WHERE THE LONG TRAIL BEGINS.

S.S. LAPPIN.

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BY

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Dedication

This little book is dedicated to the members of that great fellowship, the Helpers of Others, who, by the blessing of God on their own endeavors, have been able to come up through great tribulations to places of usefulness in a needy world.

S. S. LAPPIN.

WHERE THE LONG TRAIL BEGINS

CHAPTER I.

The Quest for a Home.

It is a strange and interesting study, this conglomerate population of ours. Men of every race, nation and faith have fled, wandered and drifted to this great and inviting land, till we may boast of an aggregation the like of which can not be seen elsewhere on earth. And the charm of the New World has possessed them like a spell. Discontented, it may be, in the first location, and the second, and even the third, their faces are still toward the setting sun; they almost never turn back. A generation may live and die in the Old Dominion; the second comes on to Ohio, the third to Illinois, and so, with "Westward Ho!" for watchword, the flood of folks moves on, each wave reaching farther than the one before.

Not less interesting is the rise and fall of inherited tendency in successive individuals of a given stock. The disease that preys on a

generation or two will apparently disappear for good, only to show up fifty years down the line. Marked moral qualities found in a group of related persons seem to be lost for a long period, till some great giant springs up from an unexpected quarter; then by diligent inquiry the strain may be traced back to its former appearance. Intellectual traits have an inning for some decades and then fade out into mediocrity, only to flash up again from some pioneer cabin or workman's cottage. Families thrive but to die out; faculties distinguish but to desert; wealth comforts by its presence but to cast down when it vanishes; genius lingers here and there, as if to succor hope till a better day shall dawn. Yet nothing good is ever lost. In all this ferment of conscious spiritual life there is ever enough of real value to justify the anticipation of the coming better day. And so, 'mid flitting scenes of shade and shine, our little lives move on. And so, because we can see so little of the plan above it all, we come to measure the ways of a great world by the things that transpire in the little valley where we live. But it is sweet to know that those who have traveled farthest and seen most clearly proclaim a universal upward trend and a future full of promise.

The little story I here begin has ever been a part of my dream life. I know the risk I run in trying to call it up—that the delicate mystery and charm of it all may vanish forever—but the plain people who played the heroic part in these little tragedies may die unsung and unappreciated except I speak, and a needy world thus miss something of its real wealth, so I yield to the pleadings of impulse and take up my task.

When the Civil War closed, Missouri, torn by the strifes of her own people and by contentions of armies and predatory bands from beyond her borders, lay broken and bleeding. Many of her citizens had fled forever with family and fortune, such as could readily be taken, and were exiles in North or South. Farms were tenantless, and land, the best of it, cheap, while much could be had for the taking by whoever would occupy it for a period of years. Attracted by reports of an open and inviting country to be occupied, a great tide of immigration moved westward from Ohio and Illinois in the late sixties and early seventies. It was the third and fourth generations of original first settlers, on whom the restlessness of their fathers had been visited. Many of them found good and permanent homes in the territory immediately beyond the

Mississippi, and there reared sons and daughters who are the pride of a great commonwealth and who are proud to be called Missourians. Others stopped there but for a generation, to rear their children among green hills and gushing springs, and then moved on —the young folks at least—to the inviting stretches of level land in Kansas and Nebraska.

But there was a reflex wave of which history can give no account, since it built nothing and destroyed nothing. With sad and hopeless deliberation it crept back, bearing on its bosom the broken and unfortunate to the sources from whence they came. Financial reverse, drouth and death were fruitful causes of this return. Perhaps a frail woman had succumbed to the rigors of pioneer life, and a sad-hearted husband, with his orphaned brood, came back to blame himself for the venture he had made. Or parents returned childless and heartbroken to reflect that it might have been different had they never gone West. Sadder still was it when a widowed mother, with her defenceless little ones, had to cast herself on this returning tide and be thrown back helpless among those in whose hearts time and distance had chilled the attachments of other years.

It was early in the spring of '70 that a young farmer schoolmaster of Illinois launched

his "prairie schooner" and turned resolutely toward the much-lauded land of Missouri. Besides himself and his companion, there were three children. The eldest was a lad of six, the second a bright-eyed girl of two and the third a boy baby in arms. The canvas-covered wagon plodded slowly over the hundred miles to the great river, crossed at the Alton ferry and began its tour of exploration.

The course chosen led up the Missouri some hundreds of miles, across to Sedalia and thence southward. There was time and to spare before cropping should begin, and the journey was made with such leisure as would permit a sufficient investigation of each locality. Just why the richer lands of the great bottom were passed by, and the more broken districts farther south given preference, it would be hard to determine. Perhaps the price per acre was a strong factor; or, it may have been that timber for firewood and building purposes, or rolling lands and gushing springs, appealed to the inherited Buckeye sentiments of the settler. However that may have been, a stop was made at Bolivar, in Polk County. After a year here, spent in teaching and small farming, a permanent location was chosen in the "Gumbo Hills" farther south. The cabin home was located two and a half

miles from "Pin Hook," or, to give the more refined Government designation precedence over the neighborhood nickname, Pleasant Hope. The nearest railroad was at Springfield, twenty miles away. Even now the newer road that has crept down through the hills from Harrisonville, and to Bolivar, has brought the outside world but six miles nearer that secluded section.

There is something stern and forbidding in the grim and unyielding aspect of mountain foothills. Irrigation has conquered arid areas farther west, and made them not only habitable, but rich and productive. Underdrainage has redeemed great sodden wastes in Illinois and Iowa, but in Missouri, and elsewhere as well, the challenge of the hills has prevailed. It was my privilege recently to look once more on the rocky steeps which are indelibly shadowed on the sensitive plates of my earliest memory. I went with the apprehension that all would be changed save the hills themselves; but, could I have been made a child again, it would have been easy to imagine that all the intervening years had been a dream. I slept under a coverlet and dried my face on a towel made by hand from cotton grown on the place where they were in use. I sat beside a wide fireplace, with its backlog and fore-

stick, and when I looked about me, but for the presence of an iron bed of recent make, I could have thought I had dropped back into the homely but happy life of three decades ago. But the experience was far from unpleasant; on the contrary, I shall remember it while I have a mind. Just to be among people who are unacquainted with hurry and unworried by the nagging calls of a meddlesome and discontented world is a relief, though it be but for a day.

The quiet of days long gone may be in part a pleasing illusion; perhaps it is only that the din and discord of that which fretted us then, being transient and incidental, have vanished, leaving the real features of that life in true perspective. Or, it may be that the subconscious better self takes note only of that which is worthy to be preserved, storing it up for a rainy day, a treasure that "neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal."

However the philosophy of it may run, the good things we once had, can now be enjoyed only in memory; we can not restore them, or the sensations they produced, by going back. God's way for mankind is forward, and happy he who out of his past has been able to retain and cultivate the art of separating

gold from dross in the criss-cross experiences of the days that come and go.

And it was here, in the country now made famous by the books of popular writers, that the home was found and the hard lot of an ambitious man was cast. Here, too, was laid the scene of battle with stump and stone, in which many a stronger man might have gone down in defeat or won only at great cost to his physical frame. And it did end in defeat and darkness and disaster, the like of which I trust few families have ever had to know. But it was the darkness of a lingering night which the dawn of a bright day has at last dispelled. It was the pall and gloom of a transient storm, and the bow of promise reflected on retreating clouds is shining in the east, and it is God's world once more.

"Clouds ofttimes shut out the blue of heaven,
But 'neath God's hand we still securely dwell,
And, trusting him, wait patiently for even—
If it be clear at sunset, all is well."

It is this faith, and this alone, that makes my story worth the telling, and the telling of it worth while.

A Pile of Stones.

CHAPTER II.

A Pile of Stones.

Little remains to mark the spot where stood the rude house we called home during our five years' residence in the Gumbo Hills of Polk County. A pile of rough stones where the chimney of the big fireplace used to be—this, and nothing more. *A pile of stones*, with a wild thorn spreading its unlovely arms above and briars in profuse disorder all about. *A pile of stones!* but of all the monuments of masonry I know—and they are not a few—there is no other so significant as this. "What mean ye by these stones?" does one ask? Much indeed! They were first gathered and placed by the hand of my father; and in all this great world there is no other material thing I can be sure his hands have handled. And these are a ruin now! What a commentary on the handiwork of man! Yet I can believe that he laid other stones than these—stones that earthquake, nor storm, nor time can ever move. *A pile of stones!* The first years of my memory were spent in the radiant reach of the fires that blazed against these stones. And the light of that fireside has shone

far. Not one of those who shared its ruddy glow has lived long enough or traveled far enough or fallen low enough to get beyond its warmth or brightness. *A pile of stones*—as I write these words a broken bit of one of them lies before me in use as a paper-weight, and when my eyes fall upon the blackened surface, purposely left on one side, visions of the precious past rise before me like a sweet dream.

There is little left in the memory of later life that can dim the blue depths that bent above our childhood days. Sunrise and sunset, as we recall them, grow brighter with the passing years, and the mystic charm of twilight takes deeper hold, but the good artist we call Time mercifully strikes his brush across the clouds. That log house—its roof of riven boards, its door secured with wooden latch and hinges, its hospitable hearthstone—why, among all the splendid homes to which I have since been made welcome I have not discovered one so good to me. The simple life we lived, our plain fare, the few books and papers that found their way to us, the trip to Springfield twice a year, and the little souvenirs of the great unknown outside world that were sometimes brought home to the children—these are tame enough to read about, I know, but to me their brightness is that of childhood's radiant day.

My mental effort to recall the past has resulted in a grouping of what remains into several separate pictures. A glimpse at these and the rude background on which they are cast is all I can offer, for it is all that remains to me of the home among the hills.

The "Pill Peddler," gaunt but great, stands before me. A simple-hearted medicine-vender was he, who came our way twice a year. What with the malaria so common then, and all the aches and shakes that company with that kind, there was much demand for tonics and cathartics. I remember little of the remedies carried by our friend, the peddler, though I dare say I had my share of those left to pay for his keep; but I remember the man. His chief claims to distinction, as I recall him, were an apparently endless stream of talk and an unappeasable appetite for biscuits. Truly he "sat by the fire and talked the night away." And we, who heard so little of what transpired in the far-away world outside our hill-bound horizon, drank it all in with unflinching credulity, though I caught a hint of a smile on my father's face sometimes, when the peddler was not looking his way. And always on these occasions my mother had biscuits for breakfast.

Biscuits! The word thrills me yet, al-

though biscuits have lost the power to do so. The times when we had wheaten biscuits stand out like little oases in great deserts of cornpone and dodgers. How this world has changed since then! There are biscuits enough in existence, such as they are, at this very instant to paralyze every weakened stomach in all Christendom, but what has gone with the dodgers? How I would relish one right now! Being the youngest, I had to wait at meals when the Pill Peddler breakfasted at our humble board, and I recall with what growing hopelessness I always counted the biscuits he ate. On one occasion when he was our guest there was, by some chance, a slight gap in the conversation at breakfast, and in the stillness that made my words unintentionally distinct, I called out: "Ma, he's eat seven already, and he's takin' another." And he did take it, even after that, but it was his last.

There was a trip to town with my father. We rode in on a load of cordwood. This we left at the mill where the mischievous fireman "touched the gauge" for my entertainment and laughed when the loud hiss of steam brought terror to my face. Again I stand by the counter at Spence's store. The mail is being "cried"—a bi-weekly event at Pleasant Hope. This over, and our little purchases made, my

father, through deference to the boyish disposition to linger, said: "Sam, do you see anything here you'd like to have?" I thought he meant to purchase what I might choose and suggested a pocket-knife—a one-bladed barlow I had been earnestly eyeing. At my words, a queer and, to me, new look flitted over his stalwart face and he led me away. I blamed him in my boy's heart then, for I little knew the constant struggle he had to provide his family with the barest necessities of life. May he forgive me for it, if he knows, for I have boys of my own now and I know that to refuse me cost him a pang far greater than that I suffered. But ah! the memory of this has comforted me over many an unanswered prayer. The bumpy ride home on the running-gear, the eagle we saw flying with a squirrel in its talons and the companionship of a father never known to me before or since as on that rare day are sweet odors from the flowery fields of long ago.

Three times I was the youngest of our family, for, though two baby brothers came to our cabin home, they left us after a playfully prattled welcome and farewell. One of them looks at me out of the picture I recall now. I have a clear remembrance of seeing him but twice, once when I got down to give him my place in

my mother's arms, and again when she bade him good-by and took me to her again, and I pitied him both times. At the first he seemed so weak and helpless, and at the last so quiet and so cold. But what I remember best is that once, in the autumn—his first and last autumn—when learning to walk, he pressed a baby hand into the soft clay with which the cracks of our house had been newly filled. When spring came again he had gone from us, but all through that summer and till autumn came again, there was a little handprint in the hardened clay. Ah! little ones we have lost, could you but know it where you are, your marks remain for a long time on the hearts that were softened by your presence. My mother's vision was very defective, and sometimes that summer when we were alone at the house I saw her go to that print in the clay and run her sensitive finger tips along its outline. Remembering this to-day, I could believe, though I had no other evidence, that a good God has made provision that the treasures we have lost here, and for which our lonely hearts so long, shall sometime be restored.

There was a vigorous Cumberland Presbyterian church at Pleasant Hope in those days. We did not attend religious meetings often.

There were reasons why we did not go. Perhaps they were not good ones, but they were such as still keep many from the house of God and such as might prevail with us again, were we put to the same test. I remember seeing the inside of the church but once. It was at the burial of the baby brother. And I remember the sad journey homeward and the loneliness we all felt. It was after this loss that our family altar came into being. The worn old Bible was brought out, and each morning there was reading and a simple prayer at our fireside. We did not understand much that was read, and the honest endeavor that was sometimes made to throw light on difficult passages did not help much. We did not understand how the God of a universe could be influenced by the simple petition sent up from our cabin home; no more do we now, for that matter, but we believed then that these prayers were effective, and we believe it still.

It is evening in winter-time. Preparations for the night are in progress. A great pile of wood is being stacked inside the door. Backlog and forestick, with plenty of smaller wood for filling, are provided. The last armload, consisting of sections from a chinquapin oak, is piled high—the last, that is, but one stick, now in the arms of a youngster, who comes

along staggering under its weight. At the doorstep he stumbles and goes rolling in the snow. The tall man holding the door open calls out jocosely, "Come on there, Chinquapin, with that boy!" and the boy who came in had a new name. "Chinquapin" stuck fast for many a year. To this very day, after three decades have passed, if I heard the call, "Come on here, Chinquapin," though it were on State Street in Chicago, there would be silence in my soul till I discovered the owner of that voice. And I shall hear it again sometime. When I have borne my burden over a long journey and into the chill snows of life's evening, I shall come to an open door, with a vacant place and a warm welcome waiting inside, and a Father's voice to call me by a new name and bid me come in. If, indeed, this be the end of it all, then nothing has been in vain.

Shadows begin to gather! First, as I remember it, there came from the county-seat a rumor that a great tract of land, including our claim, was in litigation. This meant little to children, but it was the occasion of no small anxiety for older heads. There were two dry years about this time, and, as if to add to embarrassment already strenuous, there was bad luck among the live stock. My father was a

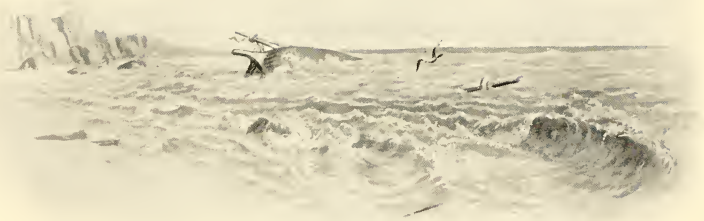
mighty woodsman, and during these years he had resort to his ax and wagon. The then boundless forest paid tribute to his toil, and many a huge sawlog did he haul to the mill at Pleasant Hope. The meager price then paid for timber would have served well enough to supply our simplest needs had not other misfortune befallen. The herculean task of making a farm among the timbered hills, and supporting a family at the same time, was too much for him, and the foundations of our bread-winner's health were disturbed. One summer night as they lay talking—the courageous frontiersman and his faithful wife—long after the children were asleep, discussing plans and prospects, the man raised himself on his elbow to clear his throat, and his mouth filled with a warm fluid. In suspicious alarm he arose and went to the moonlit door to discover what it might be. There was no mistaking, it was a hemorrhage.

Days of anxiety followed. All remedies and treatments were unvailing. Through the winter his strength failed steadily, and tuberculosis appeared. Then came a court decision that the farm title was defective. When at last a return to Illinois was planned, there were few who cared to risk purchase money on the place, even at the lowest price. An

overland journey was advised by physicians, and the team of young mules got in exchange for the scant claim on our home, with the old wagon, newly ironed, was our outfit for travel.

It must have been in March that we started. Our route lay by the way of Springfield, where we meant to stop some days. A physician lived there in whom my father had great confidence, and we wanted to consult this man as a last resort, but it proved to be only a straw in reach of a sinking man. When we stopped in front of his residence in Springfield on a Sunday afternoon, the doctor came from the yard to see what was wanted. He made a careful examination, but said little. When it was over and pay was offered, he said, "No, my good man; keep your money; you need it worse than I do," and we drove on, asking no word more than this, and his grave look as he turned away, to tell us there was no hope.

As for myself, I knew little of what it all meant. When, on the next day, I found the two older children standing by a window, crying softly, I wondered they could be so sad with so much all about us to be seen. They had begun to know what they were losing; it would take years to teach me that lesson. We were caught in the ebb-tide of immigration.



Caught in the Ebb-tide.

CHAPTER III.

Caught in the Ebb-tide.

Four hundred miles overland behind a team of mustangs! For a robust man full of the spirit of adventure there might have been something attractive in the prospect. But for a woman with three children and an invalid husband it was not an experience to anticipate with any degree of comfort. But such was the uninviting path of duty that stretched before my mother as our brief stay in Springfield came to a close in the early spring of '76.

In those days, and still for all I know, there was at Springfield a light-built wooden structure known as the "Wagon House." It had been erected at public expense, I think, for the accommodation of such patrons of the town as lived at a distance and found it convenient to stop overnight when trading; it was divided into compartments and, though cheaply built, was comfortable enough in mild weather. Here we spent the two or three days of our final preparation for the journey to Illinois. During the time, several men who had been our neighbors at Pleasant Hope came to town to market and do their spring trading.

Learning of our presence, they sought us out to say a kindly word of farewell. There were seven of them, I think; large, unshorn men of the hills they were, for the most part, rough and uncouth. They were all members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Pleasant Hope. They knew my father as a "non-professor," and my mother as a "Campbellite," neither of which was a title of special honor in Presbyterian circles. But in the presence of our affliction, be it said to their honor, they lost sight of distinctions and spoke heart to heart. They were glad to grant my father's request and hold a short service of prayer around his cot. This over, they lent themselves, each in his own blunt but kindly way, to the encouragement of my mother with such words as they could speak. When they withdrew to another room a low-toned consultation was held and one of their number returned with a purse of seven dollars for my mother.

These men were from the only church organization in all the section where they lived. When I think of some things that took place in their revival meetings as it has been related to me, some preaching that was done from their pulpit, and recall the fact that recently the congregation stood strongly against union that was to blend their body with the parent

denomination, I could persuade myself that it wasn't much of a church; but that would be to judge of the wheat by the chaff. When I remember the meeting in the "Wagon House" at Springfield—the material fruits of their profession—I can believe that men are often better than their opinions would seem to indicate. Baxter P. Fullerton was Moderator, recently, of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. His father, I think, was at the meeting in the "Wagon House." A. L. Barr, for years a useful minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and later a pastor at large in Texas, is a son of another of those men. Dr. Cowden, a man of high repute and high honor in his body, came out of another family represented in that little meeting. These three men, whose fathers said simple prayers at the bedside of a dying man in Springfield thirty years ago, and whose lives budded and bore fruit from an early environment purified by that kind of piety, are to me a sufficient justification of the country church and its rude reachings after God. That kind of religion pays; indeed, it is about the only thing in this disappointing world that does pay in full.

To lighten the load for our mustangs, we dispensed with all we would not actually need. Our clothing, bed furnishings, cooking utensils

and a few dishes, with a box or two of family possessions too precious to sacrifice, were all we carried. A great black dog came to us one day and attached himself to our expedition before we set out. We thought he knew our ponies and preferred to remain with them rather than with the master who received our mule team in exchange, and so we could not drive him off. Perhaps, compelled to make choice, he preferred the ponies to the man. Being kindly in spirit, and loyal to the family, the dog was soon regarded as a member of our party with full privileges. We had little to share with him, but "Old Rover," as we named him, proved able to shuffle for himself and keep up with the wagon to boot.

Of necessity our movement was slow. Our horses were new on the road, and my father's condition so variable that we could not travel much some days. To the younger children the experience was so novel as to be most interesting at first. During the day we lay on our backs watching the leaf shadows chase each other across the wagon-cover, or laughed to hear the patter of sudden showers that seemed to be angry at not being able to get at us. Tiring of this, we would drop out behind and follow the wagon barefoot till weary enough to snooze away an hour or two as we rode.

At the head of the caravan was our brother of thirteen. Sitting on a box at the front of the wagon, his bare brown legs hung over outside, he held the lines, not failing to touch up a lagging pony now and then, his big blue eyes missing meanwhile nothing of all the landscape panorama that floated slowly by.

When evening came we would select a suitable spot and camp by the roadside. A fire of sticks would be sufficient to prepare our simple meals. At night the sick man slept on an improvised bed under the wagon, and the others occupied couches softened by drowsiness under the canvas above. Often some kind-hearted farmer would protest against our staying outdoors at night, but the open air was thought to be more desirable.

Thus the days wore on. The long road, like a yellow ribbon fluttering in the breeze, stretched out behind us farther and farther. There were steep flint hills where both rear wheels must be chained. There were turbulent streams where some man on horseback would ride ahead of us to guide our driver. Once, I remember, water rose to the wagon-bed, striking terror to the hearts of all. We made constant and careful inquiry as to the best route and the smoothest roads. When crossing one river, the Gasconade, I think, the

ferryman, some "Preaching Bill" of the Ozarks, told my mother that there was a long stretch of pike ahead "for thirty mile or more;" then, as we were starting, he shook his head, refusing pay for carrying us, and remarked: "You'll find them pikes is the kind God made, an' the stone is not broke up very fine."

One of our horses—the team my father had traded for, thinking them better suited for our purpose than the mules—was almost blue in color and marked profusely with an assortment of deep-scarred brands. He was full of spirit till the flint hills took it out of him. It was my mother's constant fear that our young driver would come to grief in handling the animal, though the boy himself was not in the least afraid of him. Between this fear and the fording of streams, dangers in the presence of which she was helpless because of her dim eyesight, her life was a constant misgiving.

I think our course must have followed the line of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, for the names of several towns on that line have a familiar sound to me as I call them over. We passed through Lebanon, I know, for it was there I saw a burnished brass door-knob—the very acme of attractiveness to me, and one that started me to wondering what other bright things there might be in the

world. In spite of all the history I have read, I have never been able to get quite away from the impression that the human race was just beginning to get started a little when we pulled out of the Gumbo Hills in '76. How prone we are to judge the world by our limited personal knowledge of a little part of it! I have seen many brass door-knobs since then, and some of greater worth—have even had my hands on a few of them—but I have ceased to look for another like the one I saw at Lebanon.

The first days of May found us plodding along among the hills of Pulaski County. It was beginning to be talked that we were "halfway" now. Sure it was that our wagon tires were beginning to show decided evidence of wear, the ponies were noticeably quieter, and the juvenile portion of our expedition had begun to think they had moving enough for one time. My father, though much too ill to travel, would not consent to stop, and his counsels prevailed over the entreaties of his companion, and so we kept on. I know how his heart must have rebelled against leaving us before we reached our friends. How the years help us to appreciate things like this! I see now that he was but fighting off death from day to day till we could reach our destination.

One pleasant evening we drove up on the cnipyard by a vacant log house to strike camp for the night. As we came to a standstill, the wagon gave a lurch. Our driver looked down in alarm to discover the cause and then announced that a wheel was crushed. Have you ever seen the broken wheel among flower designs at a funeral ? I have, and it never fails to bring back the remembrance of that day. It was settled for us now that we must stop, for a time at least.

We took possession of the house, which had been vacated but recently, and made the invalid as comfortable as we could. A near-by resident, seeing our wagon as he passed, stopped to inquire where we were going. Finding a sick man, he quickly spread the news and watchers came to spend the night with us. A physician was called; the next day a preacher came—a great, burly man, with long white beard and a kindly voice. Up to that time I had not seen a minister that I can remember, and the memory of this big, plain, pleasant-faced man as he sat among us and as he laid his huge hands on the heads of us children is sweet to recall.

In the middle of the next night death came. With a long, weary sigh the exhausted man looked up into the face of his faithful

companion, and said: "Oh, wife, I am afraid I must die and leave you and the children here among strangers after all!" There was no consolation to offer and he expected none. Every last wish was denied him, and his life, like a ship going down in mid-ocean, went silently out. I do not know what his hopes of the future may have been; I am sure he was not afraid to die. I do know that his sad last thought was not of himself, but of the defenseless family he was leaving. May I say that I have a faith that He whose mercy has tempered the rude blast to the necessities of that family has dealt rightly with its fallen head—our broken wheel.

Nowhere is there a more sympathetic or a more hospitable people than the residents of the hill country of Missouri. They pressed in upon us to provide every comfort and every necessity their good hearts could suggest. No pay would they have for any of it, and when the yellow mound of earth in a hillside cemetery was rounded and marked, and we returned, it was to find that all our belongings had been moved to a near-by farmhouse, and provision made for us to stop in the community for a season. We would not feel like traveling, they said, and then the horses needed a rest, too. There were those among these

good people who insisted that we should stay in their midst. Just why we did not, I can not say, for I know my mother shrank from returning penniless to her people. Perhaps it was an inner instinct that urged her on; and again, perhaps it was a wisdom we little recognized, providing an environment for the future such as we could not have had there.

When two weeks had passed, our mustangs, now fresh and full of spirit, were put in harness again. Amid the protests of our new-found friends, we prepared to go on. The morning we started, that unbounded generosity of the Missouri people broke out afresh. Not content with having buried our dead for us and housed and fed us all, they came to see us off, each bringing a final token of good will—one a ham, another a bag of cornmeal, another some fruit and another a flitch of bacon—till we were well supplied with such provisions as we would have need of on the way.

One woman among them, a Mrs. Johnson, was especially kind to my mother. Her father owned the ground where my father was buried, and of her own accord she gave my mother the assurance that the place should not be lost, so that in case we wanted to visit the spot we could do so. We thought little

of this at the time; so dire was the condition in which we were placed, that we could scarce imagine a time when we would want to return to the place. But when, thirty years later, two men hired a livery outfit and drove to that neighborhood, there was but one person living who could have located the grave. Mrs. Johnson pointed it out, and, to our great surprise, it was well rounded and in as good condition as the other graves about.

We were one hundred miles from St. Louis and St. Louis was one hundred miles from our journey's end. With this prospect ahead we began our final ride. When I think of it now, I shudder and wonder. A woman, almost penniless and practically blind, with a trio of little ones, compelled to travel that distance behind a pair of Indian ponies, with a thirteen-year-old driver, and at a time, too, in her woman's life when very soon

"She should stand anear to heaven's portal,
And there, while life and death stood by,
Should pluck with trembling hands a flower immortal."

Fear and courage had daily battle in her heart—fear of dangers she could not avert and courage to meet them as a brave woman should. Two months later, when we were settled in Illinois, twin boys were born to our home. A great fear of water, a shrinking

from uncertain horses, and a timidity in the presence of sickness and death, are marked characteristics of one of them to this day, while the other would leave a chicken-pie dinner, preacher that he is, for a dive in deep water or a spin behind a fractious colt.

But we were off over the yellow, rocky road again, climbing, circling, ascending and descending, ever leading us from the land of our sorrow toward the great city and what might be in store for us beyond.

End of the Long Last Mile.

CHAPTER IV.

The Long Last Mile.

The last long half of that undulating stretch of road lay before us. Southwestern Missouri was a memory and Illinois a prospect, but that yellow, stony road was a reality present and tangible. Our team, fresh from two weeks on pasture, was ready, even eager, for the start. A little incident that might have ended in something more serious than the hearty laugh it gave us, served to impress this on our minds. Our young driver one day attempted to flick a fly from the rump of Old Dick, the spirited "blue pony;" not understanding the benevolent motive of the boy, that vindictive beast promptly planted three vicious kicks on the front end-gate of the wagon, splitting it in as many pieces. It so happened that the hoofs landed each time safely between the pair of brown legs dangling there, but the full-moon eyes of the lad that scrambled back to safety were a sufficient guarantee that the experiment would not be repeated. Poor Old Dick, before we reached our journey's end he had not the spirit left to resent even greater indignities than that.

Under the influence of the bright sunshine and the open air of our outdoor life, the buoyant spirit of childhood soon began to assert itself anew. Not even my mother, with all her sorrow and anxiety, could wholly withstand the persistent call to brighter thoughts. Our story thus far, when interested questioners drew it from us, failed not to rouse the hearty and genuine sympathy of the simple folk along the way. Often we were urged to stop and make our home among the hospitable people of some pleasant neighborhood. Various reasons were urged. One man whose wife had died, leaving his family of small children to be cared for, was especially insistent. An inducement he offered gave rise to some levity among us children behind the wagon cover. His wife, before her demise, had made two kegs of soft soap—"Fustrate soap," he said—and one of these should be ours if we would but occupy a vacant log house not far from his own, and do baking and mending for his family. But none of these things, not even the bonanza above mentioned, could move my mother from her determination to return to Illinois.

We had not traveled far when we began to hear of another family in like state, traveling but a few days ahead of us. They, too,

were bound for Illinois, and, as in our own case, the father was under the pall of the then incurable white plague. Our grave was behind and theirs ahead, that was all the difference; we hoped for their sakes that theirs might be so far ahead as not to be among strangers.

There was but one main road leading from the southwest into St. Louis, and as we were both following that, we heard of them almost every day. The condition of the man grew more and more serious. All who had seen him said that he was very, very ill, and could not live many days.

And so the end came at last. Though we were expecting it, we were shocked and depressed above measure, when we found the grave one day. It was on a green bank in the woods near where the road crossed a small stream. We came upon it unexpectedly—a little ridge of clay—and our own wound was opened anew by the sight. We wondered if the family had prepared their dead for burial and filled the grave with their own hands. If so, then in this, at least, their lot was harder than ours. When we lost the trail of their wagon soon afterward, it seemed we had parted company with kinfolks, though doubtless they never heard of us.

It is a long and uneven road the heart-broken travel! They are so far apart and so burdened that, at times, each one thinks himself journeying alone. But other wayfarers are always ahead and others ever follow. Could they but "speak each other in passing" it might be a brighter world than it is. There is but the wordless sympathy of unseeing sufferers; it is only through fellowship with Him who suffered alone for us all and whose ministry has made of one blood all nations that the bruised heart of humanity can ever come to throb as for one body.

Somewhere, in Illinois perhaps, that fatherless family ended their journey and a lone woman took up the task of caring for her orphaned brood. I should like to know how fared the folks we trailed so long on the return from our pilgrimage to the Ozarks and who, so soon after we had tasted the gall of bitterness, took up the cup in their turn and drank deeply from its unwelcome draught.

We lived almost wholly in the wagon, day and night, taking care to stop not far from some village or farmhouse each evening. We could have been comfortably housed each night, no doubt, for often did the good people where we went for water to prepare our meals, chide us that we had not asked lodging

with them. But this queer quality we call independence is a thing to be reckoned with, and my mother had her share of it. Six years later, when the "bad year" came in southern Illinois, able-bodied men—men who owned their homes—asked aid from the county, but no crumb of assistance from that source was permitted to enter our house, though we tasted no wheat bread in the six months of distress.

Somewhere southwest of St. Louis we passed through a settlement of foreign people —Germans, I think. They were new in America, and clannish. During the three or four days we spent on their roads, we had to drink creek water chiefly, for they asked no favors and granted none. Whether from pure selfishness or native suspicion, they would not let us have water from their wells, either for the team or to drink. One evening when we had had no water since noon and had camped for the night with no prospect of drink for man or beast, two men traveling together stopped near us. They, too, had had trouble getting water, and were in no mood to be trifled with. Learning that we had been denied at the house near by, one of them called to my brother to bring the horses and a bucket. He led the way and asked

courteously to be allowed to water his team. This being curtly refused, he produced a large and dangerous-looking pistol and coolly repeated his request. A key to the padlocked well was forthcoming, and there was water a-plenty for that night. A few steps backward would bring me to German ancestors, and I have wondered if they had this trait of exclusiveness so well developed. Perhaps so, and therefore I will be charitable with our Missouri friends and cherish a hope that a younger generation has smashed the padlocks ere this.

"Old Rover," the dog, was our faithful guard and vigilant scout for the entire expedition, but he, too, fared sadly among the foreigners. They had big dogs and bad ones, so that visits to back doors, where a morsel of food might sometimes be found, had to be made with caution. "Rover" was not afraid; indeed, he vanquished several ferocious fellows who disputed his rights, but to tackle a fresh specimen at every house proved too much for our leg-weary canine; he learned to follow the wagon more closely, turning aside only when some venturesome rabbit seemed to promise a repast.

This great, shaggy friend, who had voluntarily espoused our cause, and who deserted

us within two weeks after we were settled, proved a friend indeed. We had little to give him for his faithfulness, but that seemed to make no difference with him. I smile now as I think of an incident in which he had a prominent part one evening. We were preparing to eat a lunch in the wagon, and my mother placed her hand, in which she held a long loaf of bread, on the edge of the wagon-bed. "Rover," lying on the ground below, caught sight of the protruding loaf and laid hold with all earnestness. Of course we scolded and threatened, but a taste of the bread seemed to deepen his determination to dine with us, and he held on. Right doggedly did he pull and tug in spite of harsh protest from the wagon, and members of the juvenile trio looked on with anxiety and amusement till the loaf was torn asunder, leaving us a scant supply for our meal. But the look of satisfaction that lit up the dog's countenance as he licked his chops, and the hearty laugh we had, was splendid sauce for what was left.

Among the dreads and dangers of the trip, our passage through St. Louis was the direst of them all. For many days we made careful inquiry as to every detail. As we came closer, evidences of the nearness of a

great center of population began to be seen, like bits of drift cast out into still water by the force of a whirlpool. The rigs we met were of a different type, and the loads of teamsters were not such as farmers usually haul, while the people themselves were more of a ring-streaked and striped appearance. We had been told by many that it was "ten miles through St. Louis," and this appalling intelligence staggered minds to which Springfield was the climax of bigness.

Not many miles from the city we camped by the turnpike one evening. We wanted to be fresh for the trying trip of the following day, but we dreaded to come nearer the, to us, fearful maelstrom of dangers, and so we went into camp early. Lulled by the sense of security so easy to children, we were soon sleeping dreamlessly, except my mother. Her sensitive ears missed no sound, and when, in the middle of the night, a horseman rode up, she had been listening to his hoof-beats on the stony road for miles. He drew rein by our wagon and began to hello at us. Though terrified and trembling, my mother managed to ask him what was wanted, shaking her eldest son into consciousness meanwhile. A scattered conversation of questions and answers ensued while the boy was being

roused, and our visitor showed a disposition to loiter and give trouble. Presently my mother hit upon a happy stratagem. She let down the flap of the wagon-cover she had raised, and called out: "George! George! wake up here, and answer this fellow's questions for him." The name would fit for a man as well as a boy, and the broomstick that was thrust out about this time was a good enough substitute for a rifle barrel when seen in the dim moonlight. At this psychological moment, "Old Rover," on guard under the wagon as usual, let off a growl that would have done credit to a grizzly, and our friend of the horse lost no time in moving on.

Of all this I knew nothing, else I, too, might have distinguished myself. When they pulled me out of the wagon over the doubletrees, I dimly felt that something unusual was on; the impression deepened as we went straggling up the few rods of road to a farmhouse, and when I awoke next morning in a feather-bed and within four walls, I was sure something extraordinary had happened. The good woman who received our midnight call with astonishment, wept over my mother when she heard the story of her fright, and petted us children as only a good woman will do when her emotions are enlisted.

We were off early the day we were to move on the great city. How far it seemed to the real town after we got to where the houses were close together! How our eyes opened wider and wider as each new wonder appeared! How our mother trembled at the prospect of things that might happen to us! How our driver watched his mustang team as he guided them among street cars and vehicles and along the crowded thoroughfares! But straight through the great city and across the long bridge into Illinois we went without a single mishap, going from our course but once and then by but a single block, so well had the way been learned beforehand.

I have seen St. Louis a good many times since then and on some gala occasions. I reveled in the marvels and beheld the crowds at the World's Fair. But one never sees the miracle of a great city through the untaught eyes of childhood a second time. The bewilderment of attractions on every side, in the windows above and on the pavement below, the multiplicity of sights and sounds and smells, fairly foundered our senses and furnished food for fervid remembrance during many a day that followed. I have seen many wonderful feats performed and been glad at

times to add my note of applause to the huzzas of the crowd at exceptional displays of skill, but, all things considered, I do not know of a performance more wonderful than that of my elder brother, who at the age of thirteen, when fresh from the Gumbo Hills, brought that team of mustangs and our ramshackle wagon through those miles of crowded streets, picked his way across the great bridge and landed his cargo safe on the Illinois side. And this, too, is as it seems to me after thirty years.

Roads were better on the Illinois side and we made better time. A few days' travel brought us to that section of the country from which, one day six long years ago, we had gone forth in quest of a home. Just now, as I write, there come to me the words of a woman of old, returning to her kindred from a sad sojourn in the land of Moab. As never before, I can feel the force of her lament, "Call me not Naomi" (that is, pleasant), "but call me Mara" (that is, bitter), "for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me." Human life is the best interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures.

One evening our tired horses were turned into a little lane with persimmon-trees on either side. At the end there was a homelike farmhouse with a honey-locust in front. It was Uncle David's, and when we drew up on

the chipyard by the gate, our journey was ended. A great, fat, good-natured woman, who scolded incessantly, but kindly and coaxingly, came out to greet us, and a serious-looking man came in from the fields for a glimpse at this batch of battered flotsam cast up at his door by the ebb-tide of immigration.

Uncle David! I speak the title with deference now. He was a poor man, though he seemed rich to us, for he owned a farm. But it was a rather poor farm, in a rather poor township of a rather poor county of a rather poor part of Illinois. But, though he was a poor man measured by his possessions, he was a man, and such a man as we find but two or three times in our threescore years and ten. Politically he was a Democrat, fraternally a Freemason, religiously a Universalist, and socially the last court of appeal for the whole community. Uncle David! Gone from the earth these years, may the good Father of us all be kind to him where he is, for we were homeless and helpless in a world that knew not nor cared, and he took us in.

On the Long Trail.

CHAPTER V.

On the Long Trail.

Uncle David lived on Wash Branch, which flows into Dry Fork, which flows into Skillet Fork, which flows into Little Wabash, which flows into Big Wabash, celebrated in story and song. It was a shock to me when I learned in school how many miles the waters of our little branch must flow to reach the smallest streams named on the maps. I know now, and smile as I think of it, that, in condition and prospect, we were fully as far from the real world we were one day to join as were the headwaters of Wash Branch from the "Banks of the Wabash far away." Farther, in fact, for in addition to the handicap common to our neighbors of living next to no place, we had the further disadvantage, and, to us, unpleasant distinction, of having next to nothing to live with.

The two ponies, one of which could never be harnessed until he had been worked a day or two, a worn-out wagon, with what few household goods we had been able to bring from Missouri, constituted our entire possessions when we began to live anew. We did

manage to get a cow some way; I think Uncle David must have been back of that; maybe we made part payment in cash, for I have heard my mother say, that out of the seven dollars given her by the kindly group of men at Springfield, she had five dollars when she drew up at Uncle David's gate. Now think of that, will you! Talk about making money go a long way! Here is the record so far as I have heard: Four hundred miles for the four of us, with an invalid half the way, a death in the family with funeral and incidental expenses, and all on seven dollars capital, leaving a surplus on hand of five dollars. This is the bare fact, and while it may give evidence of a woman's ability to manage, it certainly is also a most eloquent testimonial to the benevolence and hospitality of the Missouri people among whom our lot was cast.

Some few rude farming implements—an "A" harrow, a double-shovel plow and an old "nigger" hoe, with a handle that wouldn't stay in—were given us by neighbors who had better ones. Garden vegetables and a patch of corn were put in, and, almost before we knew it, we were started on the long trail. The long trail—who, of all those who travel its length, can tell how long it is? Its windings were so devious we could not guess its length, or if it

had another end, or where it led. Its slopes were so frequent and so varied, we could not know whether the general course was up or down. But traveling this route is a strenuous job, and we spent no time in speculation, but went on up the road. Looked at from this end, or from where we turned off into more inviting paths, it seems long enough and to spare, but its incline is upward by a gradual slant. Hear this, ye tired travelers who follow, and be of good cheer.

About this time I enjoyed a long and unexpected visit at Uncle David's. They called for me early one morning and bundled me off breakfastless and befuddled, to spend the entire day clambering about the haymows and hunting birds' nests in the orchard. Such unceremonious hospitality struck me as rather unusual; but, since it seemed to be meant kindly, I submitted in silence. Late that evening the elder brother came for me, and we rode home together on the back of old "Charley." As we jogged along, he told me, in curious, hesitating words, that two aunts we had never seen, had come that day to make us a visit. When I had time to reflect on this, he added that each of them had brought a boy baby with her. I was a full week pondering the situation, and it was only when the aunts

were preparing to take leave, that I learned the babies had come to stay, and swallowed the lump that had been rising in my throat. And so the babies were soon toddling with us on the long trail. If their short legs retarded our progress somewhat, their blithe presence brought brightness to us all, and in due time they were able to have their part in the heat and burden of the dragging days.

Through the misty film that time has stretched on this side of the retreating past, forms and faces come to view and the tragedies and farces of that simple life are reenacted before me by individuals, whose looks and acts so stir me at times that I want to rise and call their names, and ask to be given my part and place with them. And then it comes to me, as when reality displaces a fading dream, that neither they nor I are back there, or ever can be again. We are out on the stern marches of life, each following his own course, and that, too, on routes separated by ever widening angles. When the stretches of earthly pathways have been traversed, perhaps we shall become as children again, and go back to romp over the grassy slopes of youth; and then, as shadows softly fall on the bosom of the old earth, we shall gather, all of us, I trust, and be at home once more.

Who can work out the puzzle of lives that have been broken and embittered by circumstances not of their own making? Not I, certainly, and why should I try? It is the old problem of the purpose of trouble, over which the wisest and most patient of every generation have vexed themselves in vain. The world, as it presents itself to each generation, is like a tangle of wild woodland. Tree, shrub, plant, flower, animal and insect sing their little songs in harmony or discord; they cling to each other to help or hurt; they woo and wed and fight out their little battles; they enwrap themselves together in death grapple and embrace of love; there is no minute but celebrates the birth of new life, the struggle for existence and the beating out of some spent heart. Yet each one fills his place and lives out the law of his little life as though by the fixedness of fate. To our poor vision much of it seems amiss; but what do we know of the past investments or the future plans of the Silent One, who is over all? Down among the chaos and clashings we become critical and discontented, when, if we could see the whole process as it has gone on for ages, and must, perhaps, for ages yet to come, we would be compelled to say of all creation, that it is very good. The pain and loss we suffer in

our little world is great enough for us, but how small indeed when compared with the plans of the infinite One, who out of it all is bringing salvation to our kind and glory to himself.

Is it a problem that in a world, where God is supreme, a woman, practically blind, should be left penniless and defenseless with her group of dependent children? Well, yes, a problem, and a hard one, no doubt, as measured by human rules for calculating such things. Add to this that, in the after struggles, she should often go miles on foot to do rigorous service in a farmhouse, returning at night with a pillow-slip full of meal, or a piece of bacon, scant reward of her toil and scant food for her household; that her children, the equals of any other, should be frowned upon by those, poor enough themselves, because they were poorer still and their clothes uncomely; that hungry young minds should be denied books and papers and such advantages for improvement as are now granted freely to the criminal and degraded; and that, worst of all, their lot should be laid in country slums where no church influence was, and where schools were poor; that all this and more should have to be endured for years with no hint or hope that a better day would ever

dawn—I say, put this together and you have a problem indeed.

Yet, if the product is good, who shall say of the process that it is bad? There are six years I would often have torn out of the book of memory if I could—the six years on Wash Branch. Were I to be guided by my own inclinations, I would tear these leaves to fragments, trample them under my feet, and curse them with bitter vindictiveness. But I would be wrong in this, for there sits yonder a woman, who has exercised a faith and accomplished a work little short of wonderful to me, and who, after the tempests of a long day are spent, smiles and waits through the twilight of life's evening till it shall be time to rest. I do not know how else her life could have counted for a tithe as much as it has, nor by what other process the richness of her later years could have been attained. Hard as the way has been, I would rather our feet should press again into every separate footprint of the long trail, than that we should have walked in some more favored ways I know and taken the risk of uselessness and oblivion that are always incurred by lives of ease.

I can think, too, of a man I know—the blue-eyed boy who drove us over the Ozark hills. Then, and on the longer trail, he played

the part of an elder brother with faithfulness and devotion. Whoever has gone from Kansas City to Denver over one of the great railroads that cross the State of Kansas, has owed something of the safety and comfort of travel to him. He is held in honor by those who know him well, and no trust committed to him has ever suffered at his hands. When I think how this can not be said of a hundred others, who had every opportunity denied him, I wonder if he would not be worth less to the world had he borne less responsibility when a boy.

And when another woman, after ten blissful years of wedded life, was left a widow with the tangled threads of an estate in disorder about her, could she have taken up the double task that fell to her and brought her own little ones, well equipped, to the activities of a needy world, had she not seen her mother succeed with a similar burden a hundred-fold heavier?

These and other queries have beset me till I have had to conclude that God gives us what is best, or else helps us to make the best of what he gives us, if we will.

Ah, well, we have reached the end of the long trail now. It led us to the land of Maturity. The gates of that new country swung back with surprising readiness when

we knocked. We have been inside these years —long enough to make some acquaintances among the inhabitants and form a few friendships. I know not how it may be with others, and there are a host of them, who came up the same way, but, for myself, I have not forgotten the long trail. Sometimes, in an hour of leisure, I gather about me a little group I know, and tell them of the fun and frolic we used to have, and of certain boyish triumphs and successes I like to recall, telling them as much for my own amusement as for the profit of my listeners; occasionally I have mentioned a thorn or a stone I happened to discover with my bare foot, but when young brows begin to cloud, I draw a curtain on the scene, for I know they could not understand.

No part of the steep route over which an orphaned boy has to climb from a bitter and barren past to a place of humble usefulness in the world is unfamiliar to me. I can shut my eyes and conjure up the scene at each turn of the road. I know the location of every snag that can stub a toe, and every rock that can start a stone-bruise. I know every deep hole in the creek where crawdads and mussels can be dug out of the mud at the bottom on Sunday, when a boy's clothes are not fit to wear to Sunday-school. When I see a lad crying

at the curbstone in a city street, or hear the sob of a child at night-time, I could stop short and mingle my tears with theirs, for the fountain of childish grief is opened up anew. For this I am devoutly thankful; if the bleak blasts that beat upon us serve no other purpose than to drive us within sympathetic reach of others in like state, they have made us rich indeed.

Nevertheless, I have some regrets. Early experience has disappointments, which no philosophy of later life can quite console. There are two men I solemnly decided to whip when I should be grown up. One of them was a farmer who beat me out of a dollar, twice earned, cutting two acres of sprouts with the old "nigger" hoe, and the other was an older and better-clothed boy, who used to sneer at me in the district school. They needed it badly, both of them. I knew it then, and I know it now; nothing else would meet the necessities of the case; a thorough drubbing would have made them useful members of society, but the treatment had to be postponed too long. The man was killed by accident some years ago, and the boy, son of a rich man that he was, is a drunkard now and poorer than I—may he be pitied—while I am a preacher and would not dare square

accounts with them that way, were all things favorable. Thus, with merciless irony, has the ruthless hand of time dealt with the treasured ambitions of my far-away youth.

The Long Trail—where is it, do you ask? Why, it runs close to where I live, and maybe you might discover it near you too, if you cared to cast about a little. And it is always thronged with travelers. The story I have told is one of many, and, for aught I know, tame and tedious compared with others that might be related. Many a flower-strewn path, along which the eager feet of pleasure-seekers run, winds round a bit and falls suddenly into the Long Trail; many a highway with finger-boards that point to riches and honor intersects the Long Trail at last, leaving its ambitious wayfarers no choice but to go that way; many a first trail across the trackless plain or woodman's tree-blazed pathway through the forest finds no issue of its own and turns, from sheer helplessness, as did ours, into the Long Trail.

I go out this way sometimes and scan the faces of those who pass. When I can, I like to have a word with the weary ones, for, though it may be conceit of mine, I think the wise take it well from one who bears in his body the marks of a similar strife.

What a privilege to look into the eyes of a wan-faced woman, as she leans over the tub of steaming suds, and give the grasp and look of one who understands; of all the grips and passes I know, there is none I like so well to use. What a stimulating service to drop a word of cheer to struggling lads and lasses who battle with adverse environment, and bid them fight on, with the assurance of victory at last; better than finding a home or giving a home to the earth's orphans is it to help them make homes of their own.

Occasionally as I wait by the trail I get sight of a trudging youngster different from the rest. Often I stop such a one for a good look into his eyes. I have a feeling that long ago I lost one like him, and I can't get rid of the thought that he may happen along some day, and, if he does, I must speak him a word of cheer. But he does not come, though I keep watching for him. I have met many lads who looked like him, and some who had his ways, but *he* someway never comes; perhaps I should not know him if he did now, and perhaps he has come this way once and will come no more. I do not mind the nickels I have spent in the well-meant quest for him—I am well con-

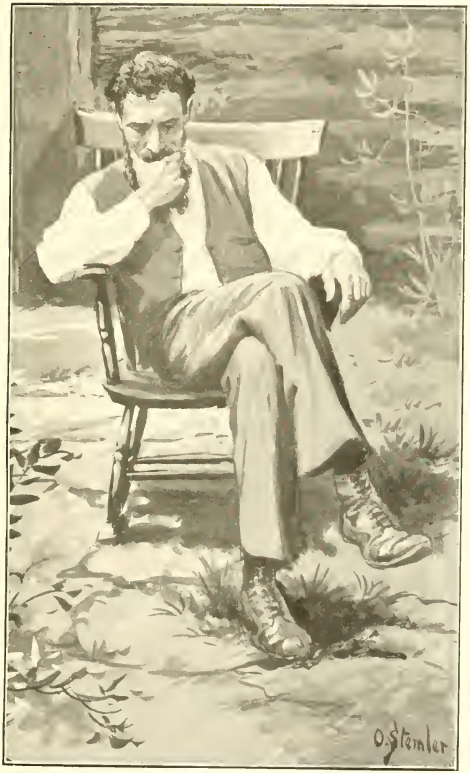
tent they should go for what good they can accomplish, just in memory of him, you know—perhaps, after all, that is as much as I shall ever be able to do for him.

CHAPTER VI.

Retrospection and Reflection.

Strangely fascinating is the pictured canvas with which the long hall of memory is hung. Its unnumbered scenes stretch away to the shadow-land, where once we began to know and think and feel. A silvery veil of glowing mist seems ever to hang before it. Almost imperceptible near at hand, this sheen grows denser in the distance, so that pictures farthest off have an added glory, while the one retouched but yesterday and the one unfinished as yet, to-day shows bare, blunt outlines, angular and uncouth. It is not easy to believe that this treasured past is but a composite of the uninteresting presents that have been. Ah! it is the work of time. "Time the enchanter" one would say, but not so. Time is no enchanter to delude us and make things seem more lovely than they are.

Time but disillusions us that we may truly see and know for once the value of what he has brought us. We are robbed of the present, and ever-possible joy of living, by fear—needless, foolish fear. We let antic-



Retrospection.

ipated trials detract from real and rational pleasures. Our forebodings bear no fruit; or, if trials do come, they are but transient, and helpful in the end. When we paint the future we put in these dark outlines; but time, with better taste, strikes them out for us, and when we look back, the canvas is bright. This talk of the good old days is a delusion, and not a harmless one by any means. Those days are of a kind with those now passing, except that they grow richer all the time as they pass. The faith that trusts God and goes ahead is what we of this age most need to add zest and relish to our lives.

But Time is a transformer, working ever with steady, justice-guided hand, by laws unerring and benevolent. When royal families retrograde and degenerate, the ferment of unrest sets silently to work. Presently there is an eruption. Revolution clears the atmosphere, reversing the order, and Time turns his glass the other end up and sets things going anew. When the rich grow arrogant in their independence, forgetting that they, too, had humble beginnings, and dare to despise the plodding poor, lo, already the anointing oil of untoward circumstance has fallen on the locks of some lad from a sun-kissed hillside in whose veins kingly currents run.

When scholars, rich in the lore of books and puffed up with vanity, sneer at or ignore the eager askings of the lowly and unschooled, a great class is in training, out where birds flit to and fro, and soft-eyed sheep nibble the sward; and at the bidding of Providence some uncouth Spurgeon, some Lincoln with forest fragrance in his garments, some Edison with his hindering deafness, some Clemens from his river raft, climbs up another way and stands glory-crowned on the crest above them all.

In all this there is, of course, an occasional accident, as we see even in the realm of nature—the tempest-wrecked leaf-tower of the woodland, the starved nestling of the slain bird-mother, the maimed member of the herd limping behind its nimble-footed companions —but the general rise and fall of things, the great ocean swells, the light and shade of life, all come and go by laws unvarying and divine.

Values fluctuate in our appreciation, as markets vary from time to time. The possessions of mankind, that once seemed to me of vital importance, appear to have a quite different worth now. So many persons I once envied, I have come at last to pity, that I found soon enough that, to be a man, I must

pluck up the weeds of envy from my heart that tender plants of pity might run rife and bear their seeds. Among all our sinning, suffering fellows, the one most to be pitied, is he who feels no pang of pity for the ills of others, and he only who may be envied is that rare rich man who has no taint of envy in his heart. Blessed are they whose lives begin with humblest scenes, and whose bodies feel the pinch of sheer poverty, if thereby the later years are enriched with the enduring wealth of that peace which cometh to the upright in heart and the power to love even the unlovely. Poor indeed is he to whom these things never come, whatever else he may gain of the world's plunder.

We constantly undervalue the worth of a good word. Nothing else pays so well as investment in courageous speech to the world's disheartened ones. The ninety and nine may be heedless of our well-meant proffer of encouragement, or may forget it and us forthwith, but the hundredth one will be heartened by it, and will praise the Giver of all good for it, remembering us when we are gone. In an old album of mine are inscribed these words: "Dear Sam:—Every young man who dares to do right will succeed in life. The world may seem cold and hard, but the faith-

ful will be rewarded.—W. C. B." I could not tell how often I have read these words penned by a schoolteacher who understood, nor how they have helped me when no other help was in sight. "W. C. B."—perhaps not one of all who read this can guess what name these letters indicate. It does not detract from the worth of his words to remember that he did not always "dare to do right" and was not always "faithful" as he should have been. The thought of his later delinquencies but awakens pity in me, for I doubt not the world dealt bitterly enough with him, if, as I have heard, he walked the hard way of the transgressor, and I would gladly cross a State to grasp his hand and thank him for the good word he gave.

There is a great lot of unofficial and unlabeled goodness in this world. With no place for it in our classification we will go sadly amiss in our appreciation of what is worthy. When we discover one doing good, in the name of Him who noted the Samaritan's deed and made it deathless, we ought to give the grip of recognition and go gladly on. So long as the deeds our Lord began to do are left untouched by those who own his creed, those of other name and nation must befriend him and do his bidding. When close contact with

the unfeeling and cynical begins to make me callous, I go back in memory to that four-hundred-mile wagon-ride out of the Ozarks; I recall the plain people who greeted us all along the way as though expecting us; the meeting of men in the wagon-house at Springfield; the good doctor who would have no fee, but who gave compassion when hope could not be offered; the ferryman and tollgate-keepers who refused our money, except in a single case; the strangers who took charge and assumed all responsibility when death came; the weak-eyed Hard-shell Baptist woman who quickly marked me as a Campbellite when we met for an hour in the country graveyard where my father lies buried, but who, God reward her, kept my father's grave for thirty years with no single word of tidings from any one of us. These people were of every religious denomination—and none; of every degree of culture—and the lack of it—common in that day and place, and of every conceivable station in life; yet the doctrine of Jesus beginning with, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these," was a controlling force in their lives.

It was not so in this old world once. It is not so to-day in lands where He is not known. This much is clear to me: not all

who serve him are clothed in the customary garments of the sanctuary. The eyes of those who know Him and have learned His way, look out sometimes from the grizzled visages of those accustomed to the hard ways of a hard world. The feet that go for Him are not always neatly shod. The hands that do His tasks are often brown and bony. But He knows His own and has them where they are needed most at times when they can serve Him best. This faith is enough for me if I can but know Him and serve Him when He wants me.

It is faith that moves the world. Faith, the much-talked-of and little-understood force. My observation of faith-full men and women when under sore trial has been my best commentary on the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The writer of that passage names but a few of the heroes of faith—enough merely for his purpose, to show that faith moves the world. Were some gifted one to write again, he could add much to the catalogue of wonders wrought by faith. Nor have they all been wrought; all about us are those whose silent and unseen part in the tragedies and temptations of life, though unappreciated by those nearest them, gives testimony to the overcoming power of faith.

Occasionally I meet a man—seldom, though, a woman—and one usually it is who has felt no frown of disfavor cast upon him in all the way, who sneers at faith in God and Christ. Then I think of a defenseless woman I once knew, taking her uncertain way from the grave of her dead and, without money or influential friends, bringing her five orphans through hardships and discouragements to honored maturity and lives of usefulness at last; and all the way groping, groping, groping in the ashy shadows of her darkened life, with no hand to hold but that of an unseen God, and no name to call before his throne but the name of One by whose stripes we are healed. I say, I think of all this when I meet one who scoffs at God and religion, and, may I be pardoned if it is wrong in me, I would like to strike him in the face and shame the mouth that dishonors God and disowns his care for the defenseless.

This world looks to me like a harmonious whole. Even its discords and sorrows are part of a plan. I can not but believe that there is a wise One over it all. If this be not true—if there is not somewhere a place and somehow a plan that eyes that see not here shall be opened, ears that hear not here shall be healed, and lives here cast down shall stand

erect—it will be the only disappointment in the whole scheme of things.

I could not tell all the windings of the covered way in which we walked, if I would, and Heaven knows I would not if I could. The mere hints I have given are all I could tell of the struggles upward, and they are enough, I trust, for the purpose I have held in view. The little triumphs for which we battled together in glorious fellowship and which stand out brightly along the way—the first lamp-flue we had in the house, for instance; the first timepiece; the first carpet on our floor—a partnership investment from the earnings of us children, my mother stitching the "rags" that formed the woof; the first ready-made clothes; the first teacher's certificates; the first college diplomas; the first sermons—all these are so like the first things in other lives that they may hardly be mentioned.

What a help it ever is to meet one in like state with us. When confronted by some grave trouble, a financial reverse, a serious illness, a domestic tragedy—just to know that another has met like obstacles and has surmounted them nerves us for the test. It is with a hope that I might encourage another, or inspire some one else to do so, that I have written. To know that I have done my part as best I

could, is a sufficient reward for the effort it has cost me. To be a humble member of that greatest and best of brotherhoods—the successful unhelped, who have become helpers of others—is honor enough for me. They are a numerous company of princely men whom to know aright is an honor indeed. I recognize them wherever I happen to meet them, and they are a splendid lot; toilers all of them, in workshop, factory and office; statehouse, college and court; farm, pulpit and platform; and the pride it gives me to be one of them is a vanity I trust may be pardoned. To have met them thus, and to have told my little story to an audience able to understand, has been a pleasure to make the heart glad. But the work of busy lives is waiting, so—farewell.