, now so familiar, first began to be heard of, the leading New England States issued lists of such property, hoping to remedy the evil, and they have from time to time put forth new editions. Massachusetts is the only one, however, that admits the word “abandoned” into the title of its pamphlet. This is called, “A Descriptive List of Farms in Massachusetts Abandoned or Partially Abandoned.” Connecticut, perhaps to save the feelings of owners and to uphold the reputation of its territory, simply calls her own, “A Descriptive Catalogue of Farms for Sale.” So, too, Vermont has only “A List of Desirable Farms at Low Prices,” and New Hampshire phrases it merely, “Secure a Home in New Hampshire.” Yet, when I came to know the field, I did not find any such great amount of euphemism in these titles after all, for while it is well enough to call a spade a spade, there is no need of being so plain-spoken as to call a thing a spade which is nothing of the sort.

Let me set down here at once, after an extended tour of inquiry, my conclusions as to the abandoned farm. It is a pure figment of the

imagination; it is a moving text for statisticians of a sentimental turn, and newspaper paragraphers who have never been out to see the facts for themselves — it does not exist.

In reply to my written application, Rhode Island made answer, with conscious pride, that she had no such catalogues and no such farms. Maine has prepared a few figures in one of the reports of her Board of Labor, wherein the large number of 3398 abandoned farms is spoken of (this was in 1890), but these were not identified in such a way as to be located and visited, and I was obliged, by my experience elsewhere, to be doubtful even about Maine. New York and Pennsylvania made the same reply as Rhode Island. New Jersey conceded a very few such farms. Some of the Southern States did not reply at all, and South Carolina said that there were within her borders a good many small tracts, taken for taxes, which would be sold for from 50 cents to \$1 an acre, but well improved land was scarce, and commanded from \$4 to \$20 an acre.

When I had got together all the catalogues, I proceeded to lay out my plan of campaign. In the first place, I confined it to New England, already a vast, formidable domain. I had before me, as enumerated in the lists, 318 farms for Connecticut, 887 for Massachusetts, 317 for New Hampshire, and 200 for Vermont, 1722 in all. Or the total would reach 5120 if one wished to take pains to look up also the very large number in Maine, about which I think it a great pity we have not more specific information. It was obviously impossible to visit all, as there are so many other things in a human life to do besides settling this problem, however interesting. I purposed, therefore, to select a certain field which should offer a unity of character. This was found in the hill-country of western Connecticut, the Berkshires of Massachusetts, the Green Mountains of Vermont, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. I confined myself, in fact, chiefly to this line. Next I tried to select typical places. I marked especially the cheaper places, for when you are looking for an abandoned farm, it is reasonable to ask that, even if it be not abandoned, it shall at least be cheap. I crossed off those offered at \$7000, \$10,000, and even as high as \$18,000, as having no place in this inquiry. Enterprising owners had taken advantage of the issue of the catalogue to insert free advertising for their property. In general, too, even the cheaper places offered were held at about the prices ruling for similar farming property roundabout, unless they were depreciated for some private and local reason — as a desperate pressure on the owner to sell, or, more often, because of their lack of intrinsic worth. If there are still some who fancy, as many



of the jeremiads we have heard would lead us to suppose, that there are fine places lying mournfully desolate which one has only to take possession of to make his own, let them be quickly undeceived.

There was a fascination in going over the catalogues in advance. I had some of them on the ocean steamer, when coming back from Europe, and, studying them with an appreciative friend, we found no end of interest in trying to divine what kind of people these sellers might be, and what their real history and degree of need. Now it was some gleam of light on quaint human nature that appeared in the few dry lines of description; now some hint of nature's charm—a fragrant pine-grove, a double row of sugar-maples before the door, or a trout-brook—that took the fancy along with it. As a rule, they describe the land as having "a never-failing stream," but one man said that his stream would "last as long as time lasts," which seemed to make it considerably more permanent. The descriptions, gathered through the care of town-clerks and similar officers, were, in the main, in the owner's language, which often gave a racy, homely flavor. "Red raspberries enough on the place to pay the interest" was a casual item, and telegraph-poles, or railroad-ties, or stone-quarries, enough to pay for the whole, were frequently alleged.

"I have lived here sixty years. Reason for selling, old age and poor health," said one. We thought there was a touch of pathos in that, and there was a humorous pathos, too, in the grave business arrangements proposed by many for almost infinitesimal sums. One would take \$100 cash, and let the remaining \$150 lie—or "lay," as he said—on mortgage at five per cent., making a total of \$250 for his farm. And we admired the pluck of a woman proprietor who wrote, "If I was a man, no money would buy the place."

The mountain region selected might properly be supposed to contain the greatest proportion of neglected farms, while the very ruggedness that made it less desirable for farming would insure the picturesque sites, the elevation, and the healthful air, most to the taste of seekers for country homes. It still remained a formidable problem how to get about among the comparatively few places selected after the sum had been reduced to its lowest terms. I can imagine a man with a small capital who is seeking a cheap farm, and wants to give himself scope enough to choose the best, quite using up his modest means in the search amid so many. The farms are back from the stations, which are generally small ones too, where trains are not frequent, and one cannot visit many in a day. The owner, or somebody else, must take the seeker a considerable drive to see them. I

wished to feel sure that there would be somebody to show me the place on reaching it, and I entered into considerable preliminary correspondence to that end. But this, again, is impractical; for, owing to the uncertainty of the demands upon one, and the desultory conveyances at one's command, it is not always possible to keep appointments.

Just before I was to set out, I was apprised by the correspondent I had arranged to meet the very first day that engagement would not hold good if the weather was bad. This was eminently proper, for nothing could be less useful than to sloop about looking at rural property in the rain. Only, if I did not join him on that day, any engagement for the next day would be thrown out, and then that for the next also, and so on, all toppling over like a row of bricks falling against one another. Another startling little detail was a postal from my second day's correspondent, stating that he had been drawn on jury for a murder trial, and could not come; but this, fortunately, was followed by still another, saying that he had been excused, and it was all right again. A business man at Canaan,—old Canaan this time, in the northwest corner of the State,—to whom I had been recommended for aid and comfort in my cause, notified me next that, owing to pressing demands upon him elsewhere, he could be at his home for our purpose only on the following Monday and Saturday. But I, for my part, could not possibly reach him by Monday, while, on the other hand, by the succeeding Saturday I must be well on beyond him. I could not pass much time in merely awaiting his leisure. I mention these circumstances only to show the various small difficulties that lie in the way of such a journey as mine. But this was not the first time that things rather difficult to plan have proved easy to execute: on the whole, I entered into very few preliminaries, but left the most to fortune; and I must say that fortune served me fairly well.

I ARRIVED at rural Wilton—after renewing overnight at South Norwalk my acquaintance with the minor American hotel—at an extremely early hour in the morning. But they are astir betimes in the country, and, with all I had to do before me, I lost nothing by the seasonable arrival. Wilton is given by the census of 1890 a population of 1804 souls, as against, say, 2500 for New Canaan. By rail one arrives at merely a station and a store, with a few houses in sight down the track. Occasionally a store, with post-office attached, is found here and there, to serve the needs of the various hamlets into which the town is divided. The beautiful maple-shaded roads are a feature of Wilton. One would say at first sight that



there could be but few such roads anywhere, yet Connecticut abounds with them. Some carping critics find fault with the maple, citing its slower and lesser growth as compared with the elm, and its troublesome way of littering up the walks in the season of shedding its profuse leafage. But, oh, what a stream of harmonious colors is that litter from the glowing splendor of its autumn leafage! Whoever has once waded ankle-high in its rustling depths, has a sensation not easily forgotten, and one which should offset much greater drawbacks than any here alleged.

Surely my instinct was good: I found that two of the places marked for especial favor in my catalogue were already sold. The same thing happened more than once along my road; other people apparently had had the same ideas, and were looking for the same things as I. Each of the places in question had seven acres of land and an eleven-room house. For the one \$750 was asked, for the other \$1400, the latter having the better situation and buildings. The purchaser of one was a young New York girl, gratifying with modest means a genuine taste for the country. She had first induced a young friend of her own sex to come and build a small cottage near her, and had then apparently converted the seniors of her family to her views, and had finally brought them all there. They were certainly very comfortable. They had turned the old farm-house into a country-seat, chiefly by giving it a coat of paint, and a name of its own. It had a pretty bit of woods at the back, and looked out over a stony pasture in front. The market-wagons which go about the country roads more or less were not giving the inmates quite the full measure of attention desired, and they had just arrived at the stage of seeking a steady family horse. By way of an income-producing feature, the enterprising young proprietor was cultivating mushroom rooms in beds carefully prepared for the purpose in the cellar of the dwelling. It seemed successful, and a considerable quantity of the product was sent to market every other morning at a dollar a pound. Later on, at the very attractive colony which a number of New York artists have planted on some of the old farms at Windsor, Vermont, I heard different accounts of the mushroom industry. "We have been through the mushroom period," said a friend there. He described the elaborate beds he had had most scientifically arranged for the crop,—out-of-doors in his case,—and added, "I assure you that mushrooms grew all over the place except in those beds."

I confess that I have always been influenced a little by the romantic side of things,—too rare in this workaday world of ours,—and I trust that I always shall be. I was drawn to the second of

the two places in question, at Wilton, by its being put down as the site on which was found a part of the gilded lead statue of George III. It would be pleasant to have even so small a scrap of historical reminiscence on one's own place. This statue occupies rather a prominent place in the district. Torn down originally from the Bowling Green, New York, by patriots of the Revolution, it was freighted by sloop to one of the Sound ports, thence inland by wagons; and the bulk of it finally reached Litchfield, where it was cast into bullets by the deft hands of the daughters of Governor Oliver Wolcott. But at Wilton daring Tories stole large sections of it out of the wagons, and effectually buried them—building better than they knew, be it remarked, for it is due to this circumstance that pieces finally came into the possession of the New York Historical Society.

A certain large piece was found in a swamp-hole back of a gray farm-house that rose imposingly on a hillock above the strip of alluvium skirting the swift Housatonic. The swamp-hole was the main objection to this place; it might have been drained, perhaps, through a "swale" on a neighbor's land, though this would probably have been expensive. There was a charming rugged approach from one side by a path and steps half cut in the natural rock, and grown with vines. It was said, too, that no tramp would ever mount there to beg, the tramp being a leisurely being averse to all undue exertion. The house, when reached, was found to be thinly built, needing, say, some \$500 worth of repairs, and was so near the verge of the slope that it seemed about to slide down. It is hardly worth while, however, to formulate objections against it, as the owner, after first advancing his price from \$1500 to \$1800,—there were fifteen or twenty acres of pasture-land with it,—was finally unwilling to sell at all.

On Wilton main street an excellent house and outbuildings, with villa-like lawn, and a farm of fifty acres in careful cultivation extending deep behind it, could have been had for \$4500, and another place of twenty acres for \$2800. These were not in the catalogue, but the owners would sell, as was so often the case, if they got what they thought a profitable price. In general, you could buy about any place you pleased, and it was always good etiquette, and even a flattering attention, to ask a man if his place was for sale. I did not want the place at the river-level, with its lands subject to overflow; or the one with innumerable rooms that had once been both boarding-house and boarding-school; or the cottage and four acres, for \$900, on a pretty, shaded rural cross-road—because it was not so much of a bargain as



the place already mentioned at \$750, and its well had fallen in. I began to find that where there was cheapness there was generally some notable and sufficient reason for it. The trouble was often with the water-supply. Water was missing, too, from an old homestead which had seemed cheap at almost any price,—if only for its most delightful approach up a grassy bank on each side, and the ancient row of maples of great girth before it,—and there was an undrainable swamp-hole in a cup-like hollow behind it. Not that a swamp is not a good thing; you want one on your farm. Its borders are always green, and give the earliest pasture in spring; the cattle can be turned out there all summer, and do not have to be led to water; and you can make a fish-pond, too, and stock it with carp. But it should have a place to itself in the midst of an estate of liberal size, and it should be the overflow of a living stream, and never stagnant drainage.

An old crone admitted us when we knocked, a caretaker who blinked and gibbered in an eery way as if she were in a state of siege with all the universe against her. The interior, what with age and its squalid tenant, seemed dishearteningly rotted away, and too far gone ever to be brought back to cleanness and sweetness. There is in the decay of a wooden house something too much resembling our own mortal corruption, which a stone building never shows, not though it date from the time of Semiramis or the Cæsars. Did one fancy a ghost, the crone herself seemed a fitting one. But, strangely enough, all throughout New England I heard almost no ghost-stories about these old houses. I wonder if I was right in ascribing this somewhat to the influence of spiritualism? The modern ghost has become a rather familiar object, desired as an acquaintance by many, and welcomed to the abodes of the well-to-do living, instead of being sent to haunt tumble-down rookeries. The perishable fragility of wood is probably one of the reasons that aids the superstition of the abandoned farm. There must come a time to every wooden structure, as to every "one-hoss shay" and the like, when its natural limit is reached, and it is cheaper to let it go to pieces than to repair it. The most complete example of such ruin I have ever seen was toward the close of my trip, near the city of New Haven. A proprietor, for a purely commercial end, was suffering his row of great ice-houses to topple down in picturesque destruction, intending to replace them with new ones. If from this one might legitimately argue concerning the condition of the ice-trade, as in like manner the condition of these farms has been judged, what woeful jeremiads indeed might well be raised!

Notice that none of the places I speak of

were abandoned; on the contrary, I was told that for the last a rent of \$10 a month was demanded. In general, no houses were abandoned that were intrinsically fitted for occupancy, and it was rare indeed to find any land that was not in some form returning income to its owners. I did not see much land purposely allowed to grow up to wood, but I heard it intelligently maintained that even if land were allowed to grow up to wood, it would produce six per cent. on the investment.

The swift little river was always running on audibly behind Wilton's peaceful street. We might dawdle, but it had engagements to turn many a mill-wheel below. My guide here was one of the very few of his kind who know just what a city person wants in the country. He knew that it was pretty nearly the opposite of the demands of the actual denizen of the country. He was not surprised that I was willing to sacrifice fertility of soil to a view, that I wished to have some gray boulders on my land, that I wished an old-fashioned house instead of a new-fashioned one, and that I would not have it too close upon the road, where one "could see everything going by." There is something almost pathetic in the eagerness for companionship which draws so many houses up to the very front of their lots; it seems as if they would get out into the very road, stop the passing teams, and ask them of their doings. It has spoiled a myriad charming building-sites. It is even worse than the narrow little piazza that was put on to darken the small windows of the already funereal "best room," in the second period of farm-house evolution and prosperity. In such places all the brightness and warmth are concentrated in the kitchen and the living-room at the back or side, where, too, are often found some of the pleasant ample porches remaining from the earlier period of the gambrel-roof, and the long roof sloping almost to the ground. It is agreeable to see how much inspiration these features give to our newer school of domestic architecture. It may yet take them back anew to the farm-house architecture where they originated.

A part of my guide's attention was claimed also by another client, a lady; but as our requirements were so different that we were in no way rivals, we drove to see some of the places together. This matron arrived, official catalogue in hand, and desired a farm for fruit-growing. She had tried it before, and seemed to know whereof she spoke, and I was edified by their talk of the Clapp's Favorite pear, the best time to plant your tomatoes and Lima beans, and how to spray your apple-trees for the codling-moth. It seemed as if the catalogues had had much to do with the revived interest which was evidently in progress; but



I was assured that they had not. Nor was the inquiry largely from city men, like myself, who wished to take the places for summer homes, a demand in which some have seen the salvation of these farms, as others have seen it in more grazing, in sheep, tame deer, apples, and wheat. The city men who inquire are only a very small part. The farms are being taken up by farmers for farming purposes. Many inquiries come from the West. One man that I know of, not having ready money to offer, proposed to pay for a place in bushels of wheat, at the market price, delivered at a Western railway-station. It is not so easy to prosper in the West as it once was, and many who have gone there turn back in desire to their New England birth-place. Professor Brewer of Yale, a most hopeful writer on the subject of Eastern agriculture, asserts that there are more abandoned farms in Kansas than in New England, and that they are abandoned with better reason. There was a "dull streak," as some put it, in farming property three years ago, and the issue of the catalogues coincided with the darkest moment of the depression; but the inevitable reaction set in, and it is the general testimony that ever since then things have been very much on the mend.

I was strongly advised not to go to "Nod," the "Land of Nod," whose somnolent title had attracted my attention. I was told that the inhabitants there were fairly moss-grown in their remoteness, and when they came down from their wilds, and faced the dazzling civilization at the depot-store, they knew not what subjects to converse about, or scarcely what countenance to hold. The "back country," or "'way back from a railroad," is something of a bugaboo till one has tried it a little—as if there could really be any back country where our railways are so near together, and where all the face of the land was so well smoothed by long occupancy before the railway came in. Indeed, these districts will perhaps one day be at a premium; for it is there alone that true rural peace still lingers, and you can drive about the well-made roads without the chronic fear of being cut in two by a train at a grade-crossing.

Those Nod people had nothing to distinguish them to the cursory eye; from the superior beings at the store, their shaded street was very pretty; and they wanted as much for their lands, or more. And as a general statement, one does not find a fool in a farmer, no matter where one may pick him up. His education is too extensive, in the varied avocations he must practise, and in the study of nature's moods and capacities. I leave it to general experience if that shrewd gray eye does not produce a certain feeling of respect, regardless of any rude dress or aspect in the figure to which it may belong.

Over at Branchville I found an artist friend who had quietly taken up one of the old places long before the late hue and cry. He had painted the house a cheery red, put in some wide, low, Dutch windows, and had left the land virtually untouched. He claimed to have made a good deal of money out of it, however; but this proved to be only a piece of his humor. It was from pictures he had painted there that he had made the money. At Ridgefield, close by, they were erecting hundred-thousand-dollar residences, and I did not think it behooved me to go near so flourishing a community on this particular kind of quest.

It was really not doing quite the fair thing by one's own judgment to look for a farm at that season. I went northward with the apple-blossoms, and it was all a green, rolling, lush, perfumed, English-looking country. I see that I can set down only a tithe of my peregrinations. Danbury, of which I had ignorantly expected nothing—what a delicious green boulevard that was that wound away from the main street in a gentle curve, with a tramway running along it, to the quiet name of Bethel! New Milford, fifteen miles farther on, had another of the delightful, wide elm-shaded streets, the very home of ancient peace. The white-robed figures of the women in summer garb moved in that verdant setting like the nymphs of a poetic dream. It was a public green, too, and there was a great deal of character in the row of wagons that the farmers used to hitch there, like a park of artillery, when they came in to do their shopping.

I was driven to Judd's Bridge, a mere halt with a store and a station, and I "flagged" my own train on the Litchfield railroad, like a lawful sort of communist. The farmers were shingling their old buildings anew on this cross-country route, and had no semblance of abandoning anything. Washington is no longer the mere "cluster of embowered white houses," perched on the highest hill in the region, described by Dr. Holland in his attractive story of "Arthur Bonnicastle." He that has built for use must build next for vanity. It has beautiful villas, and is, like Ridgefield, like Litchfield, like Norfolk, one of the lovely rural places that prosperous fashion has adopted. Each is, in its way, a little Lenox. "Arthur Bonnicastle" has made the pleasant school there one of the sights to be seen; but as to farms, I heard of only one, and while I was at dinner the proprietor even of that one came in to say that it had been sold that very morning.

Litchfield, I suppose, has the finest of all of the streets of its class, a magnificent stretch of velvety sward with a quadruple row of elms, summarily mounting perhaps the steepest of all the hills. Medieval builders would have zig-



zagged, and given us easy grades. He or they, whoever they were, who first introduced the pattern of such lovely thoroughfares should be of revered memory. The wheels of the dog-cart and of the village-cart were frequent in the land; a "Colonial" casino was near completion; the older business portion of the town had been destroyed by fire, and was replaced with more expensive brick. Not a house to rent, and people being turned away from door after door in a weary quest for summer board. If you want to live in any of these places, you must build for yourself, and your building-lot will have a costly price per foot. For a farm some two or three miles away, which good judges in the town thought worth \$2000 as a farm, I was asked \$4000: it had become a villa site.

So I went to a cross-roads farm, a good many miles distant, with which I had had considerable correspondence. I had followed the ups and downs of the sickness of a certain "our Marcus," on whose account it was for sale, so closely that, on arriving, I was able to inquire after the state of this really afflicted person with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. This was a variation of the usual farm-house type, with the small hall in the middle. Up-stairs were bedrooms, two very small and one of medium-size, "done off" in the attic. The whole main bulk of the chimney in the L-part had been taken out, after what I found to be a much-prevailing modern practice. Its foundations still remained in the cellar, and its upper walls, supported perhaps by an iron strap or so, rested on the attic floor, while a congeries of stove-pipes came up through the floors from below, and entered the flues. The cast-iron stove had long since usurped the place of the fire on the hearth; the room of the latter became better than its company, and hence this nondescript arrangement.

There were ninety acres of land, more or less, for no farms are ever accurately surveyed. Some thirty acres of it were in a sheep-pasture, at a distance from the rest, and I thought this rugged sheep-pasture, with its feeding Cotswolds,—safe as yet from the dogs, despite the cruel stories of massacre I heard all along my route,—the most attractive part of the whole estate. If we had lived under the hillock and behind the thin line of maples, at this cross-roads, we should have heard the chink of the blacksmith's hammer, and should have had for other neighbors one store, where there was a benevolent-looking woman whose sugar-plums the children would have been certain to patronize largely; and the post-office, in a private house, where the woman, unlike the storekeeper, was cross-looking, though that might have been only her superficial manner. Then there was another house, with some sort of poor immigrant

in it—a "Polander," I believe they called him. It was squalidly kept, but he might have been invaluable to help us out with work by the day. Somehow, it seemed lonelier to me there than in some places I have been where there were no houses at all. The school looked shabby, which was a bad sign. There was no church anywhere save a poor steepleless Union chapel. Even the railroad station, two or three miles away, was not a resource, for it was nothing but a station,—not even a store this time,—so that even Judd's Bridge was a metropolis in comparison.

Now as to the financial aspect. The price asked was \$2000. Figure five per cent. interest on your purchase-money at \$100. The taxes would have reached about \$15; the insurance premium would be less than \$2, an insurance of \$900 being put on the buildings. Your total annual expense would have been, say, \$120 a year, and it certainly seems as if ninety acres of land ought to earn that without any attention at all, and leave you rent free. They said the previous occupant had made \$5000 off it, and retired to another business. On the other hand, to present all sides of the question, another person, who claimed to be well posted, declared that the present inmates had bought it a little before for \$1400, and that the man referred to had never had any money at all, except a small sum realized from a dead wife's life-insurance, and had often declared his inability to get a living on the place.

Your livery-stableman is generally an excellent informant, and the driver who took me in a stylish yellow buckboard out of Litchfield, northeastward, carried his amiability so far as to be willing to sell me his own brother's place, which lay on the way.

"What would you do if you sold?" I asked this brother.

"Well, we've got several children workin' in a mill," he said, "and their mother would like to go there, and make a home for 'em, and board 'em."

Torrington, bustling with foundries, cotton-mills, skate-shops, needle-shops, and hook-and-eye-shops,—shops, not factories, they are called in the local nomenclature,—was one of the water-power villages that the new distribution of power by the railroad had made, just as Bakerville and Riverton were of those that it had harmed. I was told that at Riverton you could buy for \$2000 an excellent scythe-factory that had cost \$7000. But, indeed, even apart from the railroad, the scythe is disappearing before the advance of the mowing-machine. It will become an obsolete implement, and we shall have old Father Time mounted on a mowing-machine, and consulting a Waterbury watch instead of an hour-glass. There had been some bargains in genial-looking old brick houses (of



a sort no longer built) in Torrington and Newpaug, and perhaps others may still be found. The white spire of the meeting-house on lofty Town Hill rose before us at evening, and, turning that elevation, we entered New Hartford.

A charming prima donna, having voyaged the world over, has chosen New Hartford above all other places for her country home. So has a well-known publisher, whom the heights of Town Hill do not dismay. It has been sought by a summer sketch-class from the metropolis, which, passing out beyond the thriving cotton-mill and its hamlet of French-Canadians, has found in the pleasant glades of the Farmington River, in the pine-groves, the hills, the gorges, on all sides, good subjects for its art. The masters were great fishermen, too, and are credited with having taken out sixty trout of a morning. But here another illusion faded. The genial "Lounger" of the "Critic"—who deserves well of the Abandoned Farm, so far as the interest of literary men may have any share in ameliorating its case—was somehow, directly or indirectly, responsible for an account of a most attractive one to be had for no more than \$1300. But the price had gone up, by successive stages, since the "Lounger" wrote: it had advanced, in a brief lapse of time, first to \$1500, next to \$1800, and finally to \$2500. Be it whispered, furthermore, that the farm, while only three rods wide, ran back in a long, narrow strip for a mile or more, and its trout-brook was at the farther end of it, where it would have been very fatiguing to get at of a hot day.

I made New Hartford a center for many excursions, and was especially pleased with the very rural, English-looking township of Barkhamstead, which, with Goshen, is wont to be more disparaged as "back country" than almost any other. It contained a liberal number of farms in the catalogue, but several of these had already been sold. "The old people are dying off, and the young people are going away," I was told. But of the "young people" who had "gone away" from one of the farms, two had become, the first a prosperous storekeeper, the second the principal of an important school. And here may I be pardoned for dropping into a word or two of personal reminiscence. From the farm of my own grandfather, near New Haven, the boys, as soon as they were grown, went away, as the young birds leave the parent nest. One was a California pioneer, another became a land-owner in the West on a much larger scale than his sire in the East, and two others made fortunes in coal and the like, and used to drive down to the old place and astonish it with equipages such as it certainly never would have yielded them had they stayed there. These cases are typical, on every side, and there is surely no irreparable loss in a migration which

is so much to the average advantage. The old house has passed into the hands of a pensioner of the late war, an American, who, I am sorry to say, does not keep it up with anything like the thrift displayed by some foreign immigrants who purchased the farm of yet another ancestor in the same neighborhood. They are Italians; and there, where all the strict features of an essential New Englandism once prevailed, it is incongruous, indeed, to hear the soft speech of the *sol beato* of Naples or Venice. To show still further the kind of changes going on, I may mention a third place of the same general character in the neighborhood which has been purchased for a summer-home by German Jews. Mr. Clarence Deming, who has devoted much careful attention to this subject, shows us that, outside of Maine,—proper figures for which were wanting for his calculation,—fifty-five per cent. of the population of New England are now either foreign-born or the children of foreigners. This large foreign element is confined as yet chiefly to the towns and the vicinity of the towns, but has penetrated into the country districts proper to more than a mere tithe of the same proportion.

I should like fittingly to celebrate here the prosperous little city of Winsted, its pretty lake, and the boulevard around it on which its busy denizens recreate themselves when their work is over. The towns off the railroad are generally connected by some primitive stage-line. Sometimes it is an old surrey or an open wagon; one was simply an old buggy driven by a farmer's girl. Still, even this is a resource for doing one's commissions not to be despised. The primitive stage brings back the young folks to visit the old place in their summer vacations. Now and then, as the changes progress, you will see it carry away some figure full of character; some old widowed dame who has sold out the place and is going to live in town. Her bulkier baggage is all on board, she has hurried nervously back and forth on a dozen final errands, and now, she stands and looks back at the old place for the last time. The bicyclist was a figure most frequently met, plowing his way indomitably even on almost impassable roads. The hammock is now adopted into the remotest rural districts. This gay Southern contrivance is the importation of the younger portion of the household, and is chiefly for their use; but I have also seen occasionally a stern old farmer of the elder generation, cow-hide boots and all, awkwardly, unsmilingly, swinging in one of them. I think contrast could hardly produce a greater incongruity. As I passed Norfolk, there was a fashionable wedding in progress, for which fifteen hundred invitations had been issued, a fact from which alone much is to be inferred. The smoke of numerous limekilns indicated the approach to





DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

A LAST LOOK AT THE OLD FARM.



Canaan. Beecher has written warmly of this place, and of Salisbury, westward, and the country north to Great Barrington, and on that score there will be found in "The Star Papers" all that I have not the space to say. Canaan is not the drowsy old village I was prepared to find, but the focus of two railroads: it is trim, modern, and even fashionable.

My correspondent, already mentioned, was not there, for it was neither his Monday nor his Saturday; but I found others courteously ready to aid me. One temporarily disused farm I now saw, within two or three miles of the town. I was taken to it over an extremely hilly and poor road, which, owing to the isolation, it seemed nobody's interest to mend. The buildings were closed and in very good repair; but the fences

were laid low, almost as if blown down. This made it easy for wandering cattle to get in. The history of the place was this: It had been acquired, originally, by one of the limekiln companies for the wood on it. Converted to a farm of no great merit, it was sold to a man who paid, for a long term of years, only the interest on the mortgage. This man, having got some good cattle on the place, was beginning to forge ahead a little, when his son and principal aid fell sick, and was incapacitated for all further hard work. Then he himself was killed by his team passing over him, and his widow, having no use for the place, resigned it to the mortgagee. This instance, again, I fancy, hardly proves any of the philosophic theories as to farm decay in New England.

*William Henry Bishop.*

## DAWN AND DEATH.

### DAWN.

TIME after time, a mystery divine,  
 The nameless wonder of the dawn, we see  
 Stealing o'er heaven and earth so silently,  
 With touch so gentle and so infinite fine,  
 No subtlest sense could find and mark the line  
 When the first gleam of breaking day, set free  
 Even from the night itself, shall come to be  
 More than a paler dark, where faintly shine  
 The stars of heaven. But clearer and more clear,  
 Slowly a thousand things come forth to sight,  
 And forms and tints half hidden, far and near,  
 Melt from gray shadow into amber light,  
 Till from its ever-swelling streams are born  
 The full-flushed splendors of the perfect morn.

### DEATH.

EVEN thus some day, insensibly and slow  
 As grows that radiance, mayhap we shall see  
 That time is merged into eternity;  
 Even while we watched and waited, come to know  
 That we have died,— what they call death below,—  
 Passed from the earth painless and peacefully,  
 As men lie down to sleep, and wake to be  
 What they were yesterday, while all things show  
 Familiar round them. Only with that morn  
 Shall on us break a fuller consciousness,  
 Such sense of deeper life and light be born,  
 It must with joy ineffable possess  
 The soul immortal, now to hold its way,  
 Untrammelled thus, through God's resplendent day.

*Stuart Sterne.*



## HUNTING AN ABANDONED FARM IN UPPER NEW ENGLAND.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN, AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. A. MORLEY.

"THE PROFESSOR'S BARGAIN."

WHEN you look at the map you see a region in southwestern Massachusetts quite free from railroads. The points of departure for it, from below, are Canaan, Norfolk, or Winsted, Connecticut, by stage. I left Canaan post-office one day at 1 P. M., and arrived at Southfield, in the heart of the region in question, at half-past three. The stage was a two-horse wagon, with room for six, but the seating, as well as the freighting, space that day was occupied by kegs of nails and boxes of soap destined for an uncommonly prosperous store in the half ruinous village of Mill River, which we went two miles out of our way to visit. If one went directly to Southfield by private conveyance, one could do it much more quickly than we did. The drive back could be made inside an hour, for the way there is nearly all one long, gradual ascent.

My sole fellow-passenger was at first silent, but he grew voluble when the subject of farm-property was hit upon. It was a favorite topic, it appeared, with him as with me. He knew of a large old house over North Granby way, with seven acres of land—a place which had been run as a hotel for some sixty years, but I could have the whole for about \$700. In case that did not suit, he would sell me his own farm, a hundred and fifty acres, for \$1400; or if this were more land than I needed, then he would let the buildings and fifty acres of it go for \$800—fifty acres, he said, being enough to maintain a horse and four cows, and to furnish all the wood required.

"Reason for selling: I ain't no farmer," said he, "and I've made up my mind it's time for me to get out of it."

"How do you know you are not?" I asked. "On what grounds do you base the conclusion?"

"Well, I've tried it 'bout eighteen years, and I hain't succeeded. I guess that's basis enough."

But it appeared in conversation with him that he was one of the kind of men who never succeed in anything. He had been a miller, and had "swopped off" the mill for the farm, trusting to reap from agriculture the brilliant profits which he found the rumbling millstones and the flying grain-powder could never give.

Granby is a good deal of a horse-market; it has also some curious, disused mines, where prisoners were once kept before the State prison at Weathersfield was built. I was obliged to note the district as a promising field for further research.

The interest of the conversation did not prevent a diligent lookout on my part for such roughness as this back-country district might fairly be expected to present. Strangely enough, it was nowhere to be found. Traveling, after all, is merely a process of dissipating preconceived impressions, or of confirming them, and in this case preconceived impressions had to go. It is true that four ruined paper-mills at the village of Mill River were picturesque evidence of the shifting of an economic center, and their value to summer sketch-classes and the like can hardly be said to counterbalance it. But the roads in general were hard and good, marked at their intersections with fresh, neat guide-posts; and the pleasant, undulating farm-country was free from any trace of crudeness. Southfield, when we reached it, set in its cup-like hollow of the hills, might have been taken, from a distance, for some pretty little French village. Just at its entrance we saw great heaps of wholesome-looking cheeses staring out at us as best they could through the windows of a thriving creamery. The village had a convenient water-supply, piped into the houses from a generous spring on a hillside above, and, furthermore, it had telephone communication with Great Barrington, though this was now temporarily suspended through lack of sufficient patronage.

A single grassy street, and scarcely more, constituted this hamlet—a street of small, neat white or gray houses, with here and there one



cified with yellow ocher. Two small white meeting-houses show their Christopher Wren steeples complacently. Time has been when all these white country meeting-houses alike seemed to freeze the imagination with their coldness; but times change, and we with them. The charming grace and lightness of design that many of them possess have been recognized; their whiteness is a refreshing spot amid the greenery: in short, they are coming back into favor again, with the many other nice old-fashioned things of the period, and the invasion of Gothic chapels that succeeded them had better look well to the security of its domination.

A professor known to literary fame had made his summer home in this benighted village, and a group of Vassar College teachers were just taking an old house here, with the privilege of buying it if it suited them. Trusting he will never see these lines, I must tell you about the professor's bargain. It might fairly be considered the manor of the place. Through a screen of pleasant shade-trees, it faced the verdant open stretch of the public green. Its nearest neighbor was the village school-house, whose honest-faced, freckled little inmates would come out and play on the green with a merry clamor that ought to have given yet added value to the location. The owner appeared to have found his place after many researches like my own, and a diligent study of the official catalogues as heretofore described; and found it, too, at a highly reasonable price. It combined so many advantages that, for the nonce, it seemed quite useless to look for any other place, through fear of being devoured by envy in the retrospect. He was sufficiently retired, and yet was in the center where he might either keep a horse or not, as he chose. Fifteen acres of his own fell away behind him, down a slope to a little stream, a domain large enough to be garden, farm, and park combined, and which happily contained within itself nearly all the most desirable forms of rural charm. Distant Mount Everett rose upon the horizon blue and full of dignity. The upper field was rather wet, it is true, and needed draining. Then came a second pasture, with a few old pear-trees, apple-trees, and nut-trees scattered over it. It descended to a nearly level bench of land, with a fragrant pine-grove upon it, to breathe the odors of Araby the Blest about you on a summer day, and furthermore there were plenty of wild strawberries in the carpet of the pine-grove. Still a little farther down, there crossed the end of the property—in and out of and over its large stepping-stones—a fine, strong, babbling trout-brook, hazel-eyed and limpid. It was the kind of brook to lend itself readily to any hydraulic devices that affectionate ingenuity and the leisure of vacation might invent, though probably

the very best thing to do with such a brook is to leave it decidedly alone to its own natural charm.

In this property I looked on at some small inroads which that famous pest the hardhack had made. Its doings had almost an amusing human interest. The hardhack is the arch-enemy in certain rural districts. It is a shrub of about the general look of a huckleberry-bush. Its roots take hold on the lowermost hard-pan, and never let go if they can help it. It invades only fairly good soil, the really poor land being free from it. It must be burned over, or plowed under, or grubbed up, or fed upon by sheep, or the land must be planted with young pines. There is an irreconcilable conflict, it seems, between the pines and hardhack. You hear all of the above methods and others recommended, but, after all, certain people claim that it will take a hundred dollars an acre thoroughly to eradicate it. It is evident, therefore, that whether you pay five or fifty dollars an acre for land, you won't care to have much hardhack on it. A fight here was going on between the hardhack and the young pines wind-sown from the grove above mentioned. These were everywhere distinguishable by their yellowish tufts amid the darker green. It whimsically recalled one of those combats where the cavaliers of the lively painter Wouwerman slash and cut among the enemy in an inextricable *mêlée*. Beyond the area of the wind-sown pines, a swarm of hardhacks was charging the hill with the vigor of a storming-party or a football "flying-wedge."

One could catch, in the mind's ear, their yell of victory. But this misguided party reckoned without their host. My visit thither was in May; in the long vacation following, the professor arrived, and fell upon them with devastating ax and stump-grubber, and I have been given to understand since that the hardhacks were reduced to a becoming state of subordination.

I have now cited a number of cases going to show the material of the superior sort that is filling up the places of the absent on the "abandoned farms"; and more will follow as the narrative proceeds. The place here in question was got at a bargain, as I have said; yet this was not through the general argument of "farm decay in New England," but owing, I think, to some private and local necessity on the part of its owner. Desiring to remove to another town a small manufacturing business he was carrying on there, he realized upon his property, and sold out for what he could get. If all the property put upon the market from similar motives, even in town, were enumerated, it would make a formidable showing. What fallacious arguments, what pictures of gloom, for instance, might not be based upon



a catalogue of all the houses standing vacant, for any cause, in New York!

The success of residents for the summer would not naturally bear positively upon the problem of living with comfort in the country for a good part of the year, or even for the year through. I like to believe, and it was much kept in mind during these researches, that the ordinary plan should be reversed; people should spend nine or ten months in the country and two or three in town, instead of vice versa, as now.

A manufacture of whip-lashes was carried on in a small way in this hamlet, an industry sending a pleasant, quiet hum to the ear. Stepping into the "shops," you could see some small wheels, revolving in an iron caldron, throw the deer-skin thongs over one another, and braid them with a more than human deftness and speed. But there was only one store, and neither butcher nor baker. Some wagons used to come around with various supplies, but I learned that these were not to be depended upon as a resource for the winter. And though the stage-driver would do your commissions for a consideration, the most sagacious of stage-drivers could not be expected to have that infallible accuracy which would take the place of personal visit and inspection. I went out alone one evening, to try to realize how the place would seem supposing one were actually living there. What resources would be open to the promenader at the hour, say, of eight P. M.? The lights seemed already out in the houses, or if here and there they burned still, it was only in some obscure kitchen at the rear. The steady chirrup of tree-toad and cricket occupied the night, broken in upon occasionally by the note of the whippoorwill or the stamp of some horse in his stable. There was a light, however, in the country store, and I pushed the door open and entered. A postmaster was silently figuring his accounts at a desk in the corner, a couple of men were playing checkers at a table, overlooked by two or three others, while two half-grown country boys whispered confidentially together of things peculiar to themselves. But now a "traveler" for one of the whip-shops came in, and stirred up the men playing at checkers, and enlivened the place with some quite citified quips and pranks. This, however, could not always be expected; the young man had only "laid over" a few days, on a visit to his family. In general the sedate club must depend upon its own resources.

In midwinter, I learned, a weekly "sociable" is held among the inhabitants in a hall over the chief whip-lash shop. A long table is spread in picnic fashion with refreshments contributed by the members; "bean-bag" throwing and similar diversions are indulged in, but dancing

is against the general convictions, and not permitted.

Certain city people might not think that all this promised well; but indeed it promised very well as compared with certain other things — with the isolation of a farm shut in by the darkness of the hills, for instance. There should be nothing about it to discourage the aspirant for country life. Let the advantages and disadvantages of each state of life be properly kept in mind — a difficult thing to do, no doubt, since the disadvantages that are nearest are forever obtruding themselves in undue prominence. However, it promises well to the haggard man, distracted by cares, noises, his immense distances, weighed down by the bare mechanical obstacles of life in the metropolis that often render its all-alleged social advantages and amusements completely nugatory. For what would such a man retreat to the country? Why, for the restfulness of nature, for an opportunity to go early to bed, to get a proper acquaintance with his own family, to cultivate his own resources. And he would expect and desire to live chiefly by daylight instead of by lamplight.

A much more important matter would be the probable temper of one's new associates in all the little points of contact with them in practical every-day life. Might it not be that, used only to a certain limited routine of views and practices, they would look upon these as having something of the sacredness of the laws of the Medes and Persians, and, strong in their majority, would too severely expect the newcomer to conform? There is something formidable and repellent in such an attitude, and if it chanced to exist, it might easily ruin all hope of success. Not to go so far as Renan, who said he would even prefer an immoral community to a narrow one, one would wish to count upon a liberal construing for the best of all his variations from the local type. All questions of social distinctions apart, he would want to feel sure of an atmosphere of friendliness and approval as the proper background of the whole experiment. Have I said it already? Then let me repeat it again: the element of the unknown in the problem remains so large, even after studious efforts to solve it, that the prudent would find some means of trying rural life before committing himself to it irretrievably. He ought to hire one of these places for a year, with the privilege of buying. But I fear very few would rent him a place on such terms.

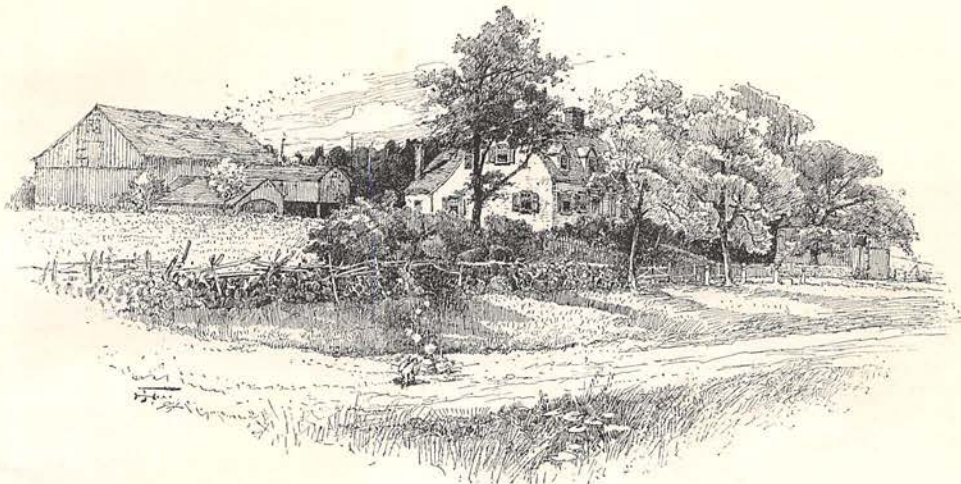
Southfield is remote, if you will, but it is in the southern Berkshires, and nothing over-primitive is now to be looked for in any of that Berkshire district, of which Lenox, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield, full of their opulent villas, are a part. Becket is yet more remote than Southfield, and



Sandisfield is more remote than Becket, the latter having no railroad connection nearer than fifteen miles. Farms were liberally catalogued in them all, but many had been sold, or withdrawn from sale, before my arrival. One vender, for instance, instead of selling out, had bought the advertised place adjoining his own, and thrown the two together.

"Chicago people" were coming in at Sandisfield, and were arranging great trout-breeding ponds and the like. Becket, on the other hand, was becoming popular for summer homes, especially among people from Springfield, Massachusetts. Let it be borne in mind that it is not New York alone that wants villas and country

the display of his own importance rather than reverence for the past. Not such, however, was the basis of the large stock-farm that had lately given a new life to the village of New Marlborough. This was composed of a number of abandoned, or in other words cheap, farms all thrown into one, under the proprietorship of a wealthy New York man. The prosperous new owner was fond of gathering around him his own kind. The horn of the four-in-hand was heard in the land, as they drove back and forth from Lenox and Stockbridge. Other city people, too, were coming in on a more modest scale. The red and yellow ochers that mark our latest modern stage of evolution in house-painting



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

AN ANCESTRAL FARM-HOUSE.

FROM A SKETCH BY THE AUTHOR.

homes, and that has the money to pay for them: every prosperous small city in the north adds its contingent to the demand. The district I treat of is to have its railroad after all, it seems, a fact which I state with no enthusiasm. No doubt capitalists looked at the map one day, and remarked with surprise what a considerable stretch there was without any. "This will never do," they said; so I am told they projected one. It is to start out from somewhere near Great Barrington, connect various of these disconnected points, and bring up somewhere about Westfield.

A distinct type of person who takes up the old farms is the prosperous son who comes back and "fixes up" the old homestead for his country residence. Him you find everywhere. Often he has no great taste or delicacy in his way of treating the old place. His best testimony of affection is generally to enlarge and make it over, winking, staring new, so that its best friend would never recognize it, and then to set up there some florid exhibition of stock-raising or other fancy farming. His motive, in short, is

were cropping out; every farmer had a new and shrewd appreciation of the worth of his acres and his mountain view; and this one circumstance of the establishment of the large stock-farm bade fair to banish "the timid spirit of inexpensiveness" from that locality permanently.

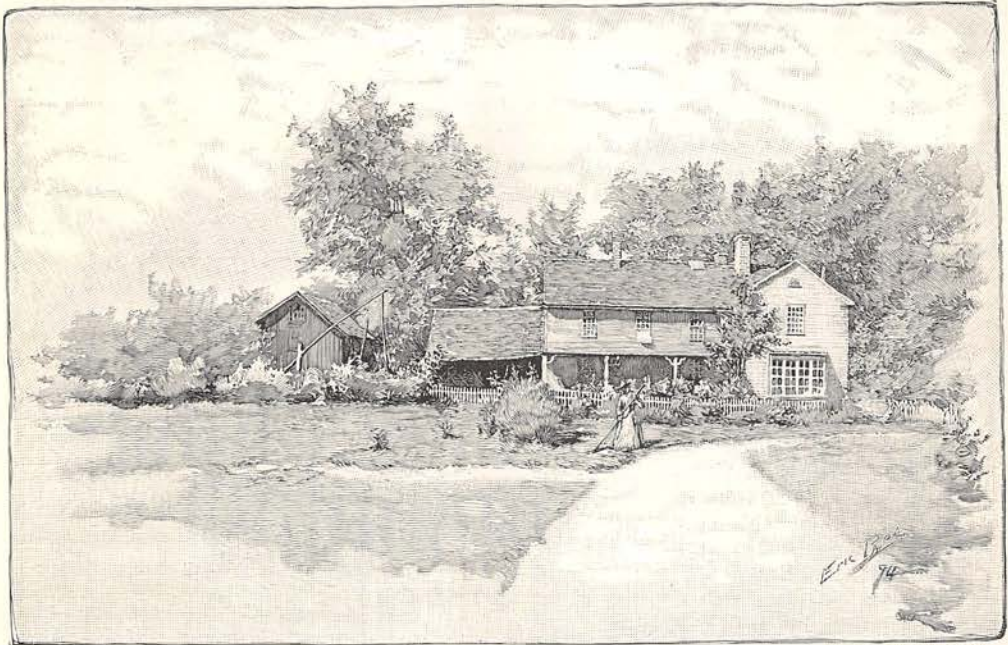
A measure of disappointment awaited me at the pretty town of Monterey, four miles farther on. My objective point there had been a certain twelve-room house, with its 200 acres of land, living springs, trout-brook, and maple-sugar grove (of 300 trees), the whole on the shore of Lake Garfield, and to be had for \$1200. But scarcely had I entered the town when my eye fell upon the following item in the local paper:

Real estate is booming in town, Mr. P— [I omit name] having sold one of his farms to Mr. Hawkins, and Mr. T— having sold the old homestead on Mount Hunger, where he was born, to New York parties. Immediate possession. The purchaser proposes building new, on a rise of ground west of the old buildings, where he can overlook the lake.



That was precisely the place, this latter one on Mount Hunger,—inauspicious name, to be sure,—and I have never known to this day whether it possessed half the attractions that the catalogue claimed for it. There were others. The country thereabouts was, all things considered, one of the most promising that I saw. An amiable, hospitable temper on the part of the people that I met added to this effect. I recall especially two very "sightly" places, as the expression goes. One, for only \$800, was opposite a little common, near which were

price was \$2000. Looking back upon it all now, I scarcely know why I did not return from the expedition under contract to buy not merely one but a dozen of the farms. In that sweet month of May, with the delicious apple-blossoms drifting slowly to the ground, each and every one of them had its moving attractions. This last is the one of those that I mentally bought, and then at once I mentally began to get into all the difficulties that provisions, the servant question, the horse question, the isolation, and the untried disposition



DRAWN BY ERIC PAPE, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY J. WELLS CHAMPNEY.

ENGRAVED BY F. H. WELLINGTON.

THE PLEASANT COUNTRY LIFE.

a district school and other neighbors. I did not look closely into the quality of land, some forty acres of it. It was suitably divided into mowing, pasture, and woodland, and sixteen acres of it were said to be proper for cultivation. Naturally, the buildings could not be expected to be wonderful for that money; something would certainly have to be expended upon them: yet they were of good size, they grouped well, and the group stood well back from the road. A discerning eye might see that it was a place you could make something of, whereas many others of far more pretensions and cost were so hopelessly commonplace and unfit in site and looks as to be beyond correction.

The second place mentioned had twice as much land; and the house had ten rooms, was considerably nearer the post-office, stood in a dignified way on a knoll of its own, shaded by fine maple-trees, and overlooked the lake. Its

of a city family would naturally involve us in. The people hereabout are favored with summer-boarders; their twelve or fourteen hundred feet elevation, their good air and water, and nearness to the heart of the Berkshire Hills, procure them this patronage. Whatever may be said of the summer-boarder otherwise, he has at least a certain liberalizing influence; the country district that he frequents is apt to shake off some of its narrowness, and to acquire the habit of treating the prejudices of strangers with comfortable consideration.

The persons with houses to dispose of had much confidence in them, for often they had them photographed with snow on the ground. The selling agent would have sent you a photograph of the one above mentioned, if you had asked for it, shown half-buried in the drifts of a great blizzard. Here indeed is the reverse of the shield; here the very antipodes of the





FROM A PAINTING BY J. ALDEN WEIR.

A WARM CORNER.

apple-blossoming. Yet I cannot say that even this picture gives me pause to any effectual extent: I rather think, as I look at it, of the healthful labor in those drifts, of the keen, bracing air, of the swift rush of the sleigh along the hard roads, and of the ring and scrape of the gliding skates over the black ice of the wintry ponds.

Monterey begins to be near a region of distinguished fashion. An eight miles' drive thence westward brings us to Great Barrington and a main artery of travel once more, the Housatonic railroad. Monument Mountain, inspiration to the poet Bryant, soon hove in sight as we advanced to Barrington, its native ruggedness veiled here by the delicate spring foliage, as if it were gently trying to prove an alibi. This was the termination of the long, roundabout, twenty-five-mile ride I had taken north-westward from Canaan. "Barrington" the country people call it for short. Perhaps even greater unceremoniousness would be desirable here for fear that all simple, natural feeling may be overpowered in time by the growth of a portentous grandeur, may be overawed by vast granite mansions and mammoth conventional inns. Bryant's early homestead makes part of the modish Berkshire Inn, but relegated to the rear, and now used as servants' quarters. You remember that French marquise, who, when she was bored in the country, and they asked her why she did not do this, that, and the other,

replied, "*Mais je n'aime pas les plaisirs innocents!*" Well, village improvement societies and mundane developments are all very well, but that is what many of our over-prosperous villages seem to be coming to.

A sprinkling of better-dressed and cosmopolitan-looking persons appeared in the trains, perhaps taking a run up in the charming spring days for a look at their Lenox and Stockbridge villas. To inquire for cheap or abandoned farms in these localities would hardly seem practical enterprise, and yet I am not so sure but thorough investigation might ferret out some bargains even hereabout; just as front seats are always found in church even when the body of the house is full. There is a farm near West Stockbridge of 225 acres, with an eight-room house and three barns, which had been sold a little before for \$3000 or less. Lenox lay only five miles distant from it, and Pittsfield only twelve. With such excellent markets at hand, and at that price, it seemed almost as if one might raise small fruits, eggs, poultry, and dairy products enough to reap a fortune.

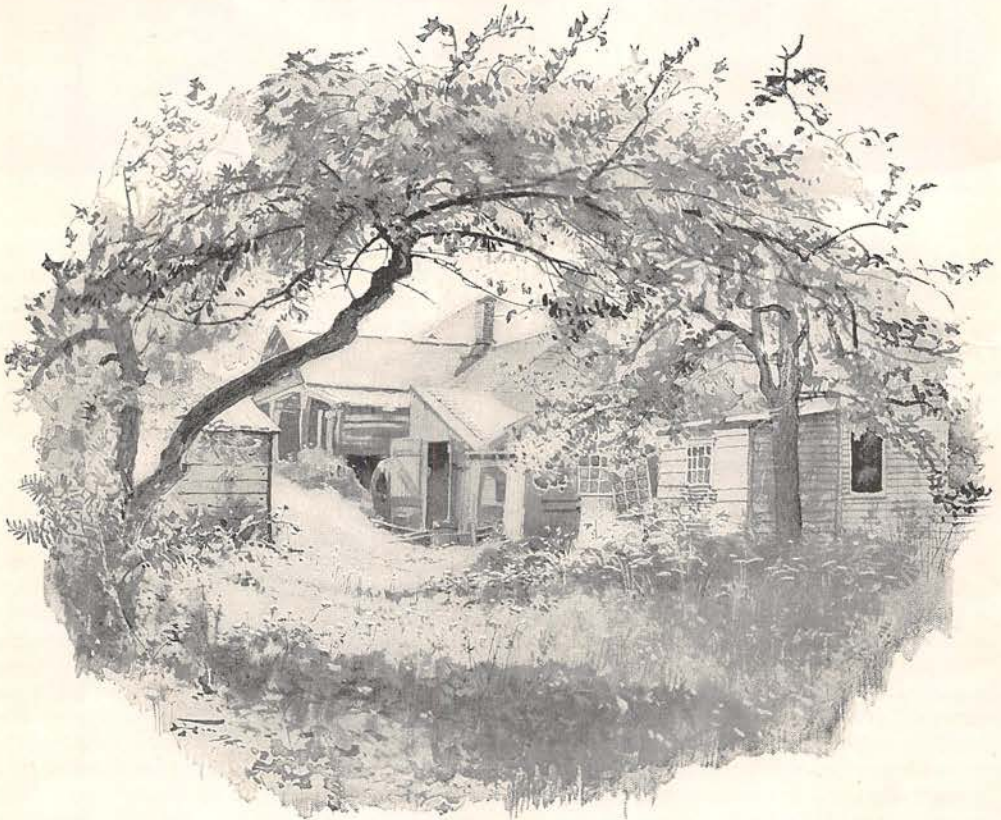
Were I to devote even a brief mention to each of the farms visited that presented some points of interest, this account would be swollen to undue proportions. I pass a large number of them untouched. In a general way all fall into four classes. First, there was the poor shanty dwelling, with some considerable stretch of



starved land, the price of which would be a few hundred dollars. Next, the story-and-a-half house, with from fifty to one hundred acres of ground, "run down," but not without tangible merits, for from \$1000 to \$2000. A number of good-sized village houses, out of repair and without land, would also come within this class. Thirdly, the two-story house, in good repair, its farm in good order, for from \$2000 upward — \$2500 being a fair average price for a place of this kind, something that was really worth while. Lastly comes the list of stock-farms, dairy-farms, and summer boarding-houses, with names of their own. These would be held at from \$5000 up to \$20,000, and their owners had no idea of selling them at a bargain, but put them into the catalogues only to snatch the opportunity for some free advertising. Apart from a few rare exceptions, the houses that were for sale cheap either were in

things, abandoned to decay, after the numerous pathetic stories to that effect with which we have grown familiar; and I returned from my trip finally in a very skeptical frame of mind about such stories.

I hasten northward now in Massachusetts, past the grave majesty of Graylock, eastward through the Hoosac tunnel, through sylvan Deerfield and Greenfield, and I cross the New Hampshire line just above Winchendon. They try to make you forget the Hoosac tunnel by lighting the lamps brilliantly, so that you may read your paper as you go through it,— as they do not for you in the Mont Cenis,— but they neglect to put these lamps out afterward, and if it is a summer day, the car is hot and stuffy the rest of the afternoon. Much fine agricultural country was passed, and there were many counties well-catalogued which I was able to study only from the car window, after the fa-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

WAITING FOR AN ARTIST.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY J. WELLS CHAMPNEY.

a condition of deplorable neglect, or else had never been good for anything from the first. In addition, they would lie away off on some forlorn back road, in places all but impossible of access. Not even once did I see any fine mansion or notable homestead, capable of better

favorite method of a leading statesman some years since. The farms seemed to grow larger as we went northward. Straight, formal pine-groves stood up here and there, like Puritan train-bands on parade. One Massachusetts village offered as an inducement to settlers a free omnibus





DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

IN THE TWILIGHT OF ITS FORTUNES.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY J. WELLS CHAMPNEY.

which would convey their children to and from school, and I think this idea has made some little progress elsewhere. The town of Miller's Falls offered the spectacle of a young bridal pair pelted with rice to the train — pelted by enthusiastic friends through the station to the very steps of their car. The couple bent before the unappeasable storm in a sulky way. As they stopped in the vestibule of the parlor-car to shake the rice out of their collars and to prepare to meet the awaiting audience within, one could but hope that such delicate social tact was more than rare in the region.

I had long since passed the limit of any preliminary engagements partly made by letter. The objective point now was Jaffrey, and the circle of villages that cluster as in reverence around the fine, isolated mountain of Monadnock, in southern New Hampshire. I bethought me of taking some opinions on my marked list of places at Winchendon before actually setting out to see them. I do not know why a town of the settled aspect of Winchendon should have such an influx of new people just then. My landlord was freshly arrived in the place, the druggist was new, the livery-stable keeper was new. A court clerk, who was also put down in the directory as a real-estate agent, could not be found after three or four visits to his office. An early settler was then obligingly hunted for

me, an oracle who was alleged to know everything that the mind of man was capable of knowing concerning the region.

"What do you think, then, of this first place on the list?" I asked, pointing it out to the oracle.

"I don't know as I know anything about that one," he returned, with a cautious air.

"What of this second one?"

"I guess I ain't much acquainted with that place."

The next question, the next, and still the next, met with no better response.

"Suppose we drop the list," I went on; "will you kindly give me a few points about *any* farms you have noticed as for sale that come within the conditions mentioned."

"Well, I don't know as I know of any — not just now," responded the vaunted oracle, uneasily. The oracle had proved a broken reed.

The livery-stable keeper said he was going to send out a man to bill the towns for a coming circus. If I cared to ride with this man, he said I would have an exceptional opportunity to see and to hear of any and all real estate that might be for sale in the country. This, indeed, seemed to promise well, and it certainly promised some amusing glimpses into life and character. But a condition precedent to it was the coming of the special railroad car contain-



ing the circus posters with other properties. The car was so much belated, that I could not wait for it, and thus I have never billed any town for a circus—in connection with light, sociological study, and the problem of modest country homes for persons of limited means.

There were catalogued farms in Rindge and East Rindge, in Fitzwilliam, in Peterboro', in Jaffrey, and Troy—such farms everywhere but in Dublin, which has been taken possession of by a colony of the élite, and grown fashionable and dear. Jaffrey is called "Jeffrey" on the spot. I was driven in all some twenty miles across the country, west from the station of East Jaffrey, to the little manufacturing town of Troy. My driver was a French-Canadian. I came to know he was a Canadian by his saying that his horse did not speak a word of English, though he himself, in speech, ways, and looks, was thoroughly assimilated to the indigenous Yankee type.

I had heard below some wonderful stories of the cheapness with which one could drive at Jaffrey, but I found that here, as elsewhere in these jaunts, driving about in the country cost but little less than city prices.

The fine, umbrageous, cathedral-like streets of the earlier part of my journey were much less frequent now. The sparse shade-trees along the main road at Jaffrey let in the sunlight freely, and a few young maples that had been set out about the three meeting-houses on the common—no Sir Christopher Wren steeples upon these meeting-houses, either!—would require many years before reaching a respectable maturity. Jaffrey had long been a familiar word; but here, once more, how rarely one gets the least idea what a place is like until one goes there. I was surprised to find Jaffrey rather a new-looking hamlet with a sandy soil. There is nothing striking about it in itself; it has for its sole attractions a dry, pleasant air, which the sandy formation favors, and the grand mountain always making a picture in the background. It is frequented by people from Boston and other parts of populous upper New England. The wayfarer from New York has to remember that the apparent remoteness to which he has withdrawn is only very relative; the farther he has got away from New York, the nearer he has come to a new and almost as busy a sphere of influence.

A New York man lately bought one of the local farms. It was in sight, on a hilltop, from the door of our inn. He was going in for something expensive, to take the place of his yacht or his four-in-hand, and was thus quite outside the pale of this inquiry, which may be considered more as devoted to outwitting destiny rather than dealing with her as one high contracting party with another. In that country

a hill-slope was called a "pitch"; we were always going up a pitch or down a pitch. They were pleasant pitches that took us down, then up again, to the cheap farm tenanted by a French-Canadian, a swarthy, pock-marked little man, with bead-like eyes, speaking English not merely broken, but pulverized, and much too full of profanity. You could perhaps have got that farm for six hundred dollars. You would have had to build a new house upon it, and the land was very likely no great affair; but, oh, what delightful boulders it had, and what a park-like screen of trees behind the house! The road through the pasture was a very painter's road, and it wound in part amid pine-trees that gave out their richest balsamic fragrance under the genial warming of the summer sun.

Going on, I cared much less for the hotel and 200 acres, on the shoulder of Monadnock, that \$4000, or, at any rate, \$6000, would have bought. I marked with special stars of admiration a well-kept place we passed which had been entered in the catalogue for \$4000, but had gone, at a recent auction-sale, for no more than \$1000. That was one of the chances that fall to persons born under a lucky star. Down in the bottom-lands, by a stream, was a house, not bad, but indeed rather good, with six acres of land for \$400. Both its well and spring were hopelessly plugged up, and the only resource for water was to bring it from a neighboring brook. Occasionally there would be a cabin and three or four acres on the market for \$150 or \$200—a poor dwelling, certainly, but the view of grand Monadnock was comprised in its title. How worthy, how even regal, it was, compared not merely with the abodes of the poor in the metropolis, but with those in which a larger part of the fairly well-to-do are, for their sins, compelled to live.

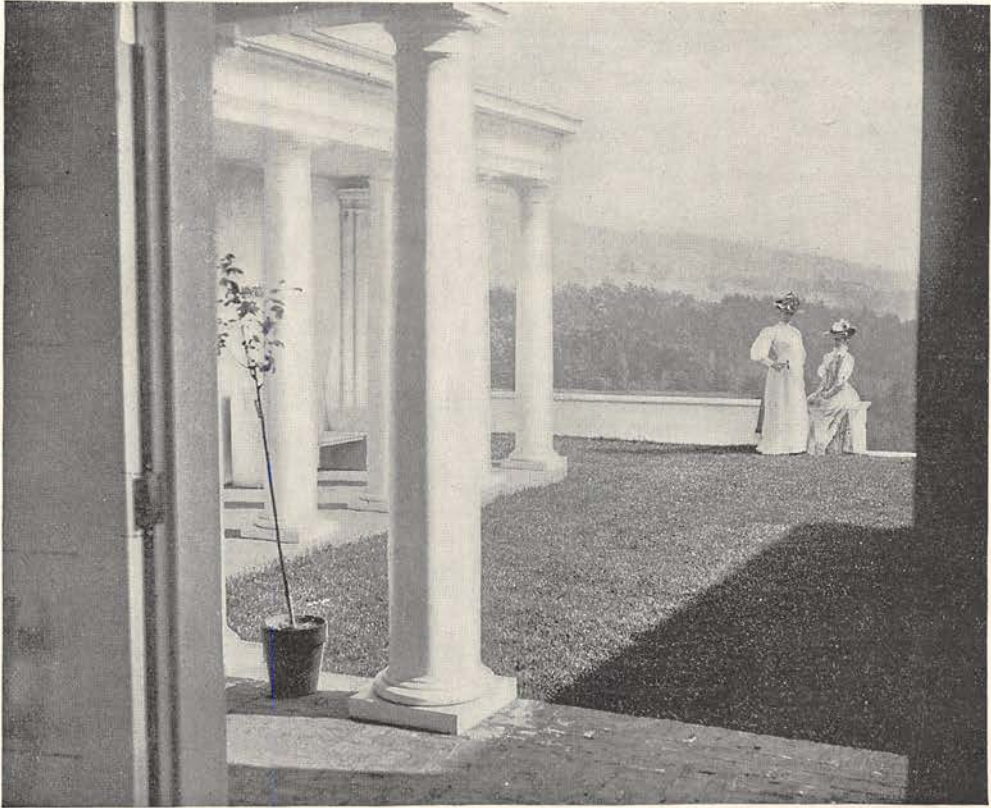
I regret, among others, a large old house on a hillock, with barns and woodsheds all joined to it in the same group, with a farm of sixty acres—the whole valued at \$1000. It had some strange inconsistencies. For instance, although there was classic ornament in its cornice, its upper story had never been "done off" into chambers; again, though the entrance-hall was wide and spacious, there were no balusters on the stairs. Its most particular lack, however, now seemed a pine-grove. I could hardly find it in my heart to forgive such a deficiency in a region where pine was so plentiful, and my taste had been set upon one ever since my stop at Southfield.

We passed at length the shoulder of scarred old Monadnock, and had left the white mountain-house showing high above like a patch of the last winter's snow. We came to a maiden sitting picturesquely under a tree by the road,



shelling peas. A house, standing far back from the border of the route, corresponded not a little to this its pleasing inmate and frontispiece. There comes a time in such researches — and it had come long before this — when you no longer adhere to any fixed list or especial program. "Is this place for sale?" we asked. She

wife would have let him. His talk of the inclemency of the winter prompted new speculations as to the desirability of the South instead of the North for the experiment. But in the South the negro problem would have to be met, and the lawlessness, the apparent insecurity of life and property, in certain sections. "Better,"



"HIGH COURT," CORNISH, N. H. LOOKING SOUTH FROM COURTYARD.

referred the query, by word of mouth, to the distant dwelling. A cross, elderly female figure at once appeared at one of the windows, bordered with apple-blossoms, and without further parley snapped back:

"No, 't ain't. 'T ain't for sale, not at no price."

But farther down the road we met the full owner, and he, leaning at ease on the cultivator with which he was encouraging the growth of young corn, said it was for sale. He would take \$2500 for it. This man was willing to chat and philosophize at length. We found that we had opinions in unison on the subject of that prevalent scourge, the "grippe." He had suffered from it greatly during the past hard winter. If he could sell out, he said, he would go South. He wanted a place in a warmer climate. He would have done it twenty years earlier if his

one says to one's self, "the harshness of nature than of man." But I have collected no data, made no investigations, in that region.

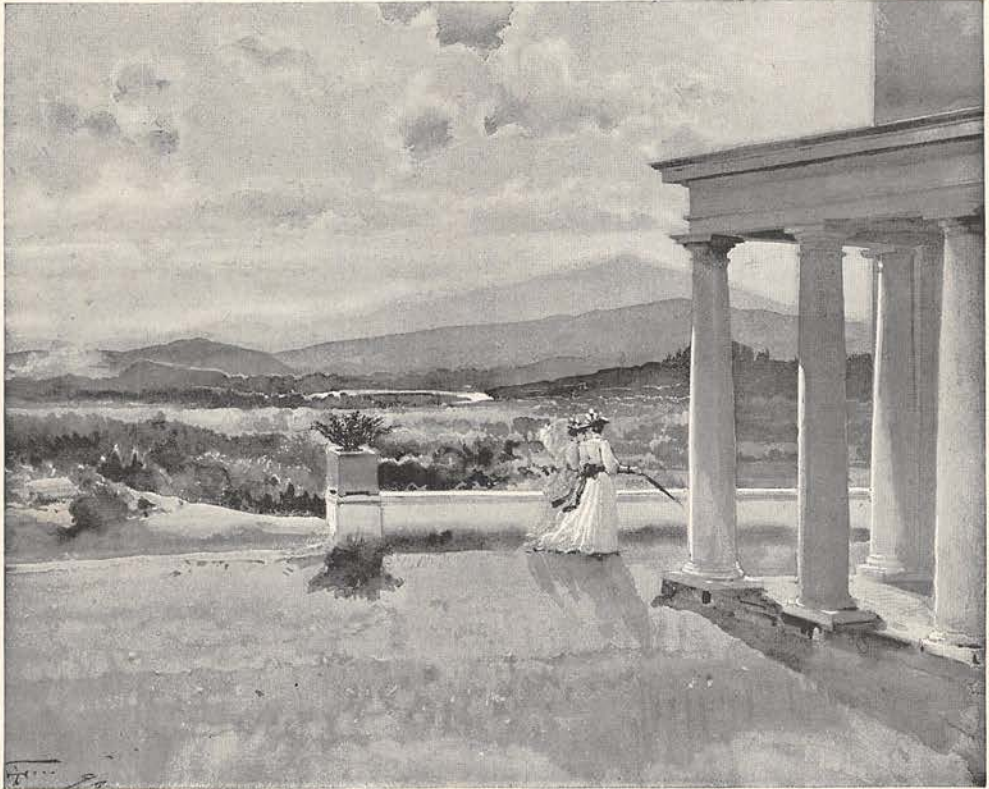
Here in New Hampshire one may fairly count upon eight months of favorable weather; the rest of the year one would be more or less snowed in. The Jaffrey mail-carrier started on horseback, last March, to make the short two miles to East Jaffrey. He was obliged to abandon his horse in the great drifts, and only succeeded in getting the mail-bags through, after prodigious effort, by carrying them on his back.

Troy town devoted itself to its blanket-mills and saw-mills, and I judged that its atmosphere was little ameliorated as yet by the summer-boarder. Changing conveyances there, I drove out two miles, almost up and down a break-neck hill, in the direction of Swanzey. I was



unable to resist going to see what a certain 150 acres, with house and barn, were like, which were offered at \$500. I did not expect very much of it, but the place proved even more disappointing than I had expected. It was even worse than the 200 acres, with buildings, for \$500, which I was to see later under the shadow of Mount Chocorua. It was abandoned, indeed.

were a conspicuous part of the view in each successive town. The multitude of such homes in our country at this day is a marvel which only the traveler is in a position to feel. Go where you will, they rise on every side; they give a new realization of the vast resources, the underlying power, the widespread prosperity, of the American people. The grandeur of the me-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

"HIGH COURT." COURTYARD LOOKING TOWARD MOUNT ASCUTNEY.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

It was a sort of "jumping-off place" that I arrived at—the last end of everything. The house was a poor squatter's shanty in a clearing of scrubby undergrowth. There was no shade; there was no fruit; there were no fences; there was no well, no spring, and you would have been so cut off from the world there as scarce ever to have seen even a country wagon go by.

And that was why—strike again the mournful lyre, O ye who love to lament over departed grandeur and economic decay!—this is why 150 acres of land, with residence and outbuildings upon the same, could be offered for \$500 in the heart of once happy New England.

It was a relief to take the train after this, and dismiss the whole subject from mind for a while. The ride along the banks of the upper Connecticut was a constant delight. Stretches of fair lawn, homes of comfort, good taste, and luxury

tropolis is, after all, only a limited incident of the whole. It was hard to believe in much serious depression in back-country of which this was the foreground, yet Bellows Falls, Charlestown, Claremont, and the rest, were all points of departure for districts of "abandoned farms"—by the catalogue. A New York acquaintance had bought one in the town of Alstead, which was reached from Cold River, and he was importing other friends. They assured me that \$10 per acre, including buildings, was a sort of standard basis for the sales thereabout. He had put a farmer on the place, and used to have part of the products sent down to him in New York.

Vermont furnished the most marvelous of all the stories I fell in with in this connection. Whitingham, Vermont, in the southern part of the State, I was told, was an absolutely deserted village. A commercial traveler declared that



he had twice driven through it without encountering a living soul, and that the houses all stood vacant, excellent houses, too, and some even with good furniture in them. When asked how he accounted for this, he said, in the usual way, that the old folks had died off, and the young folks moved away. Later on he wrote me that he understood the place had been "stocked" with Swedes—such was the rather irreverent expression—by a well-known capitalist of Bennington; but subsequent investigation showed that there was nothing in this unique story. The Whitingham postmaster writes, "This town has been quite prosperous for the past few years, and there are no Swedes settled here."

Thus there seems a chronic tendency in the human mind to invent such tales, following on after Atlantis, and Norumbega, and the Seven Cities of Cibola.

What was a reality, however, and a charmingly romantic one, were the places of artists, that I found at Windsor in Vermont. Windsor is the site of William M. Evarts's somewhat famous farm, and also of a villa of the late Judge Stoughton. The latter, I was told, after long standing idle, came to be sold for less than the cost of its plumbing. Windsor technically claimed the artist places: it was their post-office; but in reality they were across the river at Cornish Hill, on the New Hampshire side. One of them had bought an old farm-house as a basis, but he had completely disguised it by the addition of a studio and other features; his group of irregular constructions almost resembled a small village in itself. From one corner of his house projected—what shall I call it? It was not a veranda, not a loggia; it was a spacious, square, out-of-doors chamber. This was open on all sides, and simply roofed in against the weather. There the family would breakfast, dine, and pass most of the day in their various avocations, practically in the open air. One of the open sides looked out upon a garden expressly grown with flowers of the old-fashioned sort,—dahlias, phlox, and sweet-william,—and the other sides upon delicious glimpses of billowing, green mountains and the sylvan river. Others had built outright upon the ancient farm property. One dwelling was on a hilltop, somewhat bare and windy-looking at present, but likely to recall, when its formal avenues are grown, such effects as those of Palladio about Vicenza. One, whose especial fondness for the formal style in landscape has prompted his late beautiful book on the Italian gardens, had begun to carry out on his own ground some of the stately foreign ideas embodied in the book.

Strange destiny this, truly, for plain, homely old Yankee farm-lands to come to! How it must astonish their staid soil, as it is turned!

Below a terrace containing geometrical flower-gardens was a delightful pine-grove of tall, regular trees, and the ground out of which it grew, carpeted with the ruddy pine-needles, was as level as a floor. This ground was being formed into a second terrace by bordering it with a formal balustrade, like a lesser Roman Pincian. Pensive, cinque-cento poets and blessed damosels should walk upon such a terrace and in such a wood. The landscape was seen directly through the wood; the distant, peaceful river, the bold, green hills, and the blue mountains, seemed woven in amid the fine, straight trunks of the pines like some original and exquisite pattern of tapestry.

The denizens of the neighborhood did not, as a rule, keep horses; they were rarely tempted from home, since scarce anything elsewhere was half as beautiful as what they left behind. The stage-driver performed their commissions. Such a nucleus for the propagation of love of beauty and rational living deserves a monograph to itself. But I draw near my limit: I must fly across the State of New Hampshire, and I pause next in the district of Lake Winnepesaukee.

The sign of the cottager and of the camper-out was on the face of the land along Lake Sunapee. The small towns, again, both before the State capital of Concord and after it, were full of the beautiful houses, and the tasteful red and yellow hues, of the current domestic architecture. At the typical farm I took from the catalogue for inspection at Plymouth a wolf-story was thrown in. The wolf had come down into the edge of the orchard, they said; they all saw him plainly, and he was as big as a dog. The white petals were falling in a veritable snow in the same orchard just then, and the end of the blossoming was at hand, but the skeptical scoffed at the wolf; they declared that it was a dog—just simply that and nothing more.

"Was you one of them that wrote?" the proprietor asked, with a quick, keen look, as I broached the object of my visit. The farm was lonely and primitive, although his prices did not seem to take those facts greatly into account; had he known all that I had seen, from New Canaan, in Connecticut, thither, he would, like enough, have been more artful and considerate with me.

The drive between Plymouth and Center Harbor is set down as a notable one, but take care to make it from Center Harbor to Plymouth, instead of the reverse, otherwise you will have the high mountains behind you, and will not see them as you go. A certain bridge was down, and we were forced to go round by Ashland, thus extending the already long drive to something like twenty miles. "There's some



folks that make farming pay," said my driver, pointing to a place we passed.

"How?" I demanded, thinking to hear of some new plan.

"They work," he replied.

The remark was intended as a fling at "lazy farmers," of whom, rightly or wrongly, one hears much. We passed Holderness, a pretty cross-roads, with some red-roofed summer cottages, an Episcopal church in stone, and a large hotel, on the knoll that commands the widest view of the charming Lake Asquam. A novel use to which some farm-land there had been put was the establishment of a permanent vacation-camp on the lake, for the benefit of boys whose families do not wish to take them about to the summer-resort hotels.

On the shores of limpid Lake Winipiseogee I came at length to the home of him whom I may call the father of the abandoned farm—the author of informing and entertaining letters which have appeared from time to time in the columns of "The Nation." It was in a remote spot some five or six miles from Center Harbor, and a considerable drive from the main road, even after you had turned out of that into the by-road. One would need a large, cheerful family, with its many interests, to counteract the isolation of the place, and fortunately that is just what its proprietor had. His caretaker, from a farm-house in the vicinity, said that he did not believe another family in the world enjoyed their place with the unflinching merriment and thorough happiness of this; no, he would not except a single one. The house was simplicity itself, a long, low, gray house, not even painted, and all the more picturesque for lacking paint. Its new owners had merely made it weather-tight, and thrown out a number of good-sized dormer-windows in the attic, which was converted into one continuous, well-lighted room or hall. Below was a spacious living-room with a fireplace, but, apart from that, no set distribution of the house to the usual formal purposes. The dining-room was, I fancy, as Rousseau pictures it, *un peu partout*; their music-room was the beach or the shade of some fine tree; and their easy chairs, sometimes, at least, the heaps of fresh-cut grass on the rustic lawn before the door. It was rather a camp than a villa, and purposely it held as little as possible to give a housekeeper any uneasiness.

I shall not say what the owner paid for it—the more especially as I really do not know. But in going around the two lakes, I found that prices were rising here, as elsewhere. You could come in on the first story, perhaps, or on the second, but no longer on the ground floor. People were getting an exalted idea of what their property was worth to "fancy farmers"

and seekers for villa-sites. Three thousand dollars was an average price for a farm, which as a farm alone was worth \$1000.

A son of the family above adverted to was settled about as far from Center Harbor, down Lake Asquam, as was his father from it on Lake Winipiseogee. His pastures rose steeply to the bold crag of Red Hill; in front of him lay long, slender islands, like black steamers at anchor, and across the lake rose upon the view Black Mountain, White-face, Rattlesnake Hill, and Chocorua, varying all their tones with the passing hours. The young proprietor was a college man, and had pursued for a while some city occupation; but he had taken to farming out of pure love of it, and not the worst severities of winter had been able to daunt him. He hoed with his men in planting-time, pitched hay with them in haying-time, and lugged his own heavy buckets of sap through the snow in early spring, in maple-sugar time. It was a vindication of the ideal, a testimony to the world of actual, hard physical labor, which, for us, despite the disparagement of the indolent and the maledictions of the working-man,—who gets something too much of it,—is most desirable, a beautiful, beneficent thing. We please to marvel when a city person goes off heartily into the country, and yet the following paradox is true; namely, that it is city people who are precisely the best fitted for the country. Your average denizen of the country has no appreciation of natural scenery, never raises his eyes to notice it, scarce knows that it exists; thus he suffers all the disadvantages of the country without its principal compensation.

When the pretty steamer took me down to Lake Winipiseogee, the last semblance of illusion had vanished: the abandoned farm did not exist; it was not to be found even in the neighborhood of him whom I have called its inventor. Next, I journeyed northwestward to Wells River; thence, eastward, to the high peaks of the White Mountains, and passing through them, came down to Albany, under Mount Chocorua. Few or no farms were catalogued in the northern counties of the State, or in those that contain the summer resorts. In the township of Albany, two hundred acres, a seven-room house, and a barn 25 by 40 feet, were advertised for \$500. That beat the record, and I made haste to go to the town of Conway, and addressed myself to the attorney who had the place in charge.

"Sold," said he, as soon as I had mentioned my business.

It had been sold some three years, and thus should have been omitted from the last edition of my catalogue. Furthermore, the agent said it contained nearer three hundred acres than two hundred. He had had probably a hundred



letters about it. The inquiries had not come generally from the city, but from country persons of small means who asked if they could get a living out of it. The courteous attorney showed it to me, all the same, in connection with some others in the region. He threw into the wagon, as we started, fishing-rods, boots, and pennyroyal oil, against the mosquitos. He intended that we should take some trout on the way, without interfering with our errand.

Albany is a very back country, indeed. It has only a single road, so that you must come out again by the same way you go in. Its population has declined, and it is only lately that it has paid off its heavy debt in bounties, incurred during the war. Payment was made through distress by tax levies. The levy in one year was as high as 12½ per cent., and half the property in the town, including the piece we were going to see, passed under the hammer. The farm was in a miniature *intervale* below the beetling crags of Chocorua. It was precisely in the district covered by the legend of Chocorua's dying curse. The chief cursed all sheep or cattle of the whites, that they should never live or thrive there. This is the famous "Burton ail,"—the town was Burton before it was Albany,—and it is fact, owing to some peculiarity of the pasturage or what not, that cattle waste and die there, unless they can be fed on hay brought up from the Saco River.

In his stirring "Night on Mount Chocorua" which the late Albert Bolles of Harvard described for us, he must have looked directly down upon this farm. Old Chocorua himself, if he have any feeling for the fitness of things, would choose it as his place for revisiting the pale glimpses of the moon. In the midst of a small oval meadow, or prairie, encroached upon by the surrounding forests of which the greater part of the property consisted, stood a poor, lonely house and barn abandoned to the elements. I had the curiosity to note a few of the vagaries which years of ruin had occasioned. Doorsteps and main door were missing; the sill beneath had rotted away to a condition of red powder; a side door leaned against the outer wall, its panels all kicked in. Bricks from the chimney littered the floors. The parlor door had a panel out, and pistol-shots through it, the facetious doing of sportsmen who had happened that way. Gaps yawned in the roof and ceilings, as if shells had come through. One was forcibly reminded of nothing so much as the scene of *Détaille's* "Last Cartouche."

"You were right," said I to my companion; "it would not have suited me; it is dear at five hundred dollars."

"Dear at five hundred? But the price is fifteen hundred. The purchaser is holding it for a rise."

I paused there, and myriad mosquitos droned their unanimous opinion of this difference.

*William Henry Bishop.*



## THE HEART OF THE WORLD.

THE great world's heart is old and sad,  
 'T is long, long since the world was glad,  
 For death falls fast and love must part,  
 And wrong and sorrow drive men mad,  
 And salt tears grieve the old world's heart.

And yet, dear soul, for whom alway  
 My life has waited, as the May  
 All April waits to bloom and bear,  
 If we might meet and love some day,  
 How glad a heart the world would wear!

*W. P. Foster.*



council constitute the legislative department of the city, on a general ticket, under the minority-representation provision that no voter shall vote for more than seven of the twelve aldermen to be elected. Only one trial has been made of this plan, and the results of that were not especially encouraging.

In fact the trouble everywhere, under all systems, is the same. Mr. MacVeagh, in the address from which we have quoted, defined it accurately when he said :

Our trouble is your trouble—the indifference and the neglect of the so-called good citizens. Such men defeat good city government. I want to say that it is not the bad citizen that needs to be reformed, but the "good citizen." The bad citizens are a hopeless minority. The good citizens are a hopeless majority.

Mr. Moorfield Storey, speaking also at the Philadelphia Conference, said of the situation in Boston :

If honest citizens without regard to their differences on national questions would combine to secure good men in the board of aldermen, this new law might be of great assistance, but employed merely to divide the board between Republicans and Democrats it is useless.

The remedy for municipal misgovernment lies in the awakening of the respectable citizens to a proper sense of civic duty. Home rule, by placing the responsibility for misgovernment squarely and fully upon the inhabitants of the cities, must tend inevitably to hasten this awakening, and for this reason it would seem to be desirable that it should be granted.

#### The Memory of Curtis.

WHILE good citizenship and nobility of character are honored in America, the memory of George William Curtis will remain green and fragrant, but it is altogether fitting that those who were of his own day and generation should honor themselves in making a permanent memorial to his memory. The shape of this memorial, as decided upon, is twofold: first, an artistic monument; second, an endowed course of lectures upon the duties of American citizenship, and kindred subjects, to be called the "Curtis Lectureship." It will then be seen that the memorial is of such sort as not only to be a record of his personality, but to carry on forever the true work of his life by an insistence upon the cause to which his life was devoted—the elevation of the standard of American citizenship. This was the

thought that dominated his career; the motive which grew and strengthened with his years.

Curtis possessed personal traits which gave him distinction; he had exceptional literary and oratorical ability; his was a life of singular purity and nobility. But above all Curtis was a most exemplary type of American citizenship. His fame as a public man did not come from office. His great services to his country were performed as a private citizen, without expectation of political reward. In fact, his only relation to any prominent position (except the chairmanship of the Civil Service Commission) was the refusal of high place under a friendly administration.

The committee of several hundred having the matter in charge is certainly one of the most significant and representative that has ever been made in this country. It is desirable that the sum (\$25,000) shall be subscribed for in every part of the Union by all who appreciate the man, and who sympathize with the patriotic form which the memorial is to take. Mr. William Potts of Farmington, Connecticut, is the secretary, and Mr. William L. Trenholm, 160 Broadway, New York, the treasurer.

#### A Good Minister and a Good Citizen.

THERE was a time in the recent career of a prominent minister of New York when good men questioned not his motives, but certain of his methods. It was soon found that any fault of method, if fault there was, counted as nothing to the rectitude of motive, energy, and persistence of action, and, as now appears, to the enormous value of results in the unveiling of official iniquity.

The legislative inquiry would not have taken place had it not been for a popular uprising which placed the legislative branch of the State government in hands unfriendly to Tammany Hall. But the labors of Dr. Parkhurst have been the principal means in making that inquiry successful; and the people rightly regard him as the chief hero of the preparatory struggle with Tammany Hall—a struggle soon to be followed by another, which all friends of good government throughout the world are hoping will be a fatal and final defeat of that ignoble and irredeemable organization.

All honor to the true minister and true citizen, Charles H. Parkhurst. Would that every community in America possessed a patriot as earnest, unselfish, and heroic!

## OPEN LETTERS.

#### Abandoned Farms Again.

MR. WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP seems to have emerged from a search after an abandoned farm in upper New England, which he has described in an entertaining manner in *THE CENTURY*, with doubts as to the existence of the deserted homestead. Years before the abandoned farm had got itself into print, I spent some summers in Vermont, and deserted land was then abundant enough in that region. The landlord of the tavern of the quaint little village of Grafton cut the hay on a half-dozen of such places, which I have myself

visited. Oftentimes the houses were on pleasant, breezy sites with delightful outlooks. Years subsequently spent in the northeastern part of New York State within sight of the distant Green Mountains have, however, made me far more familiar with local changes there. No abandoned farms were to be found in the neighborhood of Lake George eighteen, fifteen, even ten years ago. At the time of a great exodus of a portion of the original New England stock westward, Irish and Scotch families had moved in and filled up the vacant lands. Within ten years, however, the abandoned farm has made its appearance, and has gradually spread like



some novel weed, the seeds of which had come over the Green Mountains on the east wind, or lain long dormant among the belongings of the New England folk who first settled this land, to spring up at last and bring forth fruit. In a drive of five miles I can now show the beholder as many farms where the meadow-grass waves untrod in the dooryard, and cinnamon roses struggle with weeds in the neglected garden-plots.

There is nothing romantically melancholy about the story of these abandonments. One man on the shores of Lake George, whose acres are few and untamable, though beautiful with rocks and pines, has moved to a neighboring village, where he pursues the business of boat-building. Another lives on an adjacent farm, and pastures cows on the more abundant but scarcely less rocky land of his abandoned farm. A third place with rich soil, fine fruit, a small house, and a delightful outlook, has fallen into the hands of a man who cuts the hay, and holds the farm for sale until such time as he may find a purchaser for his land. The fourth, a fine old homestead, in good preservation, with French Mountain as a background, is owned by a man who has deserted the place in search of better farming land. This farm will no doubt be sold at a low price when he dies, and his children desire to realize on their inheritance. The possessor of the fifth, which is crossed by a fine, brawling brook, prefers to abandon his place and rent a better farm, at a distance, which is in turn deserted by its owner. There are other abandoned homesteads near at hand. One man has gone into the meat business at Caldwell; another has moved to Glens Falls; a third farm, with a beautiful stretch of lake shore and a ruinous house, is deserted also, but will hardly be sold until the death of the widow of the former owner extinguishes her dower-right. Half-a-dozen abandoned mountain-side farms have been bought by a "townman," and countrymen sometimes engross land which they find on the market at prices which seem to them so low as to offer a chance for speculation.

I make no doubt that this region is far from being an exceptional one in this respect, but that corresponding evidences of a decay in the value of Eastern farm-lands may be found far and wide. The reason is patent. Rich and level Western prairies, with their farm machinery and cheap transportation, have cut out these stony, hilly farmsteads which once furnished wheat and corn for an Eastern market, and grew their half-scores of sturdy girls and boys. The boys, if possessed of spirit, have mostly long since sought the wide prairies, or moved to neighboring towns where they have chosen other vocations. Those who have inherited land, and have been unable to sell it unless at a sacrifice which seems to them too great, tug at their chains and mourn that they had not long since "gone West." The children of the Irish people who once filled up the deserted homes here have also flown the nest. And all this not because of a love of change and a hatred of hard work, but for a simple economic reason: almost anything pays better than farming. The result of this exodus is that a considerable part of the present population is a sort of immovable sediment, a weedy sort of folk attached to the soil in a blind way, who have neither the spirit to seek new fields to conquer, nor to conquer those about them, but who seem to strive only to solve the problem of how to exist with the least possible amount of bodily exertion.

Old folk remember when modest fortunes were once made on farms in this region. Now one of our most intelligent farmers has been heard to declare that he would not take the best farm in his township for ten dollars an acre. He has abandoned his own inherited land in favor of a son. When asked what he meant to do, he made answer, "Put on a gold watch and hire out by the month." It is a common saying here that a farmer cannot make more than enough in actual cash to pay his "hired man." It does not, however, follow that farms may be bought for ten dollars an acre. Your farmer is of all men the last to submit to economic changes. He is conservative and cautious above everything. He may have discovered that farming does not pay; he may know that some of the best farms in the country go begging at a third of the asking price of twenty years ago; he may even desert his land; but sell he will not at less than what seems to him to be its real value. You must wait and tire him out, and perhaps tire out his heirs, before you may get his farm at a bargain, unless indeed a mortgage overtake him before that time. His habits of thought are not business-like. He never reflects that the interest on a smaller sum would grow in time to the larger amount on which his hopes are fixed.

In New England, to the cautious spirit of the countryman one may add the presence of the city man, as a factor in enhancing the price of farm property. The latter too frequently contrives to give his country neighbors the impression that he is a boundless mine of wealth. He brings to them a never-looked-for opportunity to sell and to do for ready cash. He freely hands out in one day more money than the farmer who raises his own necessaries, and too often foregoes his luxuries, may see in months. To the farmer he seems a spendthrift who may not be deterred from sowing his means far and wide, and he shrewdly resolves that while "it rains porridge" his bowl shall not be found "bottom side up." What wonder that the price of land rises, and milk, vegetables, and carriage hire are no longer to be had for a song, when the city man is seen in the land? I myself only blame the country-folk that they too often overreach themselves in their shrewdness. If Mr. Bishop had suffered some years ago from the craze for old furniture, and had sought to buy a hall-clock from the original owner, he would have been apt to find that the price rose with the rumor of a demand even to two hundred dollars, as in one case that came to my knowledge.

Those farms which border on Lake George in this region are apt to be enhanced in price by that fact. Sales and rumors of sales have inflamed the imaginations of their owners, and no depression in the value of real estate elsewhere ever affects the ideas of these patient natives. Cases have been known where one inquiry has been enough to raise the price of a few acres to ten thousand dollars, the owner meanwhile making haste to denude his land of its timber that he might realize in two ways upon his property. The same spirit has no doubt much to do with the rise in the price of land in New England. As yet no one has selected our abandoned farms in this region for summer homes, and when they contain no lake sites they have no fancy value. Those really desiring to sell will no doubt sell at moderate prices to one whose appearance holds out no promise of miraculous showers of wealth, but is only



an earnest of a modest trickle of hard-won earnings. Perhaps, indeed, the fellow-farmer is the only man who can arrive at the lowest actual price at which farming land may be bought.

*Elizabeth Eggleston Seelye.*

LAKE GEORGE, N. Y.

#### An Instance of Organized Public Spirit.

FIVE years ago the city of Indianapolis suffered from an extreme public indifference to the evils of a form of municipal government lamentably lacking in intelligence and efficiency, and a general absence of home pride or public spirit on the part of citizens. Mr. William Fortune started a movement to overcome these disadvantages, and four years ago called together twenty-seven business and professional men who organized the Commercial Club, the membership of which increased within a month to nearly a thousand. Its name does not fully indicate the club's purpose, which is not commercial in the sense of devotion to trade interests, but is, broadly stated, to make the Indiana capital a better place to live in.

Attention was first directed to the need of a complete reorganization of the municipal government. The city was then under the control of a board of aldermen and common council, who had brought about a state of affairs similar to that in many other American cities and towns, where the legislative, executive, and judicial powers are intermingled in hopeless confusion, and where political advantage is the main consideration. A committee representing the club, the city government, and the board of trade prepared a charter embodying many of the best modern ideas of municipal government, and secured its enactment by the legislature, notwithstanding the bitter opposition of many influential people who were interested in the continuance of the old form.

The streets of Indianapolis, at the time of the club's organization, were little better than the worst—not a foot of asphalt or brick. Much educational work was done in enlightening the public as to the value and importance of street improvements. A paving exposition was held for the purpose of affording citizens an opportunity of obtaining information easily regarding the various street-paving methods. The project, an original one, was successful. Nearly all the leading paving companies in America made exhibits, and official delegates were sent to the exposition by a hundred or more cities and towns to gather information. The result was that remonstrances against proposed street-paving ceased, and the demand for it at once became greater than the city authorities could meet, and has so continued for four years.

In 1891 the city was without a system of sewerage. A committee of the club spent a year, under the direction of eminent experts, in an exhaustive investigation, with the result that a comprehensive sewerage system is now far on toward completion.

The club has represented the public in providing for the unemployed during this winter, having the cooperation of all organizations engaged in charitable work. It has devised and carried out a plan by which between 4000 and 5000 persons have been furnished regularly an ample supply of food, sold to them on credit, under an agreement requiring them to perform work in payment of their indebtedness, at the rate of 12½ cents an

hour. The public has been given the benefit of the labor without charge. The aim has been to avoid pauperizing the people who have been under the necessity of receiving relief. Dr. Albert Shaw, in a recent article, has characterized this plan as "the most perfect arrangement for relief that has been devised in any of our cities."

The character of the club's work will farther appear in a summary of some of the enterprises with which it has had to do partly or wholly: a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar county jail in place of one which disgraced the community; a State Road Congress; equalization of the city's taxes; securing for Indianapolis the Twenty-seventh National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic; and a bill for a State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation.

In a word, the club's accomplishment is that no one's thought for the betterment of the community has had to be unrealized for lack of cooperation. With a view to permanence in this centralization of public spirit an eight-story stone front building—the handsomest business structure in the State—has been erected by the club as its home.

The articles of incorporation provide that "the club shall not be committed in any manner to the advocacy of any candidate for office." Each member has but one vote regardless of the amount of his subscription, which must be for at least five of the ten-dollar shares of non-dividend-paying stock. Only the income from the money realized by the sale of shares is available in furthering the club's undertakings.

"Booming" has been a very small part, and the offering of bonuses no part, of the work, which has been conducted on the theory that the improvement of the city is a desirable, if not an essential, precedent to its upbuilding from without.

While the large representative membership gives to the club the general support essential to the accomplishment of public undertakings, its work is done by a few men acting as committeemen or as officers. Occasional public meetings are held for the purpose of affording opportunity for suggestions as to what should be done, but all plans are quietly developed and carried out by representatives.

*Evans Woollen.*

#### One Cause of Apathy in Municipal Politics.

It may be safely assumed that the more or less educated or cultivated man, whose abilities have made him successful in the management of his private business, or whose interest in real estate gives him a large share of taxes to pay, is rather conspicuous by his absence than prominent in the public politics of cities, or in the work of municipal legislation and administration. Let us see whether any light will be thrown on the relation of such men to the reforms which are demanded, by consideration of the significance of their "apathy"—that is, by an attempt to discover and explain their present unsatisfactory attitude toward municipal interests, commonly so characterized.

It is clear enough that in any city where a considerable number of the "representative men"—or, as some say, "the best men"—approximate to a sense of public duty, the solution of its municipal problem is probably in sight, since such men would not manifest