

vague and doubtful: yet, corresponding so well with his vacillating course, hitherto, they were generally believed. It was said that he had joined a tribe of Indians in the far west, and with the little knowledge of physic and anatomy that he possessed, became their great "medicine-man."

Where, after that, were Abel's wanderings or what his pursuits, his friends never heard; but there were some of them who looked for him day after day, expecting that he might come home laden with gold, to buy the still fertile acres of Hillside. There was one too, among those well-tried friends, who had thought of him and loved him, through all his chances and changes.

Her hope has been long deferred and is doomed to disappointment, for it is far from probable that she will ever see again her errant and misguided lover

VI.

THE harvest-time of the year comes always fraught to me with many tender and pleasant recollections.

At times I am a child again, sporting with my play-mates amidst the newly mown hay upon the meadows of Willowdale; or later in the season, as older in years, I follow the reapers to the opulent wheat-field to hear the rustling of the grain as it falls beneath their sweeping cradles. A glorious sight it is to me when the capacious granary is heaped to its very eaves with its golden wealth; for it makes the heart of the husbandman glad, and his toil in the hot summer is forgotten.

And sometimes I am by the Rhine again in fancy, where is

"A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, corn-field, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles, breathing stern farewells,
From grey but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells;"

and amidst those mellowed beauties I listen to the peasant's song as he gathers to the wine-press the fruit of his sunny vineyard. I think of the olive gathering in sunny Provence and still sunnier Tuscany

of the orange groves of Sorrento and Messina, and the date-harvests on the far-off plains of Ismir.

Thus with the ripened grain and the rustling corn do slumbering memories of past years, and the scenes which gladdened them, waken with renewed freshness. Yet the memories of foreign climes and scenes, impregnated as they are with what Longfellow terms "the delicious perfume, the soft Ausonian air of travel," are not near so sweet as those that cluster around the old farm-house at Leeville. Yet it was not the dwelling-place of my ancestors, but the time-worn inheritance of a friend, companion of many wanderings.

One of us had roamed the classic shores of the old world; on ancient battle-fields, in dim cathedrals, and gorgeous palaces, strayed and marvelled. He had gazed on glorious views from high snow-peaks and cliff-perched castles by the Rhine and Rhone; and where ruined temples and lava-buried cities are, his tireless feet had wandered.

Once more at home, what wonder was it that he loved to sit with his companion in the old homestead hall, and recount his travels.

The hot and dusty summer brought memories of Windermere and Lomond lying cool and placid amidst their shadowy hills; and longing for a breath of the cool airs which come from Alpine glaciers, we envied for a while the monks of St. Bernard. But when the

cold winds of winter swept around the old hall, and the well-filled fire-place was all a-glow, we thought of once blistered feet in the crater of Vesuvius, and on the burning sands of Egypt.

It was a noble old place of which I write:

The ancestral oaks and elms which shade it have not yet fallen beneath the Vandal axe of the wood-cutter. Through their dense summer foliage the eye may catch the gleam of the distant river, flowing proudly on its course to the distant sea.

The hum of the city is far away; but a quiet village with linden-shaded and cottage-lined avenues lies near by. No louder sounds come thence than the clink of the blacksmith's hammer, or the glad voices of children as they break loose from school restraint and go sporting homewards. Now and then a travelling circus company stop for a day and pitch their huge tent on the village green, making a little more bustle and excitement than is common; but this is a rare occurrence.

A thrifty and intelligent class of farmers here and there dot the surrounding country with their houses and barns. It is a region where vast grain-fields, wide pastures, and fine cattle most abound.

A range of well wooded hills are visible from Leeville, till lost in the blue distance, they merge into the spurs of the Alleghanies, fifty miles away.

Not a half day's ride to the west lies Indian lake, a smooth sheet of water embosomed amidst hills whose sides are covered with forests of pine and hemlock. There, six years ago, we could drive any day, and find in the log cabin of "Uncle Josh" a warm welcome.

Then deer were plenty thereabout, and trout of the very finest could be had for nothing but the sport of taking them. Of old Uncle Josh we have spoken before; but the warm-hearted hunter and woodsman sleeps his last sleep. His cabin has given place to a flaunting tavern; now and then a stray deer, whose fellows are far away amidst the Adirondacks, is hunted to death and murdered in the water. City sportsmen brag of catching an occasional "two pounder" in the lake, but the Indian lake of to-day is not that of ten years ago. Even its name has been changed by the progress of the age; the hemlocks and pines are being cut from the hills; and could good Uncle Josh be permitted to wake up awhile and look around him, like old Rip Van Winkle, it is doubtful if he would know the site of his humble cabin.

I loved my winter visits at Leeville. My friend spent most of the season at home; and being but a day's journey from the city, I was often there. Many were the glorious sleighing frolics we enjoyed together; and I remember one in particular, as being the occasion of a difficulty between my friend Frank and a

dashing young farmer in the vicinity, not easily settled. Almost all villages and communities have their chosen belles. In this respect, Leeville was not peculiar. Mabel Lee, with a little more cultivation—a few artificial acquirements and accomplishments, would have been a belle at Saratoga, Newport, anywhere.

She was in fact the reigning beauty, not only of the village, but the surrounding country.

A year's study at a city school had added somewhat to her natural charms both of body and mind; so on her return to Leeville, there was quite a rivalry among the beaux of the vicinity, as to which would be the favorite.

Through my friend, I was invited to join a sleighing party which was appointed to gather on the night of the full moon.

It had thus far been a delightful winter for the country. The snow had fallen heavy early in the season; and occasionally deepened by slighter falls, had made the roads in fine order.

The night of the frolic came, bright and cold: and the village tavern, which was to be the rendezvous of the company, presented its gayest appearance. Sleigh loads of gay maidens with their brothers, suitors, and friends, came dashing to the door. Frank's splendid "blacks," loaded with bells, and attached to a richly furred cutter holding four persons, were near at hand

He had determined that Mabel Lee and a companion of hers from the city should occupy his sleigh, and we four form the load.

It was not long before it was so arranged; for the superiority of my friend's team above all others there, was temptation sufficient for the belle and her friend.

I had noticed, however, that a young man of the vicinity, who had been somewhat of a suitor in days gone by for the heart and hand of the beauty of Lee-ville, was watching us narrowly. He bore rather a dare-devil, though by no means bad character, in the staid village; and I soon discovered from some of his actions, that he was bent on mischief that night. I did not however fathom his intentions.

At last the vehicles were loaded, some fifteen in number, of all shapes, styles, and sizes, from the home-made hickory pole jumper to the great omnibus sled built for such occasions.

Just previous to starting, I had gone into the tavern to light my segar, leaving Frank busy in arranging the robes for the comfort of our ladies, when a jingling of many bells that I knew were ours, and a loud shout from my friend, brought me hastily to the door. At first I supposed his horses had become restive and started suddenly without a driver: but by the bright moonlight I could plainly see they were under control. It was only a second before I comprehended all.

There stood Frank surprised and angered, looking after his team as they swept over the frozen road under the guidance of his rival. The fellow had taken advantage of our inattention, and played us a trick. But there stood the sorrel mare and light cutter of the interloper.

"Jump in for heaven's sake, Hal;" said Harry, and away we sped in chase, with a dozen others after us to see the fun.

For a mile or two we saw nothing of the runaways, and the noise of the bells behind us prevented our hearing those ahead.

Up hill and down, we flew like the wind; but we knew the mettle and the speed of our blacks, and that a stern chase would prove a long one in this instance at least. It was five miles from our place of starting before we caught a glimpse of the pursued: they were rising a steep hillside, and we could see the moon-beams glisten on the silver bells of the horses.

We shouted, and drove as fast as we dared to, but away they went over the hill and down its descent with unflinching speed.

It was nearly ten miles to the river, where we were to stop and take supper before returning. There, too, the chase would be ended; unless they avoided us by taking another road.

I had seldom seen Frank more excited: for he was

naturally calm though decided, and not a man to be trifled with, even in sport: but to have his noble team over-driven by a stranger and a would-be rival too, was more than he could bear.

At last the river bank was reached. Our sleigh stood at the door, and the ladies were on the piazza awaiting us: but their dare-devil driver was nowhere to be seen. Thinking perhaps that he had carried the joke too far, he thought it prudent to keep out of sight for awhile: and it was well he did. Frank's first inquiry was after his horses: but they had been well-cared-for, and the negro hostler was as wet as his charge from the exertion of rubbing them down.

Mabel and her friend seemed rather mortified at being carried off so unceremoniously: though I fancied they inwardly thought it was a capital joke. By degrees, the parties who had not come over the road as fast as we did, arrived at the river; and ere long the adventure of the evening was forgotten, save by us, in the enjoyment of a famous supper, an enlivening dance, and another rapid drive homeward. Frank's wrath was a little appeased, by receiving an apology the next day from the "harum-scarum" youth: but he never forgot the affront.

We were thinking of the autumn though; yet, in thinking of Leeville, my thoughts have played

truant, and unconsciously led me into an unseasonable digression.

I remember one glorious autumn, most of which was spent at my friend's farm. The frosts had fallen early on the hillsides and in the low grounds, turning the maple leaves to a golden yellow, and the tenderer forest vines that beautiful scarlet and crimson which art can scarcely equal.

The season had been a most propitious one for the farmer. The great red barns were filled with golden wheat-sheaves, bundles of rye, and the finest of hay. The orchard fruit had been gathered to the mill or cellar, and the corn was ready for husking.

It was to be a gay season in and about Leeville, for Mabel Lee, the belle, was to be married; and the occasion was looked forward to as about to be one of more than ordinary brilliancy.

And who was now the accepted suitor? Not Frank, nor the hero of the sleighing frolic. A stranger had stepped in unawares, and quietly wooed and won gentle Mabel Lee.

The eve of the wedding arrived. It was to precede the corn-husking frolic of the season on her father's farm, and form a part of the occasion. It was a large company of young and old that gathered beneath the roof of Samuel Lee on that bright October eve.

Never before had there been such a festive gathering

in Leeville; never in all the country round had a lovelier bride been given away.

And when the ceremony was over, and the husking commenced on the great granary floor, how the hours sped amidst laugh and song, till supper was prepared in the wide hall of the farm-house, and duly appreciated! And when the feast was over, and the dance began, how many wondered who would be the bride at the next corn-husking!

“That night there was joy in the gabled manse,
 When home were the harvest wains;
 The young and the beautiful met in the dance
 To the bounding music's strains.
 And the trusting love of Mabel's eyes,
 In their clear and holy light,
 Was the love—oh! spirit of Paradise,
 That could know no change or blight.”

VII.

THE places which we were accustomed to frequent in childhood and early youth, are seldom, if ever, forgotten. They are endeared to us by associations whose memories seem rather to freshen than fade as we advance in years.

The smoothly-shorn meadows upon which we played—the newly-mown hay, to us so sweet and healthful—the shady woods through which we roved during the summer noontides in search of wild flowers and berries—all come before our mental vision as though they had never faded or changed with the lapse of years.

“The young! oh! what should wandering fancy bring,
 In life's first spring-time, but the thoughts of Spring?
 World without winter, blooming amaranth bowers,
 Garlands of brightness, wreath'd from changeless flowers.”

As well remembered as 'twere but yesterday are those joyous summers when, freed from the restraints of the heated city, we children, brothers and sisters, revelled in the liberty of that happy change.

It was to no gay watering-place with its round of

dissipation, its fashions, formalities and discomforts, our feet were guided; but to a large and quiet farmhouse that lay amidst the hills which skirt the gently flowing Passaic.

Childhood is observant, but not appreciative, and though I remember well the lovely panorama that lay around us, even to every knoll and tree which added to its beauty, I was too young then to realize its charms.

There was the shady school-house lane, with its noble old elms and chestnuts veiling out the sunshine with their dense foliage. There, too, was the lowly school-house, with its rude desks and whittled benches, its noisy troop, and their meek, unappreciated teacher. Poor Woodford! his was a hard and thankless task; yet there was one among his charge who gained his love and gladdened many a sad hour by her gentle sympathy.

She was the eldest of his female scholars, the most intelligent, and consequently his greatest favorite. Moreover, her father—Ralph Somers, had been the first to lend a helping hand to the indigent and invalid student, when he first came to Willow-dale, seeking employment.

The farmer's ample roof had been his shelter, till he almost learned to call it his home. The whole household honored him for his virtues, and therefore it is

not strange that a "feeling akin to love" for him should spring up in the heart of Esther Somers.

There was too much of sympathy in their tastes, too much congeniality in their natures, for anything like indifference.

The burden of her satchel to and from school was his lightest labor. He sheltered her from the rain—lifted her over fences, and in aught that he could be, was her willing helper.

A year or two before, she had been my playmate, during our summer stay at Willow-dale; but girls mature sooner than boys, and so, whilst I was in my early "teens," she became a budding woman. Still I was allowed to be a frequent companion, and therefore witness of that sympathy, which one day ripened into love.

"We strayed together in the wood,
We roved the meadows soft and green;
Or on the rustic footbridge stood,
Over its silvery flood to lean."

The "Gulley," as we used to call the shady ravine which bounded one side of the farm, was our favorite resort. There, when our daily studies were over, or on Saturday afternoons, we youngsters, under the guidance of the teacher and his fair companion, wandered in search of wild plums and berries, making the glen

resound with our laughing frolics. There was our rustic arbor, made of birch boughs, and almost impervious to sun and rain, with the wild vines creeping so densely over it. Many were the feasts of wild strawberries and whortleberries that we enjoyed there, served up so daintily on vine-leaf platters. So—

“ We feasted, with no grace but song,
In summer when the days were long.”

We loved the old-fashioned garden too, with its tall holly-hocks and flaunting sun-flowers, its great, odorous beds of thyme, and sage, and marjoram, which were the especial care of our thrifty housewife, and duly cut and put away in the dry garret for winter use.

But better did we love to visit the huge coop of soft-eyed wild pigeons that stood in a shady corner, and feed them morning and evening with their allowance of buckwheat, that they might afford us betimes a dainty pie.

The old cider-mill in the orchard, and the hay-barracks in the meadow, were scenes of many a merry game of “hide and seek” and “puss in the corner;” they were mute witnesses too of childish quarrels and childhood’s smiles and tears.

So were three happy summers passed, but the fourth was shadowed by the first heartfelt sorrow that I ever

knew; the bitterest, because the first. What an incomprehensible mystery is death to the glad spirit of youth! how dense, yet fleeting, is the shadow which the wings of the Dark Angel cast over life’s sunny landscape!

Sweet Esther Somers! She faded from our sight like a flower beneath the early frost. I was too much of a boy then to know or regard how she sickened or suffered. I can only remember how we missed her in our many walks and sports, how we wondered why “the schoolmaster” looked so sad and laughed so little, and how we wished the doctor would make her well again before the wild strawberries were ripe.

We little knew, when sometimes we were admitted to her bedside, and grew frightened at her pale, thin face, that she would never more go down into the “Gulley” again, nor into the distant woods, nor even into the garden beneath the window.

I remember how she grew worse, and then the bright afternoon on which she died, when we were one by one summoned to her chamber that we might receive the little tokens of affection, and the last kiss she should ever give us; but even then we could not feel that she was going to die. It was only when we stood by her coffin, and gazed upon her closed eyes, and silent lips, and forehead so white and cold, that we realized we should have her with us no more.

So in her youth and loveliness they buried her in the quiet village churchyard, beneath an old willow tree, whose drooping branches seemed weeping over her; and there we were wont to go, on still Sabbath eves, to tend the flowers which loving hands had planted, and talk of her whom we all so dearly loved. I did not feel so much then, but I know now what a void her death had made, which could never be re-filled.

Thenceforth, her father's hearth was gloomy and desolate; thenceforth did poor Woodford, her lover, wear a saddened brow. His hopes were soon overcast, and to a nature like his they were seemingly shadowed for ever

It is many a long year since my feet have trodden the well-known haunts of my childhood in fair Willowdale. I have looked on many a glorious view from lake, river, and high mountain-top, but never have I forgotten those quiet spots, so dear with youthful and tender associations.

Doubtless the tripping feet of children are treading the winding paths in the shady "Gulley," and maybe gentle hands are keeping the birchen arbor from falling to decay: and the old cider-mill must be sadly dilapidated now, but if it is standing yet, I know that it echoes oftentimes with the merry voices of childhood

Beneath the old willow tree in the churchyard, there

is the same green grave, but do loving children bend over it and weep, as we used to?

There are graves there, too, which we have never seen. Ralph Somers is in one, and a playmate of ours in another. Woodford may be there too, but we know not.