DRAKE SAMUEL ADAMS

THE HEART OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS, THEIR LEGEND AND SCENERY

Samuel Drake

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The Heart of the White Mountains, Their Legend and Scenery / Tourist's Edition:

Содержание

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To JOHN G. WHITTIER:

An illustrious and venerated bard, who shares with you the love and honor of his countrymen, tells us that the poets are the best travelling companions. Like Orlando in the forest of Arden, they "hang odes on hawthorns and elegies on thistles."

In the spirit of that delightful companionship, so graciously announced, it is to you, who have kindled on our aged summits that this volume is affectionately dedicated by

"The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream."

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

THE very flattering reception which the sumptuous holiday edition of "The Heart of the White Mountains" received on its *début* has decided the Messrs. Harper to re-issue it in a more convenient and less expensive form, with the addition of a Tourist's Appendix, and an Index farther adapting it for the use of actual travellers. While all the original features remain intact, these additions serve to render the references in the text intelligible to the uninstructed reader, and at the same time help to make a practical working manual. One or two new maps contribute to the same end.

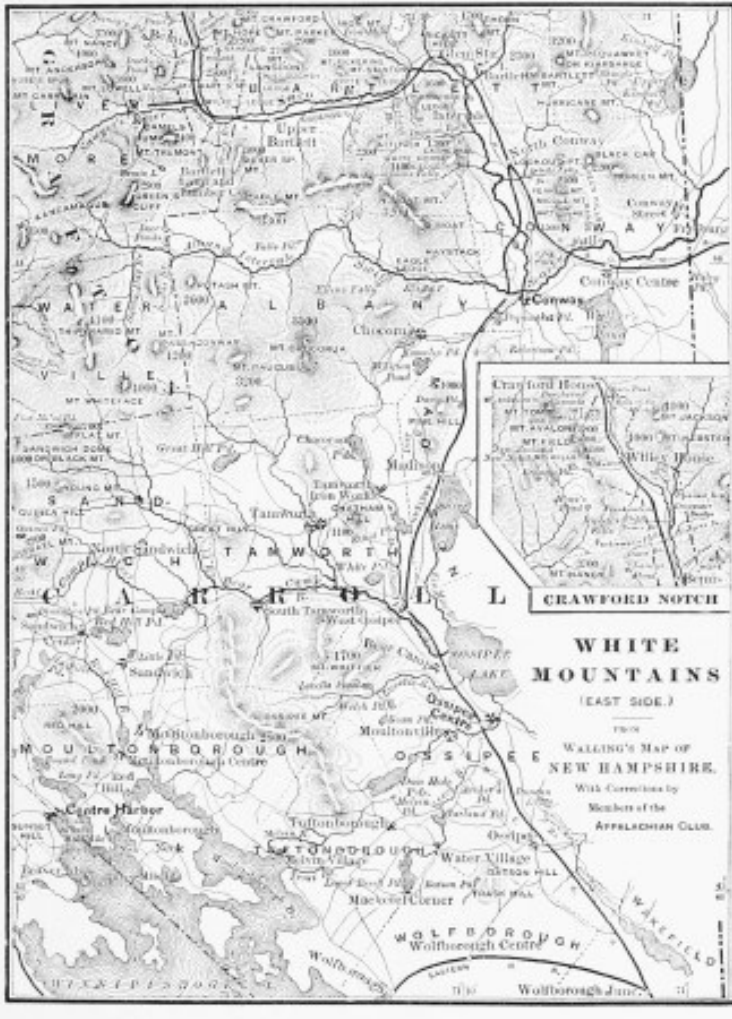
I take the opportunity thus afforded me to say that, when "The Heart of the White Mountains" was originally prepared, I hoped it might go into the hands of those who, making the journey for the first time, feel the need of something different from the conventional guide-book of the day, and for whom it would also be, during the hours of travel or of leisure among the mountains, to some extent an entertaining as well as a useful companion. So far as author and publisher are concerned, that purpose is now realized.

Finally, I wrote the book because I could not help it.

Samuel Adams Drake.

Melrose, *January, 1882*.

FIRST JOURNEY


CRAWFORD NOTCH
WHITE MOUNTAINS
(EAST SIDE.)
FROM
WALLING'S MAP OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE.
With Corrections by
Members of the
APPALACHIAN CLUB.
Conway
Centre Harbor
Wolfeboro Centre
Wolfeboro Junc.
Water Village
Ossipee Centre
Moultonborough Centre
Tuftonborough
Madison
Tamworth
South Tamworth
West Ossipee
Chocorua
Mt. Washington
Mt. Jackson
Willey House
Crawford House
Mt. Avalon
Mt. Field
Mt. Parker

I.
MY TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

"Si jeunesse savait! si viellesse pouvait!"

ONE morning in September I was sauntering up and down the railway-station waiting for the slow hands of the clock to reach the hour fixed for the departure of the train. The fact that these hands never move backward did not in the least seem to restrain the impatience of the travellers thronging into the station, some with happy, some with anxious faces, some without trace of either emotion, yet all betraying the same eagerness and haste of manner. All at once I heard my name pronounced, and felt a heavy hand upon my shoulder.

"What!" I exclaimed, in genuine surprise, "is it you, colonel?"

"Myself," affirmed the speaker, offering his cigar-case.

"And where did you drop from" – accepting an Havana; "the Blue Grass?"

"I reckon."

"But what are you doing in New England, when you should be in Kentucky?"

"Doing, I? oh, well," said my friend, with a shade of constraint; then with a quizzical smile, "You are a Yankee; guess."

"Take care."

"Guess."

"Running away from your creditors?"

The colonel's chin cut the air contemptuously.

"Running after a woman, perhaps?"

My companion quickly took the cigar from his lips, looked at me with mouth half opened, then stammered, "What in blue brimstone put that into your head?"

"Evidently you are going on a journey, but are dressed for an evening party," I replied, comprising with a glance the colonel's black suit, lavender gloves, and white cravat.

"Why," said the colonel, glancing rather complacently at himself – "why we Kentuckians always travel so at home. But it's now your turn; where are you going yourself?"

"To the mountains."

"Good; so am I: White Mountains, Green Mountains, Rocky Mountains, or Mountains of the Moon, I care not."

"What is your route?"

"I'm not at all familiar with the topography of your mountains. What is yours?"

"By the Eastern to Lake Winnipiseogee, thence to Centre Harbor, thence by stage and rail to North Conway and the White Mountain Notch."

My friend purchased his ticket by the indicated route, and the train was soon rumbling over the bridges which span the Charles and Mystic. Farewell, Boston, city where, like thy railways, all extremes meet, but where I would still rather live on a crust

moistened with east wind than cast my lot elsewhere.

When we had fairly emerged into the light and sunshine of the open country, I recognized my old acquaintance George Brentwood. At a gesture from me he came and sat opposite to us.

George Brentwood was a blond young man of thirty-four or thirty-five, with brown hair, full reddish beard, shrewdish blue eyes, a robust frame, and a general air of negligent repose. In a word, he was the antipodes of my companion, whose hair, eyebrows, and mustache were coal-black, eyes dark and sparkling, manner nervous, and his attitudes careless and unconstrained, though not destitute of a certain natural grace. Both were men to be remarked in a crowd.

"George," said I, "permit me to introduce my friend Colonel Swords."

After a few civil questions and answers, George declared his destination to be ours, and was cordially welcomed to join us. By way of breaking the ice, he observed,

"Apropos of your title, colonel, I presume you served in the Rebellion?"

The colonel hitched a little on his seat before replying. Knowing him to be a very modest man, I came to his assistance. "Yes," said I, "the colonel fought hard and bled freely. Let me see, where were you wounded?"

"Through the chest."

"No, I mean in what battle?"

"Spottsylvania."

"Left on the field for dead, and taken prisoner," I finished.

George is a fellow of very generous impulses. "My dear sir," said he, effusively, grasping the colonel's hand, "after what you have suffered for the old flag, you can need no other passport to the gratitude and friendship of a New-Englander. Count me as one of your debtors. During the war it was my fortune – my misfortune, I should say – to be in a distant country; otherwise we should have been found fighting shoulder to shoulder under Grant, or Sherman, or Sheridan, or Thomas.

The colonel's color rose. He drew himself proudly up, cleared his throat, and said, laconically, "Hardly, stranger, seeing that I had the honor to fight under the Confederate flag."

You have seen a tortoise suddenly draw back into his shell. Well, George as suddenly retreated into his. For an instant he looked at the Southron as one might at a confessed murderer; then stammered out a few random and unmeaning words about mistaken sense of duty – gallant but useless struggle, you know – drew a newspaper from his pocket, and hid his confusion behind it.

Fearing my fiery Kentuckian might let fall some unlucky word that would act like a live coal dropped on the tortoise's back, I hastened to interpose. "But really, colonel," I urged, returning to the charge, "with the Blue Ridge always at your back, I wager you did not come a thousand miles merely to see our mountains. Come, what takes you from Lexington?"

"A truant disposition."

"Nothing else?"

His dark face grew swarthy, then pale. He looked at me doubtfully a moment, and then leaned close to my ear. "You guessed it," he whispered.

"A woman?"

"Yes; you know that I was taken prisoner and sent North. Through the influence of a friend who had known my family before the war, I was allowed to pass my first days of convalescence in a beautiful little village in Berkshire. There I was cured of the bullet, but received a more mortal wound."

"What a misfortune!"

"Yes; no; confound you, let me finish."

"Helen, the daughter of the gentleman who procured my transfer from the hospital to his pleasant home" (the proud Southerner would not say his benefactor), "was a beautiful creature. Let me describe her to you."

"Oh," I hastened to say, "I know her." Like all lovers, that subject might have a beginning but no ending.

"You?"

"Of course. Listen. Yellow hair, rippling ravishingly from an alabaster forehead, pink cheeks, pouting lips, dimpled chin, snowy throat – "

The colonel made a gesture of impatience. "Pshaw, that's a type, not a portrait. Well, the upshot of it was that I was exchanged, and ordered to report at Baltimore for transportation to our lines. Imagine my dismay. No, you can't, for I was

beginning to think she cared for me, and I was every day getting deeper and deeper in love. But to tell her! That posed me. When alone with her, my cowardly tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. Once or twice I came very near bawling out, 'I love you!' just as I would have given an order to a squadron to charge a battery."

"Well; but you did propose at last?"

"Oh yes."

"And was accepted."

The colonel lowered his head, and his face grew pinched.

"Refused gently, but positively refused."

"Come," I hazarded, thinking the story ended, "I do not like your Helen."

"Why?"

"Because either you are mistaken, or she seems just a little of a coquette."

"Oh, you don't know her," said the colonel, warmly; "when we parted she betrayed unusual agitation – for her; but I was cut to the quick by her refusal, and determined not to let her see how deeply I felt it. After the Deluge – you know what I mean – after the tragedy at Appomattox, I went back to the old home. Couldn't stay there. I tried New Orleans, Cuba. No use."

Something rose in the colonel's throat, but he gulped it down and went on:

"The image of that girl pursues me. Did you ever try running away from yourself? Well, after fighting it out with myself until I

could endure it no longer, I put pride in my pocket, came straight to Berkshire, only to find Helen gone."

"That was unlucky; where?"

"To the mountains, of course. Everybody seems to be going there; but I shall find her."

"Don't be too sanguine. It will be like looking for a needle in a hay-stack. The mountains are a perfect Dædalian labyrinth," I could not help saying, in my vexation. Instead of an ardent lover of nature, I had picked up the "baby of a girl." But there was George Brentwood. I went over and sat by George.

It was generally understood that George was deeply enamored of a young and beautiful widow who had long ceased to count her love affairs, who all the world, except George, knew loved only herself, and who had therefore nothing left worth mentioning to bestow upon another. By nature a coquette, passionately fond of admiration, her self-love was flattered by the attentions of such a man as George, and he, poor fellow, driven one day to the verge of despair, the next intoxicated with the crumbs she threw him, was the victim of a species of slavery which was fast undermining his buoyant and generous disposition. The colonel was in hot pursuit of his adored Helen. Two words sufficed to acquaint me that George was escaping from his beautiful tormentor. At all events, I was sure of him.

"How charming the country is! What a delightful sense of freedom!" George drew a deep breath, and stretched his limbs luxuriously. "Shall we have an old-fashioned tramp together?"

He continued, with assumed vivacity, “The deuce take me if I go back to town for a twelve-month. How we creep along! I feel exultation in putting the long miles between me and the accursed city,” said George, at last.

“You experience no regret, then, at leaving the city?”

George merely looked at me; but he could not have spoken more eloquently.

The train had just left Portsmouth, when the conductor entered the car holding aloft a yellow envelope. Every eye was instantly riveted upon it. Conversation ceased. For whom of the fifty or sixty occupants of the car had this flash overtaken the express train? In that moment the criminal realized the futility of flight, the merchant the uncertainty of his investments, the man of leisure all the ordinary contingencies of life. The conductor put an end to the suspense by demanding,

“Is Mr. George Brentwood in this car?”

In spite of an heroic effort at self-control, George’s hand trembled as he tore open the envelope; but as he read his face became radiant. Had he been alone I believe he would have kissed the paper.

“Your news is not bad?” I ventured to ask, seeing him relapse into a fit of musing, and noting the smile that came and went like a ripple on still water.

“Thank you, quite the contrary; but it is important that I should immediately return to Boston.”

“How unfortunate!”

George turned on me a fixed and questioning look, but made no reply.

"And the mountains?" I persisted.

"Oh, sink the mountains!"

I last saw George striding impatiently up and down the platform of the Rochester station, watch in hand. Without doubt he had received his recall. However, there was still the lovelorn colonel.

Never have I seen a man more thoroughly enraptured with the growing beauty of the scenery. I promised myself much enjoyment in his society, for his comments were both original and picturesque; so that by the time we arrived at Wolfborough I had already forgotten George and his widow.

There was the usual throng of idlers lounging about the pier with their noses in the air, and their hands in their pockets; perhaps more than the usual confusion, for the steamer merely touched to take and leave passengers. We went on board. As the bell tolled the colonel uttered an exclamation. He became all on a sudden transformed from a passive spectator into an excited and prominent actor in the scene. He gesticulated wildly, swung his hat, and shouted in a frantic way, apparently to attract the attention of some one in the crowd; failing in which he seized his luggage, took the stairs in two steps, and darting like a rocket among the astonished spectators, who divided to the right and left before his impetuous onset, was in the act of vigorously shaking hands with a hale old gentleman of fifty odd when the boat swung

clear. He waved his unoccupied hand, and I saw his face wreathed in smiles. I could not fail to interpret the gesture as an adieu.

"Halloo!" I shouted, "what of the mountains?"

II.
INCOMPARABLE WINNIPISEOGEE

First a lake
Tinted with sunset, next the wavy lines
Of far receding hills. – Whittier.

WHEN the steamer glides out of the land-locked inlet at the bottom of which Wolfborough is situated, one of those pictures, forever ineffaceable, presents itself. In effect, all the conditions of a picture are realized. Here is the shining expanse of the lake stretching away in the distance, and finally lost among tufted inlets and foliage-rounded promontories. To the right are the Ossipee mountains, dark, vigorously outlined, and wooded to their summits. To the left, more distant, rise the twin domes of the Belknap peaks. In front, and closing the view, the imposing Sandwich summits dominate the scene.

All these mountains seem advancing into the lake. They possess a special character of color, outline, or physiognomy which fixes them in the memory, not confusedly, but in the place appropriate to this beautiful picture, to its fine proportions, exquisite harmony, and general effectiveness. Even M. Chateaubriand, who maintains that mountains should only be seen from a distance – even he would have found in

Winnipiseogee the perfection of his ideal *mise en scène*; for here they stand well back from the lake, so as to give the best effect of perspective.

Lovely as the lake is, the eye will rove among the mountains that we have come to see. They, and they alone, are the objects which have enticed us – entice us even now with a charm and mystery that we cannot pretend to explain. We do not wish it explained. We know that we are as free, as light of heart, as the birds that skim the placid surface of the lake, and coquet with their own shadows. The memory of those mountains is like snatches of music that come unbidden and haunt you perpetually.

Having taken in the grander features, the eye is occupied with its details. We see the lake quivering in sunshine. From bold summit to beautiful water the shores are clothed in most vivid green. The islands, which we believe to be floating gardens, are almost tropical in the luxuriance and richness of their vegetation. The deep shadows they fling down image each islet so faithfully that it seems, like Narcissus, gloating over its own beauty. Here and there a glimmer of water through the trees denotes secluded little havens. Boats float idly on the calm surface. Water-fowl rise and beat the glossy, dark water with startled wings. White tents appear, and handkerchiefs flutter from jutting points or headlands. Over all tower the mountains.

The steamer glided swiftly and noiselessly on, attended by the echo of her paddles from the shores. Dimpled waves, parting from her prow, rolled indolently in, and broke on the foam-

fretted rocks. There was a warmth of color about these rocks, a pure transparency to the water, a brightness to the foliage, an invigorating strength in the mountains that exerted a cheerful influence upon our spirits.

As we advanced up the lake new and rare vistas rapidly succeeded. After leaving Long Island behind, the near ranges drew apart, holding us admiring and absorbed spectators of a moving panorama of distant summits. An opening appeared, through which Mount Washington burst upon us blue as lapis-lazuli, a chaplet of clouds crowning his imperial front. Slowly, majestically, he marches by, and now Chocorua scowls upon us. A murmur of admiration ran from group to group as these monumental figures were successively unveiled. Men kept silence, but women could not repress the exclamation, "How beautiful!" The two grandest types which these mountains enclose were thus displayed in the full splendor of noonday.

I should add that those who now saw Mount Washington for the first time, and whose curiosity was whetted by the knowledge that it was the highest peak of the whole family of mountains, openly manifested their disappointment. That Mount Washington! It was in vain to remind them that the eye traversed forty miles in its flight from lake to summit. Fault of perspective or not, the mountain was not nearly so high as they imagined. Chocorua, on the contrary, with its ashen spire and olive-green flanks, realized more fully their idea of a high mountain. One was near, the other far. Imagination fails to make a mountain

higher than it looks. The mind takes its measure after the eye.

Our boat was now rapidly nearing Centre Harbor. On the right its progress gradually unmasking the western slopes of the Ossipee range, more fully opened the view of Chocorua and his dependent peaks. We were looking in the direction of Tamworth. Ossipee, and Conway. Red Hill, a detached mountain at the head of the lake, now moved into the gap, excluding further views of distant summits. Moosehillock, lofty but unimpressive, has for some time showed its flattened heights over the Sandwich Mountains, but is now sinking behind them. To the west, thronged with islands, is the long reach of water toward the outlet of the lake at Weirs.[1]

This lake was the highway over which Indian war-parties advanced or retreated during their predatory incursions from Canada. Many captives must have crossed it whom its mountain walls seemed forever destined to separate from friends and kindred. The Indians who inhabited villages at Winnipiseogee (Weirs), Ossipee, and Pigwacket (Fryeburg), were hostile; and from time to time during the old wars troops were marched from the English settlements to subdue them. These scouting-parties found the woods well stocked with bear, moose, and deer, and the lake with salmon-trout, some of which, according to the narrative before me, were three feet long, and weighed twelve pounds each.

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[1] So called from the fishing-weirs of the Indians. The Indian name was Aquedahtan. Here is the Endicott Rock, with an inscription made by Massachusetts surveyors in 1652.

Traces of Indian occupation remained up to the present century. Fishing-weirs and woodland paths were frequently discovered by the whites; but a greater curiosity than either is mentioned by Dr. Belknap, in his "History of New Hampshire," who there tells of a pine-tree, standing on the shore of Winnipiseogee River, on which was carved a canoe with two men in it, supposed to have been a mark of direction to those who were expected to follow. Another was a tree in Moultonborough, standing near a carrying-place between two ponds. On this tree was a representation of one of their expeditions. The number of killed and the prisoners were shown by rude drawings of human beings, the former being distinguished by the mark of a knife across the throat. Even the distinction of sex was preserved in the drawing.

Centre Harbor is advantageously situated for a sojourn more or less prolonged. Although settled as early as 1755, it is, in common with the other lake towns, barren of history or tradition. Its greatest impulse is, beyond question, the tide of tourists which annually ebbs and flows among the most sequestered nooks, enriching this charming region like an inundation of the Nile. An anecdote will, however, serve to illustrate the character of the men who first subdued this wilderness. Our anecdote represents its hero a man of resources. His career proves him a man of courage. Although a veritable personage, let us call him General Hampton.

The fact that General Hampton lived in that only half-cleared

atmosphere following the age of credulity and superstition, naturally accounts for the extraordinary legend concerning him which, for the rest, had its origin among his own friends and neighbors, who merely shared the general belief in the practice of diabolic arts, through compacts with the arch-enemy of mankind himself, universally prevailing in that day – yes, prevailing all over Christendom. By a mere legend, we are thus able to lay hold of the thread which conducts us back through the dark era of superstition and delusion, and which is now so amazing.

The general, says the legend, encountered a far more notable adversary than Abenaki warriors or conjurers, among whom he had lived, and whom it was the passion of his life to exterminate.

In an evil hour his yearning to amass wealth suddenly led him to declare that he would sell his soul for the possession of unbounded riches. Think of the devil, and he is at your elbow. The fatal declaration was no sooner made – the general was sitting alone by his fireside – than a shower of sparks came down the chimney, out of which stepped a man dressed from top to toe in black velvet. The astonished Hampton noticed that the stranger's ruffles were not even smutted.

"Your servant, general," quoth the stranger, suavely, "but let us make haste, if you please, for I am expected at the governor's in a quarter of an hour," he added, picking up a live coal with his thumb and forefinger and consulting his watch with it.

The general's wits began to desert him. Portsmouth was five leagues, long ones at that, from Hampton House, and his strange

visitor talked, with the utmost unconcern, of getting there in fifteen minutes. His astonishment caused him to stammer out,

"Then you must be the – "

"Tush! what signifies a name?" interrupted the stranger, with a deprecating wave of the hand. "Come, do we understand each other? is it a bargain or not?"

At the talismanic word "bargain" the general pricked up his ears. He had often been heard to say that neither man nor devil could get the better of him in a trade. He took out his jack-knife and began to whittle. The devil took out his, and began to pare his nails.

"But what proof have I that you can perform what you promise?" demanded Hampton, pursing up his mouth, and contracting his bushy eyebrows.

The fiend ran his fingers carelessly through his peruke; a shower of golden guineas fell to the floor, and rolled to the four corners of the room. The general quickly stooped to pick up one; but no sooner had his fingers closed upon it than he uttered a yell. It was red-hot.

The devil chuckled. "Try again," he said.

But Hampton shook his head, and retreated a step.

"Don't be afraid."

Hampton cautiously touched a coin. It was cool. He weighed it in his hand, and rung it on the table. It was full weight and true ring. Then he went down on his hands and knees, and began to gather up the guineas with feverish haste.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded Satan.

"Completely, your majesty."

"Then to business. By-the-way, have you anything to drink in the house?"

"There is some Old Jamaica in the cupboard."

"Excellent. I am as thirsty as a Puritan on election-day," said the devil, seating himself at the table and negligently flinging his mantle back over his shoulder.

Hampton brought a decanter and a couple of glasses from the cupboard, filled one and passed it to his infernal guest, who tasted it, and smacked his lips with the air of a connoisseur. Hampton watched every gesture. "Does your excellency not find it to his taste?" he ventured to ask.

"H'm, I have drunk worse; but let me show you how to make a salamander," replied Satan, touching the lighted end of the taper to the liquor, which instantly burst into a spectral blue flame. The fiend then raised the tankard, glanced approvingly at the blaze – which to Hampton's disordered intellect resembled an adder's forked and agile tongue – nodded, and said, patronizingly, "To our better acquaintance." He then quaffed the contents at a single gulp.

Hampton shuddered. This was not the way he had been used to seeing healths drunk. He pretended, however, to drink, for fear of giving offence, but somehow the liquor choked him. The demon set down the tankard, and observed, in a matter-of-fact way that put his listener in a cold sweat,

"Now that you are convinced I am able to make you the richest man in all the province, listen. In consideration of your agreement, duly signed and sealed, to deliver your soul" – here he drew a parchment from his breast – "I engage, on my part, on the first day of every month, to fill your boots with golden elephants like these before you. But mark me well," said Satan, holding up a forefinger glittering with diamonds; "if you try to play me any trick you will repent it. I know you, Jonathan Hampton, and shall keep my eye upon you. So beware!"

Hampton flinched a little at this plain speech; but a thought seemed to strike him, and he brightened up. Satan opened the scroll, smoothed out the creases, dipped a pen in the inkhorn at his girdle, and pointing to a blank space said, laconically, "Sign!"

Hampton hesitated.

"If you are afraid," sneered Satan, "why put me to all this trouble?" And he began to put the gold in his pocket.

His victim seized the pen, but his hand shook so he could not write. He gulped down a swallow of rum, stole a look at his infernal guest, who nodded his head by way of encouragement, and a second time approached his pen to the paper. The struggle was soon over. The unhappy Hampton wrote his name at the bottom of the fatal list, which he was astonished to see numbered some of the highest personages in the province. "I shall at least be in good company," he muttered.

"Good!" said Satan, rising and putting the scroll carefully within his breast. "Rely on me, general, and be sure you keep

faith. Remember!" So saying, the demon waved his hand, wrapped his mantle about him, and vanished up the chimney.

Satan performed his part of the contract to the letter. On the first day of every month the boots, which were hung on the crane in the fireplace the night before, were found in the morning stuffed full of guineas. It is true that Hampton had ransacked the village for the largest pair to be found, and had finally secured a brace of trooper's boots, which came up to the wearer's thigh; but the contract merely expressed boots, and the devil does not stand upon trifles.

Hampton rolled in wealth. Everything prospered. His neighbors regarded him first with envy, then with aversion, at last with fear. Not a few affirmed he had entered into a league with the Evil One. Others shook their heads, saying, "What does it signify? that man would outwit the devil himself."

But one morning, when the fiend came as usual to fill the boots, what was his astonishment to find that he could not fill them. He poured in the guineas, but it was like pouring water into a rat-hole. The more he put in, the more the quantity seemed to diminish. In vain he persisted: the boots could not be filled.

The devil scratched his ear. "I must look into this," he reflected. No sooner said than he attempted to descend, but found his progress suddenly arrested. The chimney was choked up with guineas. Foaming with rage, the demon tore the boots from the crane. The crafty general had cut off the soles, leaving only the legs for the devil to fill. The chamber was knee-deep

with gold.

The devil gave a horrible grin, and disappeared. The same night Hampton House was burnt to the ground, the general only escaping in his shirt. He had been dreaming he was dead and in hell. His precious guineas were secreted in the wainscot, the ceiling, and other hiding-places known only to himself. He blasphemed, wept, and tore his hair. Suddenly he grew calm. After all, the loss was not irreparable, he reflected. Gold would melt, it is true; but he would find it all, of course he would, at daybreak, run into a solid lump in the cellar – every guinea. That is true of ordinary gold.

The general worked with the energy of despair clearing away the rubbish. He refused all offers of assistance: he dared not accept them. But the gold had vanished. Whether it was really consumed, or had passed again into the massy entrails of the earth, will never be known. It is certain that every vestige of it had disappeared.

When the general died and was buried, strange rumors began to circulate. To quiet them, the grave was opened; but when the lid was removed from the coffin, it was found to be empty.

Having reached Centre Harbor at two in the afternoon, there was still time to ascend Red Hill before sunset. This eminence would be called a mountain anywhere else. Its altitude is inconsiderable, but its situation at the head of the lake, on its very borders, is highly favorable to a commanding prospect of the surrounding lake region. There are two summits, the northern

and highest being only a little more than two thousand feet.

For such an excursion little preparation is necessary. In fact a carriage-road ascends within a mile of the superior summit; and from this point the path is one of the easiest I have ever traversed. The value of a pure atmosphere is so well understood by every mountain tourist that he will neglect no opportunity which this thrice-fickle element offers him. This was a day of days.

After a little promenade of two hours, or two hours and a half, I reached the cairn on the summit, from which a tattered signal flag fluttered in the breeze. Without extravagance, the view is one of the most engaging that the eye ever looked upon. I had before me that beautiful valley extending between the Sandwich chain on the left and the Ossipee range on the right, the distance filled by a background of mountains. It was across this valley that we saw Mount Washington, while coming up the lake. But that noble peak was now hid.

The first chain trending to the west threw one gigantic arm around the beautiful little Squam Lake, which like a magnificent gem sparkled at my feet. The second stretched its huge rampart along the eastern shores of Winnipiseogee.

The surface of this valley is tumbled about in most charming disorder. Three villages crowned as many eminences in the foreground; three little lakes, half hid in the middle distance, blue as turquoise, lighted the fading hues of field and forest. Hamlets and farms, groves and forests innumerable, were scattered broadcast over this inviting landscape. The harvests

were gathered, and the mellowed tints of green, orange, and gold resembled rich old tapestry. Men and animals looked like insects creeping along the roads.

From this point of view the Sandwich Mountains took far greater interest and character, and I remarked that no two summits were precisely alike in form or outline. Higher and more distant peaks peered curiously over their brawny shoulders from their lairs in the valley of the Pemigewasset; but more remarkable, more weird than all, was the gigantic monolith which tops the rock-ribbed pile of Chocorua. The more I looked, the more this monstrous freak of nature fascinated. As the sun glided down the west, a ruddy glow tinged its pinnacle; while the shadows lurking in the ravines stole up the mountain side and crouched for a final spring upon the summit. Little by little, twilight flowed over the valley, and a thin haze rose from its surface.

I had waited for this moment, and now turned to the lakes. Winnipiseogee was visible throughout its whole length, the multitude of islands peeping above it giving the idea of an inundation rather than an inland sea. On the farthest shores mere specks of white denoted houses; and traced in faint relief on the southern sky, so unsubstantial, indeed, as to render it doubtful if it were sky or mountain, was the Grand Monadnock, the fixed sentinel of all this august assemblage of mountains.

Glowing in sunset splendor, streaked with all the hues of the rainbow, the lake was indeed magnificent.

In vain the eye roved hither and thither seeking some foil to this peerless beauty. Everywhere the same unrivalled picture led it captive over thirty miles of gleaming water, up the graceful curves of the mountains, to rest at last among crimson clouds floating in rosy vapor over their notched summits.

Imagination must assist the reader to reproduce this ravishing spectacle. To attempt to describe it is like a profanation. Paradise seemed to have opened wide its gates to my enraptured gaze; or had I surprised the secrets of the unknown world? I stood silent and spellbound, with a strange, exquisite feeling at the heart. I felt a thrill of pain when a voice from the forest broke the solemn stillness which alone befitted this almost supernatural vision. Now I understood the pagan's adoration of the sun. My mind ran over the most striking or touching incidents of Scripture, where the sublimity of the scene is always in harmony with the grandeur of the event – the Temptation, the Sermon on the Mount, the Transfiguration – and memory brought to my aid these words, so simple, so tender, yet so expressive, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, himself, alone."

III.
CHOCORUA

"There I saw above me mountains,
And I asked of them what century
Met them in their youth."

AFTER a stay at Centre Harbor long enough to gain a knowledge of its charming environs, but which seemed all too brief, I took the stage at two o'clock one sunny afternoon for Tamworth. I had resolved, if the following morning should be clear, to ascend Chocorua, which from the summit of Red Hill seemed to fling his defiance from afar.

Following my custom, I took an outside seat with the driver. There being only three or four passengers, what is frequently a bone of contention was settled without that display of impudent selfishness which is seen when a dozen or more travellers are all struggling for precedence. But at the steamboat landing the case was different. I remained a quiet looker-on of the scene that ensued. It was sufficiently ridiculous.

At the moment the steamboat touched her pier the passengers prepared to spring to the shore, and force had to be used to keep them back until she could be secured. An instant after the crowd rushed pell-mell up the wharf, surrounded the stage, and began,

women as well as men, a promiscuous scramble for the two or three unoccupied seats at the top.

Two men and one woman succeeded in obtaining the prizes. The woman interested me by the intense triumph that sparkled in her black eyes and glowed on her cheeks at having distanced several competitors of her own sex, to say nothing of the men. She beamed! As I made room for her, she said, with a toss of the head, "I guess I haven't been through Lake George for nothing."

Crack! We were jolting along the road, around the base of Red Hill, the horses stepping briskly out at the driver's chirrup, the coach pitching and lurching like a gondola in a sea. What a sense of exhilaration, of lightness! The air so pure and elastic, the odor of the pines so fragrant, so invigorating, which we breathe with all the avidity of a convalescent who for the first time crosses the threshold of his chamber. Each moment I felt my body growing lighter. A delicious sense of self-ownership breaks the chain binding us to the toiling, struggling, worrying life we have left behind. We carry our world with us. Life begins anew, or rather it has only just begun.

The view of the ranges which on either side elevate two immense walls of green is kept for nearly the whole distance. As we climb the hill into Sandwich, Mount Israel is the prominent object; then brawny Whiteface, Passaconnaway's pyramid, Chocorua's mutilated spire advance, in their turn, into line. Sometimes we were in a thick forest, sometimes on a broad, sunny glade; now threading our way through groves of pitch-pine,

now winding along the banks of the Bear-Camp River.

The views of the mountains, as the afternoon wore away, grew more and more interesting. The ravines darkened, the summits brightened. Cloud-shadows chased each other up and down the steeps, or, flitting slowly across the valley, spread thick mantles of black that seemed to deaden the sound of our wheels as we passed over them. On one side all was light, on the other all gloom. But the landscape is not all that may be seen to advantage from the top of a stage-coach.

From time to time, as something provoked an exclamation of surprise or pleasure, certain of the inside occupants manifested open discontent. They were losing something where they had expected to see everything.

While the horses were being changed, one of the insides, I need not say it was a woman, thrust her head out of the window, and addressed the young person perched like a bird upon the highest seat. Her voice was soft and persuasive:

"Miss!"

"Madam!"

"I'm so afraid you find it too cold up there. Sha'n't I change places with you?"

The little one gave her voice a droll inflection as she briskly replied, "Oh dear no, thank you; I'm very comfortable indeed."

"But," urged the other, "you don't look strong; indeed, dear, you don't. Aren't you very, very tired, sitting so long without any support to your back?"

"Thanks, no; my spine is the strongest part of me."

"But," still persisted the inside, changing her voice to a loud whisper, "to be sitting alone with all those men!"

"They mind their business, and I mind mine," said the little one, reddening; "besides," she quickly added, "you proposed changing places, I believe!"

"Oh!" returned the other, with an accent impossible to convey in words, "if you like it."

"I tell you what, ma'am," snapped the one in possession, "I've been all over Europe alone, and was never once insulted except by persons of my own sex."

This home-thrust ended the colloquy. The first speaker quickly drew in her head, and I remarked a general twitching of muscles on the faces around me. The driver shook his head in silent glee. The little woman's eyes emitted sparks.

From West Ossipee I drove over to Tamworth Iron Works, where I passed the night, and where I had, so to speak, Chocorua under my thumb.

This mountain being the most proper for a legend, it accordingly has one. Here it is in all its purity:

After the terrible battle in which the Sokokis were nearly destroyed, a remnant of the tribe, with their chief, Chocorua, fled into the fastnesses of these mountains, where the foot of a white man had never intruded. Here they trapped the beaver, speared the salmon, and hunted the moose.

The survivors of Lovewell's band brought the first news of

their disaster to the settlements. More like spectres than living men, their haggard looks, bloodshot eyes, and shaking limbs, their clothing hanging about them in shreds, announced the hardships of that long and terrible march but too plainly.

Among those who had set out with the expedition were three brothers – one a mere stripling, the others famous hunters. The eldest of the three, having fallen lame on the second day, was left behind. His brethren would have conducted him back to the nearest village, but he promptly refused their proffered aid, saying,

"' Tis enough to lose one man; three are too many. Go; do my part as well as your own."

The two had gone but a few steps when the disabled ranger called the second brother back.

"Tom," said the elder, "take care of our brother."

"Surely," replied the other, in some surprise. "Surely," he repeated.

"I charge you," continued the first speaker, "watch over the boy as I would myself."

"Never fear, Lance; whatever befalls Hugh happens to me."

"Not so," said the other, with energy; "you must die for him, if need be."

"They shall chop me as fine as sausage-meat before a hair of the lad's head is harmed."

"God bless you, Tom!" The brothers then embraced and separated.

"What was our brother saying to you?" demanded the younger, when Tom rejoined him.

"He begged me, seeing he could not go with us, to shoot two or three redskins for him; and I promised." The two then quickened their pace in order to overtake their comrades.

Among those who succeeded in regaining the settlements was a man who had been wounded in twenty places. He was at once a ghastly and a pitiful object. Faint with hunger, fatigue, and loss of blood, he reeled, fell, slowly rose to his feet, and sunk lifeless at the entrance to the village. This time he did not rise again.

A crowd ran up. When they had wiped the blood and dirt from the dead man's face, a by-stander threw himself upon the body with the cry, "My God, it is Tom!"

The following day the surviving brother joined a strong party despatched by the colonial authorities to the scene of Lovewell's encounter, where they arrived after a forced march. Here, among the trampled thickets, they found the festering corpses of the slain. Among them was Hugh, the younger brother. He was riddled with bullets and shockingly mangled. Up to this moment, Lance had hoped against hope; now the dread reality stared him in the face. The stout ranger grew white, his fingers convulsively clutched the barrel of his gun, and something like a curse escaped through his clinched teeth; then, kneeling beside the body, he buried his face in his hands. Hugh's blood cried aloud for vengeance.

Thorough but unavailing search was made for the savages.

They had disappeared, after applying the torch to their village. Silently and sadly the rangers performed the last service for their fallen comrades, and then, turning their backs upon the mountains, commenced their march homeward.

The next day the absence of Lance was remarked; but, as he was their best hunter, the rangers made no doubt he would rejoin them at the next halt.

Chocorua was not ignorant that the English were near. Like the vulture, he scented danger from afar. From the summit of the mountain he had watched the smoke of the hostile camp-fires stealing above the forest. The remainder of the tribe had buried themselves still deeper in the wilderness. They were too few for attack, too weak for defence.

One morning the chief ascended the pinnacle, and swept the horizon with his piercing eye. Far in the south a faint smoke told where the foe had pitched his last encampment. Chocorua's dark eye lighted with exultation. The accursed pale-faces were gone.

He turned to descend the mountain, but had not taken ten steps when a white hunter, armed to the teeth, started from behind the crags and barred his passage. The chief recoiled, but not with fear, as the muzzle of his adversary's weapon touched his naked breast. The white man's eyes shone with deadly purpose, as he forced the chieftain, step by step, back to the highest point of the mountain. Chocorua could not pass except over the hunter's dead body.

Glaring into each other's eyes with mortal hate, the two men

reached the summit.

"Chocorua will go no farther," said the chief, haughtily.

The white man trembled with excitement. For a moment he could not speak. Then, in a voice husky with suppressed emotion, he exclaimed,

"Die, then, like a dog, thou destroyer of my family, thou incarnate devil! The white man has been in Chocorua's wigwam; has counted their scalps – father, mother, sister, brother. He has tracked him to the mountain-top. Now, demon or devil, Chocorua dies by my hand."

The chief saw no escape. He comprehended that his last moment was come. As if all the savage heroism of his race had come to his aid, he drew himself up to his full height, and stood erect and motionless as a statue of bronze upon the enormous pedestal of the mountain. His dark eye blazed, his nostrils dilated, the muscles of his bronzed forehead stood out like whip-cord. The black eagle's feather in his scalplock fluttered proudly in the cool morning breeze. He stood thus for a moment looking death sternly in the face, then, raising his bared arm with a gesture of superb disdain, he spoke with energy:

"Chocorua is unarmed; Chocorua will die. His heart is big and strong with the blood of the accursed pale-face. He laughs at death. He spits in the white man's face. Go; tell your warriors Chocorua died like a chief!"

With this defiance on his lips the chief sprung from the brink into the unfathomable abyss below. An appalling crash

was followed by a death-like silence. As soon as he recovered from his stupor the hunter ran to the verge of the precipice and looked over. A horrible fascination held him an instant. Then, shouldering his gun, he retraced his steps down the mountain, and the next day rejoined his comrades.

The general and front views of the Sandwich group, which may be had in perfection from the hill behind the Chocorua House, or from the opposite elevation, are very striking, embracing as they do the principal summits from Chocorua to the heavy mass of Black Mountain. There are more distinct traits, perhaps, embodied in this range than in any other among the White Hills, except that incomparable band of peaks constituting the northern half of the great chain itself. There seems, too, a special fitness in designating these mountains by their Indian titles – Chocorua, Paugus, Passaconnaway, Wonnalancet – a group of great sagamores, wild, grand, picturesque.[2]

The highway now skirted the margin of Chocorua Lake, a lovely little sheet of water voluptuously reposing at the foot of

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[2] No tradition attaches to the last three peaks. Passaconnaway was a great chieftain and conjurer of the Pennacooks. It is of him the poet Whittier writes:Burned for him the drifted snow,Bade through ice fresh lilies blow,And the leaves of summer glowOver winter's wood.This noted patriarch and necromancer, in whose arts not only the Indians but the English seemed to have put entire faith, after living to a great age, was, according to the tradition, translated to heaven from the summit of Mount Washington, after the manner of Elias, in a chariot of fire, surrounded by a tempest of flame. Wonnalancet was the son and successor of Passaconnaway. Paugus, an under chief of the Pigwackets, or Sokokis, killed in the battle with Lovewell, related in the next chapter.

its overshadowing mountain. I cannot call Chocorua beautiful, yet of all the White Mountain peaks is it the most individual, the most aggressively suggestive. But the lake, fast locked in the embrace of encircling hills, bathed in all the affluence of the blessed sunlight, its bosom decorated with white lilies, its shores glassed in water which looks like a sheet of satin – ah, this was beautiful indeed! Its charming seclusion, its rare combination of laughing water and impassive old mountains; above all, the striking contrast between its chaste beauty and the huge-ribbed thing rising above, awakens a variety of sensations. It is passing strange. The mountain attracts, and at the same time repels you. Two sentiments struggle here for mastery – open admiration, energetic repulsion. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, the beholder feels an antipathy for a creation of inanimate nature. Chocorua suggests some fabled prodigy of the old mythology – a headless Centaur, sprung from the foul womb of earth. The lake seems another Andromeda exposed to a monster.

A beautiful Indian legend ran to the effect that the stillness of the lake was sacred to the Great Spirit, and that if a human voice was heard upon its waters the offender's canoe would instantly sink to the bottom.

Chocorua, as seen from Tamworth, shows a long, undulating ridge of white rising over one of green, both extending toward the east, and opening between a deep ravine, through which a path ascends to the summit. But this way affords no view until the summit is close at hand. Beyond the hump-backed ridge of

Chocorua the tip of the southern peak of Moat Mountain peers over, like a mountain standing on tiptoe.

The mountain, with its formidable outworks, is constantly in view until the highway is left for a wood-road winding around its base into an interval where there is a farm-house. Here the road ends and the ascent begins.

Taking a guide here, who was strong, nimble, and sure-footed, but who proved to be lamentably ignorant of the topography of the country, we were in a few moments rapidly threading the path up the mountain. It ought to be said here that, with rare exceptions, the men who serve you in these ascensions should be regarded rather as porters than as guides.

In about an hour we reached the summit of the first mountain; for there are four subordinate ridges to cross before you stand under the single block of granite forming the pinnacle.

When reconnoitring this pinnacle through your glass, at a distance of five miles, you will say to scale it would be difficult; when you have climbed close underneath you will say it is impossible. After surveying it from the bare ledges of Bald Mountain, where we stood letting the cool breeze blow upon us, I asked my guide where we could ascend. He pointed out a long crack, or crevice, toward the left, in which a few bushes were growing. It is narrow, almost perpendicular, and seemingly impracticable. I could not help exclaiming, "What, up there! nothing but birds of the air can mount that sheer wall!" It is, however, there or nowhere you must ascend.

The whole upper zone of the mountain seems smitten with palsy. Except in the ravines between the inferior summits, nothing grew, nothing relieved the wide-spread desolation. Beyond us rose the enormous conical crag, scarred and riven by lightning, which gives to Chocorua its highly distinctive character. It is no longer ashen, but black with lichens. There was little of symmetry, nothing of grace; only the grandeur of power. You might as well pelt it with snow-balls as batter it with the mightiest artillery. For ages it has brushed the tempest aside, has seen the thunder-bolt shivered against its imperial battlements; for ages to come it will continue to defy the utmost power that can assail it. And what enemies it has withstood, overthrown, or put to rout! Not far from the base of the pinnacle evidence that the mountain was once densely wooded is on all sides. The rotted stumps of large trees still cling with a death-grip to the ledges, the shrivelled trunks lie bleaching where they were hurled by the hurricane. Many years ago this region was desolated by fire. In the night Old Chocorua, lighting his fiery torch, stood in the midst of his own funeral pyre. The burning mountain illuminated the sky and put out the stars. A brilliant circle of light, twenty miles in extent, surrounded the flaming peak like a halo; while underneath an immense tongue of forked flame licked the sides of the summit with devouring haste. The lakes, those bright jewels lying in the lap of the valleys, glowed like enormous carbuncles. Superstitious folk regarded the conflagration as a portent of war or pestilence. In the morning a few charred trunks,

standing erect, were all that remained of the original forest. The rocks themselves bear witness to the intense heat which has either cracked them wide open, crumbled them in pieces, or divested them, like oysters, of their outer shell, all along the path of the conflagration.

The walk over the lower summits to the base of the peak occupied another hour, and is a most profitable feature of the ascent. On each side a superb panorama of mountains and lakes, of towns, villages, and hamlets, is being slowly unrolled; while every forward step develops the inaccessible character of the high summit more and more.

Having strayed from the path to gather blueberries, my companion set me again on the march by pointing out where a bear had been feeding not long before. Yet, while assuring me that Bruin was perfectly harmless at this season, I did not fail to remark that my guide made the most rapid strides of the day after this discovery. While feeling our way around the base of the pinnacle, in order to gain the ravine by which it is attacked, the path suddenly stopped. At the right, projecting rocks, affording a hold for neither hand nor foot, rose like a wall; before us, joined to the perpendicular rock, an unbroken ledge of bare granite, smoothly polished by ice, swept down by a sharp incline hundreds of feet, and then broke off abruptly into profounder depths. To advance upon this ledge, as steep as a roof, and where one false step would inevitably send the climber rolling to the bottom of the ravine, demands steady nerves. It invests the whole jaunt

with just enough of the perilous to excite the apprehensions, or provoke the enthusiasm of the individual who stands there for the first time, looking askance at his guide, and revolving the chances of crossing it in safety. While debating with myself whether to take off my boots, or go down on my hands and knees and creep, the guide crossed this place with a steady step; and, upon reaching the opposite side, grasped a fragment of rock with one hand while extending his staff to me with the other. Rather than accept his assistance, I passed over with an assurance I was far from feeling; but when we came down the mountain I walked across with far more ease in my stockings.[3]

When he saw me safely over, my conductor moved on, with the remark,

"A skittish place."

"Skittish," indeed! We proceeded to drag ourselves up the ravine by the aid of bushes, or such protruding rocks as offered a hold. From the valley below we must have looked like flies creeping up a wall. After a breathless scramble, which put me in mind of the escalade of the Iron Castle of Porto Bello, where the English, having no scaling-ladders, mounted over each other's shoulders, we came to a sort of plateau, on which was a ruined hut. The view here is varied and extensive; but after regaining our breath we hastened to complete the ascent, in order to enjoy, in all its perfection, the prospect awaiting us on the summit.

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[3] Something has since been done by the Appalachian Club to render this part of the ascent less hazardous than it formerly was.

Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, it is among mountains that my knowledge of them has been obtained. I have little hesitation, then, in pronouncing the view from Chocorua one of the noblest that can reward the adventurous climber; for, notwithstanding it is not a high peak, and cannot, therefore, unfold the whole mountain system at a glance, it yet affords an unsurpassed view-point, from which one sees the surrounding mountains rising on all sides in all their majesty, and clothed in all their terrors.

Let me try to explain why Chocorua is such a remarkable and eligible post of observation.

One comprehends perfectly that the last high building on the skirts of a city embraces the largest unobstructed view of the surrounding country. This mountain is placed at the extremity of a range that abuts upon the lower Saco valley, and therefore overlooks all the hill-country on the east and south-east as far as the sea-coast. The arc of this circle of vision extends from the Camden Hills to Agamenticus, or from the Penobscot to the Piscataqua. The day being one of a thousand, I distinctly saw the ocean with the naked eye; not merely as a white blur on the horizon's edge, but actual blue water, over which smoke was curling. This magnificent *coup-d'œil* embraces the scattered villages of Conway, Fryeburg, Madison, Eaton, Ossipee, with their numerous lakes and streams. I counted seventeen of the former flashing in the sun.

In the second place, Chocorua stands at the entrance to the valley opening between the Sandwich and Ossipee chains, and

commands, therefore, to the south-west, between these natural walls, the northern limb of Winnipiseogee and of Squam, which are seen glittering on each side of Red Hill. In the foreground, at the foot of the mountain, Chocorua Lake is beyond question the most enticing object in a landscape wonderfully lighted and enriched by its profusion of brilliant waters, which resemble so many highly burnished reflectors multiplying the rays of the sun. I was now looking back to my first station on Red Hill, only the range of vision was much more extensive. It is unnecessary to recapitulate the names of the villages and summits seen in this direction. Over the lakes, Winnipiseogee and Squam, the humid peaks of Mount Belknap and of Mount Kearsarge, in Warner, last caught the eye. These two sections of the landscape first meet the eye of the climber while advancing toward the peak, whose rugged head and brawny shoulders intercept the view to the north, only to be enjoyed when the mountain is fully conquered.

Upon the cap-stone crowning the pinnacle, supporting myself by grasping the signal-staff planted on the highest point of this rock, from which the wind threatened to sweep us like chaff, I enjoyed the third and final act of this sublime tableau, in which the whole company of mountains is crowded upon the stage. Hundreds of dark and bristling shapes confronted us. Like a horde of barbarians, they seemed silently awaiting the signal to march upon the lowlands. As the wind swept through their ranks, an impatient murmur rose from the midst. Each mountain

shook its myriad spears, and gave its voice to swell the sublime chorus. At first all was confusion; then I began to seek out the chiefs, whose rock-helmed heads, lifted high above their grisly battalions, invested each with a distinction and a sovereignty which yielded nothing except to that imperial peak over which attendant clouds hovered or floated swiftly away, as if bearing a message to those distant encampments pitched on the farthest verge of the horizon.

At my left hand extended all the summits, forming at their western extremity the valley of Mad River, and terminating in the immovable mass of Black Mountain. The peaks of Tripyramid, Tecumseh, and Osceola stretched along the northern course of this stream, and over them gleamed afar the massive plateau-ridge of Moosehillock. From my stand-point the great wall of the Sandwich chain, which from Tamworth presents an unbroken front to the south, now divided into ridges running north and south, separated by profound ravines. Paugus crouched at my feet; Passaconnaway elevated his fine crest next; Whiteface, his lowered and brilliant front; and then Black Mountain, the giant landmark of half a score of towns and villages.

Directly at my feet, to the north-west, the great intervale of Swift River gleamed from the depths of this valley, like sunshine from a storm-cloud. Following the course of this little oasis, the eye wandered over the inaccessible and untrodden peaks of the Pemigewasset wilderness, resting last on the blue ridge of the Franconia Mountains. About midway of this line one sees

the bristling slopes of Mounts Carrigain and Hancock, and the Carrigain Notch, through which a hardy pedestrian may pass from the Pemigewasset to the Saco by following the course of the streams flowing out of it. Besides its solitary, picturesque grandeur, Carrigain has the distinction of being the geographical centre of the White Mountain group. Taking its peak for an axis, a radius thirty miles long will describe a circle, including in its sweep nearly the whole mountain system. In this sense Carrigain is, therefore, the hub of the White Mountains.

Having explored the horizon thus far, I now turned more to the north, where, by a fortunate chance, Chocorua dominates a portion of the chain intervening between itself and the Saco Valley. I was looking straight up this valley through the great White Mountain Notch. There was the dark spire of Mount Willey, and the scarred side of Webster. There was the arched rock of Mount Willard, and over it the liquid profile of Cherry Mountain. It was superb; it was idyllic. Such was the perfect transparency of the air, that I clearly distinguished the red color of the slides on Mount Webster without the aid of my glass.

From this centre, outlined with a bold, free hand against the azure, the undulations of the great White Mountains ascended grandly to the dome of Mount Washington, and then plunged into the defiles of the Pinkham Notch. Following this line eastward, the eye traversed the mountains of Jackson to the half-closed aperture of the Carter Notch, finally resting on the pinnacle of Kearsarge. Without stirring a single step, we have taken a journey

of three hundred miles.

Down in the valley the day was one of the sultriest; up here it was so cold that our teeth chattered. We were forced to descend into the hollow lying between the northerly foot of the peak and the first of the bald knobs constituting the great white ridge of the mountain. Here is a fine spring, and here, on either side of this singular rock-gallery, is a landscape of rare beauty enclosed by its walls. Here, too, the mutilated pyramid of the peak rises before you like an antique ruin. One finds, without effort, striking resemblances to winding galleries, bastions, and battlements. He could pass days and weeks here without a single wish to return to earth. Here we ate our luncheon, and perused the landscape at leisure. Before us stretched the long course of the Saco, from its source in the Notch to where, with one grand sweep to the east, it takes leave of the mountains, flows awhile demurely through the lowlands, and in two or three infuriated plunges reaches the sea.

I do not remember when I have more fully enjoyed the serene calm of a Sabbath evening than while wandering among the fragrant and stately pines that skirt the shores of Lake Chocorua. Indeed, except for the occasional sound of hoofs along the cool and shady road, or of voices coming from the bosom of the lake itself, one might say a perpetual Sabbath reigned here. Yonder tall, athletic pines, those palms of the north, through which the glimmer of water is seen, hum their monotonous lullaby to the drowsy lake. The mountains seem so many statues to Silence. There is no use for speech here. The mute and expressive

language of two lovers, accustomed to read each others' secret thoughts, is the divine medium. Truant breezes ruffle the foliage in playful wantonness, but the trees only shake their green heads and murmur "Hush! hush!" A consecration is upon the mere, a hallowed light within the wood. Here is the place to linger over the pages of "Hyperion," or dream away the idle hours with the poets; and here, stretched along the turf, one gets closer to Nature, studying her with ever-increasing wonder and delight, or musing upon the thousand forms of mysterious life swarming in the clod under his hand.

Charming, too, are the walks by the lake-side in the effulgence of the harvest-moon; and enchanting the white splendor quivering on its dark waters. A boat steals by; see! its oars dip up molten silver. The voyagers troll a love-ditty. Dangerous ground this colonnade of woods and yonder sparkling water for self-conscious lovers! Love and the ocean have the same subtle sympathy with moonlight. The stronger its beams the higher rises the flood.

IV.
LOVEWELL

Of worthy Captain Lovewell I purpose now to sing.
How valiantly he served his country and his king.

Old Ballad.

LET us make a détour to historic Fryeburg, leaving the cars at Conway, which in former times enjoyed a happy pre-eminence as the centre upon which the old stage-routes converged, and where travellers, going or returning from the mountains, always passed the night. But those old travellers have mostly gone where the name of Chatigee, by which both drivers and tourists liked to designate Conway, is going; only there is for the name, fortunately, no resurrection. No one knows its origin; none will mourn its decease.

It is here, at Conway, or Conway Corner, that first enrapturing view of the White Mountains bursts upon the traveller like a splendid vision. But we shall see it again on our return from Fryeburg. Moreover, I enjoyed this constant espionage from a distance before a nearer approach, this exchange of preliminary civilities before coming closer to the heart of the mountains.

Fryeburg stands on a dry and sandy plain, elevated above the Saco River. It lies behind the mountain range, which, terminating

in Conway, compels the river to make a right angle. Turning these mountains, the river seems now to be in no hurry, but coils about the meadows in a manner that instantly recalls the famous Connecticut Ox-Bow. Chocorua and Kearsarge are the two prominent figures in the landscape.

The village street is most beautifully shaded by elms of great size, which, giving to each other an outstretched hand over the way, spring an arch of green high above, through which we look up and down. At one end justice is dispensed at the Oxford House – an inn with a pedigree; at the other learning is diffused in the academy where Webster once taught and disciplined the rising generation. A scroll over the inn door bears the date of 1763. The first school-house and the first framed house built in Fryeburg are still standing, a little way out of the village. On our way to the remarkable rock, emerging from the plain like a walrus from the sea, we linger a moment in the village graveyard to read the long inscription on the monument of General Joseph Frye, a veteran of the old wars, and founder of the town which bears his name. Ascending now the rock to which we just referred, called the Jockey Cap, we are lifted high above the plain, having the river meadows, the graceful loops of the river itself, the fine pyramid of Kearsarge on one side, and on the other the dark sheet of Lovewell's Pond stretched at our feet.

It was here, under the shadow of Mount Kearsarge, was fought one of the bloodiest and most obstinately contested battles that can be found in the annals of war; so terrible, indeed, that the

story was repeated from fireside to fireside, and from generation to generation, as worthy a niche beside that of Leonidas and his band of heroes. Familiar as is the tale – and who does not know it by heart? – it can still send the blood throbbing to the temples, or coursing back to the heart. Unfortunately, the details are sufficiently meagre, but, in truth, they need no embellishment. Their very simplicity presents the tragedy in all its grandeur. It is an epic.

In April, 1725, John Lovewell, a hardy and experienced ranger of Dunstable, whose exploits had already noised his fame abroad, marched with forty-six men for the Indian villages at Pigwacket, now Fryeburg, Maine. At Ossipee he built a small fort, designed as a refuge in case of disaster. This precaution undoubtedly saved the lives of some of his men. He was now within two short marches of the enemy's village. The scouts having found Indian tracks in the neighborhood, Lovewell resumed his route, leaving one of his men who had fallen sick, his surgeon, and eight men, to guard the fort. His command was now reduced to thirty-four officers and men.

The rangers reached the shores of the beautiful lake which bears Lovewell's name, and bivouacked for the night.

The night passed without an alarm; but the sentinels who watched the encampment reported hearing strange noises in the woods. Lovewell scented the presence of his enemy.

In fact, on the morning of the 8th of May, while his band were on their knees seeking Divine favor in the approaching

conflict, the report of a gun brought every man to his feet. Upon reconnoitring, a solitary Indian was discovered on a point of land about a mile from the camp.

The leader immediately called his men about him, and told them that they must now quickly decide whether to fight or retreat. The men, with one accord, replied that they had not come so far in search of the enemy to beat a shameful retreat the moment he was found. Seeing his band possessed with this spirit, Lovewell then prepared for battle. The rangers threw off their knapsacks and blankets, looked to their primings, and loosened their knives and axes. The order was then given, and they moved cautiously out of their camp. Believing the enemy was in his front, Lovewell neglected to place a guard over his baggage.

Instead of plunging into the woods, the Indian who had alarmed the camp stood where he was first seen until the scouts fired upon him, when he returned the fire, wounding Lovewell and one other. Ensign Wyman then levelled his musket and shot him dead. The day began thus unfortunately for the English. Lovewell was mortally wounded in the abdomen, but continued to give his orders.

After clearing the woods in their front without finding any more Indians, the rangers fell back toward the spot where they had deposited their packs. This was a sandy plain, thinly covered with pines, at the north-east end of the lake.

During their absence, the Indians, led by the old chief, Paugus, whose name was a terror throughout the length and

breadth of the English frontiers, stumbled upon the deserted encampment. Paugus counted the packs, and, finding his warriors outnumbered the rangers, the wily chief placed them in ambush; he divined that the English would return from their unsuccessful scout sooner or later, and he prepared to repeat the tactics used with such fatal effect at Bloody Brook, and at the defeat of Wadsworth. This consisted in arranging his savages in a semicircle, the two wings of which, enveloping the rangers, would expose them to a murderous cross-fire at short musket-range.

Without suspecting their danger, Lovewell's men fell into the fatal snare which the crafty Paugus had thus spread for them. Hardly had they entered it when the grove blazed with a deadly volley, and resounded with the yells of the Indians. As if confident of their prey, they even left their coverts, and flung themselves upon the English with a fury nothing could withstand.

In this onset Lovewell, who, notwithstanding his wound, bravely encouraged his men with voice and example, received a second wound, and fell. Two of his lieutenants were killed at his side; but with desperate valor the rangers charged up to the muzzles of the enemy's guns, killing nine, and sweeping the others before them. This gallant charge cost them eight killed, besides their captain; two more were badly wounded.

Twenty-three men had now to maintain the conflict with the whole Sokokis tribe. Their situation was indeed desperate. Relief was impossible; for they were fifty miles from the nearest English

settlements. Their packs and provisions were in the enemy's hands, and the woods swarmed with foes. To conquer or die was the only alternative. These devoted Englishmen despaired of conquering, but they prepared to die bravely.

Ensign Wyman, on whom the command devolved after the death of Lovewell, was his worthy successor. Seeing the enemy stealing upon his flanks as if to surround him, he ordered his men to fall back to the shore of the lake, where their right was protected by a brook, and their left by a rocky point extending into the lake. A few large pines stood on the beach between.

This manœuvre was executed under a hot fire, which still further thinned the ranks of the English. The Indians closed in upon them, filling the air with demoniac yells whenever a victim fell. Assailing the whites with taunts, and shaking ropes in their faces, they cried out to them to yield. But to the repeated demands to surrender, the rangers replied only with bullets. They thought of the fort and its ten defenders, and hoped, or rather prayed, for night. This hope, forlorn as it seemed, encouraged them to fight on, and they delivered their fire with fatal precision whenever an Indian showed himself. The English were in a trap, but the Indians dared not approach within reach of the lion's claws.

While this long combat was proceeding, one of the English went to the lake to wash his gun, and, on emerging at the shore, descried an Indian in the act of cleansing his own. This Indian was Paugus.

The ranger went to work like a man who comprehends that his life depends upon a second. The chief followed him in every movement. Both charged their guns at the same instant. The Englishman threw his ramrod on the sand; the Indian dropped his.

"Me kill you," said Paugus, priming his weapon from his powder-horn.

"The chief lies," retorted the undaunted ranger, striking the breech of his firelock upon the ground with such force that it primed itself. An instant later Paugus fell, shot through the heart.

"I said I should kill you," muttered the victor, spurning the dead body of his enemy, and plunging into the thickest of the fight.

Darkness closed the conflict, which had continued without cessation since ten in the morning. Little by little the shouts of the enemy grew feebler, and finally ceased. The English stood to their arms until midnight, when, convinced that the savages had abandoned the sanguinary field of battle, they began their retreat toward the fort. Only nine were unhurt. Eleven were badly wounded, but were resolved to march with their comrades, though they died by the way. Three more were alive, but had received their death-wounds. One of these was Lieutenant Robbins, of Chelmsford. Knowing that he must be left behind, he begged his comrades to load his gun, in order that he might sell his life as dearly as possible when the savages returned to wreak their vengeance upon the wounded.

I have said that twenty-three men continued the fight after the bloody repulse in which Lovewell was killed. There were only twenty-two. The other, whose name the reader will excuse me from mentioning, fled from the field and gained the fort, where he spread the report that Lovewell was cut to pieces, himself being the sole survivor. This intelligence, striking terror, decided the little garrison to abandon the fort, which was immediately done, and in haste.

This was the crowning misfortune of the expedition. The rangers now became a band of panic-stricken fugitives. After incredible hardships, less than twenty starving, emaciated, and footsore men, half of them badly wounded, straggled into the nearest English settlements.

The loss of the Indians could only be guessed; but the battle led to the immediate abandonment of their village, from which so many war-parties had formerly harassed the English. Paugus, the savage wolf, the implacable foe of the whites, was dead. His tribe forsook the graves of their fathers, nor rested until they had put many long leagues between them and their pursuers. For them the advance of the English was the Juggernaut under whose wheels their race was doomed to perish from the face of the earth.

V.
NORTH CONWAY

"Tall spire from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote."

THE entrance to North Conway is, without doubt, the most beautiful and imposing introduction to the high mountains.

Although the traveller has for fifty miles skirted the outlying ranges, catching quick-shifting glimpses of the great summits, yet, when at last the train swings round the foot of the Moat range into the Saco Valley, so complete is the transition, so charming the picture, that not even the most apathetic can repress a movement of surprise and admiration. This is the moment when every one feels the inadequacy of his own conceptions.

Nature has formed here a vast antechamber, into which you are ushered through a gate-way of mountains upon the numerous inner courts, galleries, and cloisters of her most secluded retreats. Here the mountains fall back before the impetuous flood of the Saco, which comes pouring down from the summit of the great Notch, white, and panting with the haste of its flight. Here the river gives rendezvous to several of its larger affluents – the East Branch, the Ellis, the Swift – and, like an army taking the field,

their united streams, sweeping grandly around the foot of the last mountain range, emerge into the open country. Here the valley, contracted at its extremity between the gentle slope of Kearsarge and the abrupt declivities of Moat, encloses an ellipse of verdant and fertile land ravishing to behold, skirted on one side by thick woods, behind which precipices a thousand feet high rise black and threatening, overlooked on the other by a high terrace, along which the village is built. It is the inferior summit of Kearsarge, which descends by a long, regular slope to the intervale at its upper end, while a secondary ridge of the Moats, advancing on the opposite side, drops into it by a precipice. The superb silver-gray crest of Kearsarge is seen rising in a regular pyramid behind the right shoulder of its lower summit. Ordinarily the house perched on the top is seen as distinctly as those in the village. It is the last in the village.

Looking up through this verdant mountain park, at a distance of twenty miles, the imposing masses of the great summits seem scaling the skies. Then, heavily massed on the right, comes the Carter range, divided by the cup-shaped dip of the Carter Notch; then the truncated cone of Double-Head; and then, with outworks firmly planted in the valley, the glittering pinnacle of Kearsarge. The mountain in front of you, looking up the village street, is Thorn Mountain, on the other side of which is Jackson, and the way up the Ellis Valley to the Pinkham Notch, the Glen House, Gorham, and the Androscoggin.

The traveller, who is ushered upon this splendid scene with

the rapidity of steam, perceives that he is at last among real mountains, and quickly yields to the indefinable charm which from this moment surrounds and holds him a willing captive.

Looking across the meadow from the village street, the eye is stopped by an isolated ridge of bare, overhanging precipices. It is thrust out into the valley from Moat Mountain, of which it forms a part, presenting two singular, regularly arched cliffs, seven hundred to nine hundred and fifty feet in height toward the village. The green forest underneath contrasts vividly with the lustrous black of these precipitous walls, which glisten brightly in the sunshine, where they are wet by tiny streams flowing down. On the nearest of these is a very curious resemblance to the head and shoulders of a horse in the act of rearing, occasioned by a white incrustation on the face of the cliff. This accident gives to it the name of White Horse Ledge. All marriageable ladies, maiden or widow, run out to look at it, in consequence of the belief current in New England that if, after seeing a white horse, you count a hundred, the first gentleman you meet will be your future husband! Underneath this cliff a charming little lake lies hid.

Next beyond is the Cathedral Ledge, so called from the curious rock cavity it contains; and still farther up the valley is Humphrey's Ledge, one of the finest rock-studies of them all when we stand underneath it. But the reader now has a general acquaintance with North Conway, and with its topography. He begins his study of mountain beauty in a spirit of loving

enthusiasm, which leads him on and on to the ripeness of an education achieved by simply throwing himself upon the bosom of indulgent Nature, putting the world as far as possible behind him.

But now from these masses of hard rock let us turn once more to the valley, where the rich intervales spread an exhaustless feast for the eye. If autumn be the season, the vase-like elms, the stacks of yellow corn, the golden pumpkins looking like enormous oranges, the floor-cloth of green and gold damasked with purple gorse and coppice, give the idea of an immense table groaning beneath its luxurious weight of fruit and flowers.

Turn now to the mountain presiding with such matchless grace and dignity over the village. Kearsarge, in the twilight, deserves, like Lorenzo di Medicis, to be called "the magnificent." The yellow and orange foliage looks, for all the world, like a golden shower fallen upon it. The gray ledges at the apex, which the clear, yellow light renders almost incandescent, are far more in harmony with the rest of the mountain than in the vernal season.

Are we yet in sympathy with that free-masonry of art through which our eminent landscape-painters recognized here the true picturesque point of view of the great mountains, the effective contrasts and harmonious ensemble of the near scenery – the grandest allied with the humblest objects of nature? One cannot turn in any direction without recognizing a picture he has seen in the studios, or in the saloons of the clubs.

The first persons I saw on the platform of the railway-station

were my quondam companions, the colonel and George. We met like friends who had parted only half an hour before. During dinner it was agreed that we should pass our afternoon among the cliffs. This arrangement appeared very judicious; the distance is short, and the attractions many.

We accordingly set out for the ledges at three in the afternoon. The weather did not look promising, to be sure, but we decided it sufficiently so for this promenade of three or four hours.

While en route, let me mention a discovery. One morning, while sitting on the piazza of the Kearsarge House enjoying the dreamy influence of the warm atmosphere, which spun its soft, gossamer web about the mountains, I observed a peculiar shadow thrown by a jutting mass of the Cathedral Ledge upon a smooth surface, which exactly resembled a human figure standing upright. I looked away, then back again, to see if I was not the victim of an illusion. No, it was still there. Now it is always there. The head and upper part of the body were inclined slightly forward, the legs perfectly formed. At ten every forenoon, punctual to the hour, this phantom, emerging from the rock, stands, fixed and motionless as a statue, in its niche. At every turn of the sun, this shade silently interrogates the feverish activity that has replaced the silence of ages. One day or another I shall demand of my phantom what it has witnessed.

The road we followed soon turned sharply away from the main street of the village, to the left, and in a few rods more plunged into the Saco, leaving us standing on the bank, looking askance

at a wide expanse of water, choked with bowlders, around which the swift current whirled and foamed with rage. We decided it too shallow to swim, but doubted if it was not too deep to ford. We had reached our Rubicon.

"We must wade," said the colonel, with decision.

"Precisely my idea," assented George, beginning to unlace his shoes.

I put my hand in the river. Ugh! it was as cold as ice.

Having assured ourselves no one saw us, we divested ourselves of shoes, stockings, pantaloons, and drawers. We put our stockings in our pockets, disposed our clothing in a roll over the shoulder, as soldiers do on the march, tied our shoes together, and hung them around our necks. Then, placing our hands upon each others' shoulders, as I have seen gymnasts do in a circus, we entered the river, like candidates for baptism, feeling our way, and catching our breath.

"*Sans-culottes*," suggested the colonel, who knew a little French.

"Kit-kats," added George, who knows something of art, as the water rose steadily above our knees.

The treacherous bowlders tripped us up at every step, so that one or the other was constantly floundering, like a stranded porpoise in a frog-pond. But, thanks to our device, we reached the middle of the river without anything worse than a few bruises. Here we were fairly stopped. The water was waist-deep, and the current every moment threatened to lift us from our feet. How

foolish we looked!

Advance or retreat? That was the question. One pointed up stream, another down; while, to aggravate the situation, rain began to patter around us. In two minutes the river was steaming. George, who is a great infant, suggested putting our hands in our pockets, to keep them warm, and our clothes in the river, to keep them dry.

"By Jove!" ejaculated the colonel, "the river is smoking."

"Let us join the river," said George, producing his cigar-case.

Putting our heads together over the colonel's last match, thus forming an antique tripod of our bodies, we succeeded in getting a light; and for the first time, I venture to affirm, since its waters gushed from the mountains, incense ascended from the bosom of the Saco.

"I'm freezing!" stuttered George.

I was pushing forward, to cut the dilemma short, when the colonel interposed with,

"Stop; I want to tell you a story."

"A story? here – in the middle of the river?" we shouted.

"In the middle of the river; here – a story!" he echoed.

"I would like to sit down while I listen," observed George.

Evidently the coldness of the water had forced the blood into our friend's head. He was ill, but obstinate. We therefore resigned ourselves to hear him.

"This river and this situation remind me of the Potawatamies," he began.

"Potawatamies!" we echoed, with chattering teeth. "Go on; go on."

"When I was on the Plains," continued the colonel, "I passed some time among those Indians. During my stay, the chief invited me to accompany him on a buffalo-hunt. I accepted on the spot; for of all things a buffalo-hunt was the one I was most desirous of seeing. We set out at daybreak the next morning. After a few hours' march, we came to a stream between deep banks, and flowing with a rapid current, like this one – "

"Go on; go on!" we shiveringly articulated.

"At a gesture from the chief, a young squaw dismounted from her pony, advanced to the edge of the stream, and began, timidly, to wade it. When she hesitated, as she did two or three times, the chief said something which encouraged her to proceed. All at once she stopped, threw up her arms, and screamed something in the Indian dialect; at which all the braves burst into a loud laugh, the squaws joining in.

"'What does she say?' I asked of the chief.

"'Up to the middle,' he replied, pushing his pony into the stream."

The stream grew shallower, so that we soon emerged from the water upon the opposite bank. Here we poured the water from our shoes, and resumed our wet clothing. Everything was cooled, except our ardor.

As we approached nearer, the ledges were full of grim recesses, rude rock-niches, and traversed by perpendicular

cracks from brow to base. “Take care!” I shouted; “there is a huge piece of the cliff just ready to fall.”

In some places the rock is sheer and smooth, in others it is broken regularly down, for half its whole height, to where it is joined by rude buttresses of massive granite. The lithe maples climb up the steepest ravines, but cannot pass the waste of sheer rock stretching between them and the firs, which look down over the brink of the precipice. Rusted purple is the prevailing color, blotched here and there with white, like the drip oozing from limestone. We soon emerged on the shore of Echo Lake.

Hovering under the great precipices, which lie heavily shadowed on its glossy surface, are gathered the waters flowing from the airy heights above – the little rills, the rivulets, the cascades. The tremendous shadow the cliff flings down seems lying deep in the bosom of the lake, as if perpetually imprinted there. Slender birches, brilliant foliage, were daintily etched upon the surface, like arabesques on polished steel. The water is perfectly transparent, and without a ripple. Indeed, the breezes playing around the summit, or humming in the tree-tops, seem forbidden to enter this haunt of Dryads. The lake laps the yellow strand with a light, fluttering movement. The place seems dedicated to silence itself.

To destroy this illusion, a man came out of a booth and touched off a small cannon. The effect was like knocking at half a dozen doors at once. And the silence which followed seemed all the deeper. Then the aged rock was pelted with

questions, and made to jeer, laugh, menace, or curse by turns, or all at once. How grandly it bore all these petty insolences! How presumptuous in us thus to cover its hoary front with obloquy! We could never get the last word. We did not even come off in triumph. How ironically the mountain repeated, "Who are you?" and "What am I!" With what energy it at last vociferated, "Go to the devil!" To the Devil's Den we accordingly go.

Following a woodland path skirting the base of the cliffs, we were very soon before the entrance of the Devil's Den, formed by a huge piece of the cliff falling upon other detached fragments in such a way as to leave an aperture large enough to admit fifty persons at once. A ponderous mass divides the cavern into two chambers, one of which is light, airy, and spacious, the other dark, gloomy, and contracted – a mere hole. This might well have been the lair of the bears and panthers formerly roaming, unmolested, these woods.

The Cathedral is a recess higher up in the same cliff, hollowed out by the cleaving off of the lower rock, leaving the upper portion of the precipice overhanging. The top of the roof is as high as a tall tree. Some maples that have grown here since the outer portion of the rock fell, assist, with their straight-limbed, columnar trunks, the resemblance to a chancel. A little way off this cavity has really the appearance of a gigantic shell, like those fossils seen imbedded in subterranean rocks. We did not miss here the delicious glimpses of Kearsarge, and of the mountains across the valley which, now that the sun came out, were all in

brilliant light, while the cool afternoon shadows already wrapped the woods about us in twilight gloom.

Still farther on we came upon a fine cascade falling down a long, irregular staircase of broken rock. One of these steps extends, a solid mass of granite, more than a hundred feet across the bed of the stream, and is twenty feet high. Unless the brook is full, it is not a single sheet we see, but twenty, fifty crystal streams gushing or spirting from the grooves they have channelled in the hard granite, and falling into basins they have hollowed out. It is these curious, circular stone cavities, out of which the freshest and cleanest water constantly pours, that give to the cascade the name of Diana's Baths. The water never dashes itself noisily down, but slips, like oil, from the rocks, with a pleasant, purling sound no single word of our language will correctly describe. From here we returned to the village in the same way that we came.[4]

The wild and bristling little mountain range on the east side of North Conway embodies a good deal of picturesque character. It is there our way lies to Artists' Falls, which are on a brook issuing from these Green Hills. I found the walk, following its windings, more remunerative than the falls themselves. The brook, flowing first over a smooth granite ledge, collects in a little pool below, out of which the pure water filters through bowlders and among glittering pebbles to a gorge between two rocks, down which it plunges. The beauty of this cascade consists in its waywardness.

[4] The Saco has since been bridged, and is traversed with all ease.

Now it is a thin sheet, flowing demurely along; now it breaks out in uncontrollable antics; and at length, as if tired of this sport, darts like an arrow down the rocky fissure, and is a mountain brook again.

The ascent of Kearsarge and of the Moats fittingly crowns the series of excursions which are the most attractive feature of out-of-door life at North Conway. The northern peak of Moat is the one most frequently climbed, but the southern affords almost equally admirable views of the Saco, the Ellis, and the Swift River valleys, with the mountain chains enclosing them. The prospect here is, however, much the same as that obtained from Chocorua, which is seen rising beyond the Swift River valley. To that description I must, therefore, refer the reader, who is already acquainted with its principal features.

The high ridge is an arid and desolate heap of summits stripped bare of vegetation by fire. When this fire occurred, twenty odd years ago, it drove the bears and rattlesnakes from their forest homes in great numbers, so that they fell an easy prey to their destroyers. A depression near its centre divides the ridge in two, constituting, in effect, two mountains. We crossed the range in its whole length, and, after newly refreshing ourselves with the admirable views had from its greater elevation, descended the northern peak to Diana's Baths. Probably the most striking view of the Moats is from Conway. Here the summits, thrown into a mass of lawless curves and blunted, prong-like protuberances, rear a blackened and weird-looking cluster on

high. But for a wide region they divide with Chocorua the honors of the landscape, constituting, at Jackson especially, a large and imposing background, massively based and buttressed, and cutting through space with their trenchant edge.

In the winter of 1876, finding myself at North Conway, I determined to make the attempt to ascend Mount Kearsarge, notwithstanding two-thirds of the mountain were shrouded in snow, and the bare shaft constituting the spire sheathed in glittering ice. The mountain had definitively gone into winter-quarters.

I was up early enough to surprise, all at once, the unwonted and curiously-blended effect of moonlight, starlight, and the twilight of dawn. The new moon, with the old in her arms, balanced her shining crescent on the curved peak of Moat Mountain. All these high, surrounding peaks, carved in marble and flooded with effulgence, impressed the spirit with that mingled awe and devotion felt among the antique monuments of some vast cemetery. The sight thrilled and solemnized by its chaste magnificence. Glittering stars, snow-draped summits, black mountains casting sable draperies upon the dead white of the valley, constituted a scene of sepulchral pomp into which the supernatural entered unchallenged. One by one the stars went out. The moon grew pale. A clear emerald, overspreading the east, was reflected from lofty peak and tapering spire.

Day broke bright, clear, and crisp. There, again, was the same matchless array of high and noble summits, sitting on thrones of

alabaster whiteness. While the moon still lingered in the west, the broad red disk of the sun rose over the wooded ridges in the east. So sun and moon, monarch and queen, saluted each other. One gave the watchword, and descended behind the moated mountain; the other ascended the vacant throne. Thus night and day met and exchanged majestic salutation in the courts of the morning.

The mercury stood at three degrees below zero in the village, when I set out on foot for the mountain. A light fall of snow had renewed the Christmas decorations. The trees had newly-leaved and blossomed. Beautiful it was to see the dark old pines thick-flaked with new snow, and the same feathery substance lodged on every twig and branchlet, tangle of vines, or tuft of tawny yellow grass. Fir-trees looked like gigantic azaleas; thickets like coral groves. Nothing too slender or too fragile for the white flight to alight upon. Talk of decorative art! Even the telegraph-wires hung in broad, graceful festoons of white, and the poor washer-woman's clothes-line was changed into the same immaterial thing of beauty.

The ascent proved more toilsome than I had anticipated, as my feet broke through the frozen crust at every step. But if the climb had been difficult when in the woods, it certainly presented few attractions when I emerged from them half a mile below the summit. I found the surface of the bare ledges, which now continue to the top of the mountain, sheeted in ice, smooth and slippery as glass.

Many a time have I laughed heartily at the feverish indecision of a dog when he runs along the margin of a pond into which he has been urged to plunge. He turns this way and that, whines, barks, crouches for the leap, laps the water, but hesitates. Imagine, now, the same animal chasing some object upon slippery ice, his feet spread widely apart; his frantic efforts to stop; the circles described in the air by his tail. Well, I experienced the same perplexity, and made nearly the same ridiculous evolutions.

After several futile attempts to advance over it, and as often finding myself sliding backward with entire loss of control of my own movements, I tried the rugged ravine, traversing the summit, with some success, steadying my steps on the iced bowlders by grasping the bushes which grew there among clefts of the rock. But this way, besides being extremely fatiguing, was decidedly the more dangerous of the two; and I was glad, after a brief trial, to abandon it for the ice, in which, here and there, detached stones, solidly embedded, furnished points of support, if they could be reached. By pursuing a zigzag course from stone to stone, sometimes – like a pious Moslem approaching the tomb of the Prophet – upon my hands and knees, and shedding tears from the force of the wind, I succeeded in getting over the ledges after an hour's obstinate battle to maintain an upright position, and after several mishaps had taught me a degree of caution closely approaching timidity. By far the most treacherous ground was where fresh snow, covering the smooth ice, spread its pitfalls in

the path, causing me several times to measure my length; but at last these obstacles were one by one surmounted; I groped my way, foot by foot, up the sharp rise of the pinnacle, finding myself at the front door of the house which is so conspicuous an object from the valley.

Never was air more pure, more crisp, or more transparent. Besides, what air can rival that of winter? I felt myself rather floating than walking. Certainly there is a lightness, a clearness, and a depth that belongs to no other season. At no other season do we behold our native skies so blue, so firm, or so brilliant as when the limpid ether, winnowed by the fierce north wind to absolute purity, presents objects with such marvellous clearness, precision, and fidelity, that we hardly persuade ourselves they are forty, fifty, or a hundred miles distant. To realize this rare condition was all the object of the ascent – an object attained in a measure far beyond any anticipations I had formed.

As may easily be imagined, the immediate effect was bewildering in the extreme. In the first place, the direct rays of the noonday sun covered the mountain-top with dazzling brilliancy. The eye fairly ached with looking at it. In the second, the intensity of the blue was such as to give the idea that the grand expanse of sky was hard frozen. Nothing more coldly brilliant than this immense azure dome can be conceived. There was not the faintest trace of a cloud anywhere; nothing but this splendid void. Under this high-vaulted dome, imagine now a vast expanse of white etched with brown – a landscape in sepia. Such was the

general effect.

But the inexpressible delight of having all this admirable scene to one's self! Taine asks, "Can anything be sweeter than the certainty of being alone? In any widely known spot, you are in constant dread of an incursion of tourists; the hallooing of guides, the loud-voiced admiration, the bustle, whether of unfastening horses, or of unpacking provisions, or of airing opinions, all disturb the budding sensation; civilization recovers its hold upon you. But here, what security and what silence! nothing that recalls man; the landscape is just what it has been these six thousand years."

The view from this mountain is justly admired. Stripped of life and color, I found it sad, pathetic even. Dead white and steel blue rudely repulsed the sensitive eye. The north wind, cold and cutting, drove me to take shelter under glaring rocks. The cracking of ice first on one side, then on the other, diverted the attention from the landscape, as if the mountain was continually snapping its fingers in disdain. I had constantly the feeling that some *one* or some *thing* was at my elbow. What childishness! But where now was the lavish summer, the barbaric splendors of autumn – its arabesques of foliage, its velvet shadows, its dappled skies, its glow, mantling like that of health and beauty? All-pervading gloom and defoliation were rendered ten times more melancholy by the splendid glare. Winter flung her white shroud over the land to hide the repulsiveness of death.

I looked across the valley where Moat Mountain reared

its magnificent dark wave. Passing to the north side, the eye wandered over the wooded summits to the silvery heap of Washington, to which frozen, rose-colored mists were clinging. A great ice-cataract rolled down over the edge of Tuckerman's Ravine, its wave of glittering emerald. It shone with enchanting brilliancy, cheating the imagination with the idea that it moved; that the thin, spectral vapor rose from the depths of the ice-cold gorge below. There gaped, wide open, the enormous hole of Carter Notch; there the pale-blue Saco wound in and out of the hills, with hamlets and villages strung along its serpentine course; and, as the river grows, villages increase to towns, towns to cities. There was the sea sparkling like a plain of quicksilver, with ponds and lakes innumerable between. There, in the south-west, as far as the eye could reach, was Monadnock demanding recognition; and in the west, Moosehillock, Lafayette, Carrigain peaks, lifted with calm superiority above the chaos of mountains, like higher waves of a frozen sea. Finally, there were the snow-capped summits of the great range seen throughout their whole extent, sunning their satin sides in indolent enjoyment.

This view has no peer in these mountains. Indeed, the mountain seems expressly placed to command in one comprehensive sweep of the eye the most impressive features of any mountain landscape. Being a peak of the second order – that is to say, one not dominating all the chains – while it does not unfold the topography of the region in its whole extent, it is sufficiently elevated to permit the spectator to enjoy that

increasing grandeur with which the distant ranges rise, tier upon tier, to their great central spires, without lessening materially their loftiness, or the peculiar and varied expression of their contours. The peak of Kearsarge peeps down over one shoulder into New Hampshire, over the other into Maine. It looks straight up through the open door of the Carter Notch, and boldly stares Washington in the face. It sees the sun rise from the ocean, and set behind Mount Lafayette. It patronizes Moat, measures itself proudly with Chocorua, and maintains a distant acquaintance with Monadnock. It is a handsome mountain, and, as such, is a general favorite with the ladies and the artists. Like a careful shepherd, it every morning scans the valleys to see that none of its flock of villages has wandered. For these villagers it is a sun-dial, a weather-vane, an almanac; for the wayfarer, a sure guide; and for the poet, a mountain with a soul.

The cold was intense, the wind piercing. On its north side the house was deeply incrusted with ice-spars – windows and all. I feel that only scant justice can be done to their wondrous beauty. All the scrubby bushes growing out of interstices of the crumbling summit – wee twig and slender filament – were stemmed with ice; while the rocks bristled with countless frost feathers. With my pitch-cakes and a few twigs I lighted a fire, which might be seen from the half-dozen villages clustered about the foot of the mountain, and pleased myself with imagining the astonishment with which a smoke curling upward from this peak would be greeted for fifty miles around. I then prepared

to descend – I say prepared to descend, for the thing at once so easy to say and so difficult of performance suddenly revived the recollection of the hazardous scramble up the ledges, and made it seem child's play by comparison. For a brief hour I had forgotten all this. However, go down I must. But how? The first step on the ice threatened a descent more rapid than flesh and blood could calmly contemplate. I had no hatchet to cut steps in the ice; no rope to attach to the rocks, and thus lower myself, as is practised in crossing the glaciers of the Alps; and there was no foothold. For a moment I seriously thought of forcing an entrance into the house, and, making a signal of distress, resign myself to the possibility of help from below. But while sitting on a rock looking blankly at the glassy declivity stretching down from the summit, a bright idea came to my aid. I remembered having read in Bourrienne's "Memoirs" that Bonaparte – the great Bonaparte – was forced to slide down the summit of the Great St. Bernard *seated*, while making his famous passage of the Alps. Yes, the great Corsican really advanced to the conquest of Italy in this undignified posture. But never did great example find more unworthy imitator. Seating myself, as the Little Corporal had done, using my staff as a rudder, and steering for protruding stones in order to check the force of the descent from time to time, I slid down with a celerity the very remembrance of which makes my head swim, arriving safe, but breathless and much astonished, at the first irregular patch of snow. The pleasure of standing erect on something the feet could grasp was one not to

be translated into words.

VI.
FROM KEARSARGE TO CARRIGAIN

Raleigh.– "Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall."
Queen Elizabeth.– "If thy heart fail thee, climb thou not at all."

AFTER the storm, we had a fine lunar bow. The corona in the centre was a clear silver, the outer circle composed of pale green and orange fires. Over the moon's disk clouds swept a continuous stormy flight. The great planet resembled a splendid decoration hung high in the heavens.

Having now progressed to terms of easy familiarity with the village, it was decided to pay our respects to the Intervale, which unites it with the neighboring town of Bartlett.

The road up the valley first skirts a wood, and through this wood are delicious glimpses of Mount Adams. During the heat of the day or cool of the evening this extensive and beautiful forest has always been a favorite haunt. Tall, athletic pines, that bend in the breeze like whalebone, lift their immense clusters of impenetrable foliage on high. The sighs of lovers are softly echoed in their green tops; voices and laughter issue from it. We, too, will swing our hammock here, and breathe the healing fragrance that is so grateful.

In a little enclosure of rough stone, on the Bigelow place, lie the remains of the ill-fated Willey family, who were destroyed by the memorable slide of 1826. The inscription closes with this not too lucid figure:

> "We gaze around, we read their monument;
> We sigh, and when we sigh we sink."

Where the high terrace, making one grand sweep to the right, again unveils the same superb view of the great summits, now wholly unobstructed by houses or groves, we halt before that picture, unrivalled in these mountains, not surpassed, perhaps, upon earth, and which we never tire of gazing upon. Its most salient features have already been described; but here in their very midst, from their very heart, nature seems to have snatched a garden-spot from the haggard mountains arrested in their advance by the command, "Thus far, and no farther!" The elms, all grace, all refinement of form, bend before the fierce blasts of winter, but stir not. The frozen east wind flies shrieking through, as if to tear them limb from limb. The ground is littered with their branches. They bow meekly before its rage, but stir not. Really, they seem so many sentinels jealously guarding that repose of which the vale is so eloquently the expression. The vale regards the stormy summits around with the unconcern of perfect security. It is rest to look at it.

Again we scan the great peaks which in clear days come boldly

down and stand at our very doors, but on hazy ones remove to a vast distance, keeping vaguely aloof day in and day out. Sometimes they are in the sulks, sometimes bold and forward. By turns they are graciously condescending, or tantalizingly incomprehensible. One time they muffle themselves in clouds from head to foot, so we cannot detect a suggestive line or a contour; another, throwing off all disguise, they expose their most secret beauties to the free gaze of the multitude. This is to set the beholder's blood on fire with the passion to climb as high as those gray shafts of everlasting rock that so proudly survey the creeping leagues beneath them.

Nowhere is the unapproachable grandeur of Mount Washington more fully manifested than here. This large and impressive view is at once suggestive of that glorious pre-eminence always associated with high mountains. There are mountains, respectable ones too, in the middle distance; but over these the great peak lords it with undisputed sway. The bold and firm, though gradual, lines of ascent culminating at the apex, extend over leagues of sky. After a clear sunset, Mount Washington takes the same dull lead-color of the clouds hovering like enormous night-birds over its head.

North Conway permits, to the tourist, a choice of two very agreeable excursions, either of which may be made in a day, although they could profitably occupy a week. One is to follow the course of the Saco, through the great Notch, to Fabyans, where you are on the westward side of the great range, and where

you take the rail to the summit of Mount Washington. The other excursion is to diverge from the Saco Valley three or four miles from North Conway, ascending the valley of Ellis River – one of the lame affluents of the Saco – through the Pinkham Notch to the Glen House, where you are exactly under the eastern foot of Mount Washington, and may ascend it, by the carriage-road, in a coach-and-four. We had already chosen the first route, and as soon as the roads were a little settled we began our march.

The storm was over. The keen north wind drove the mists in utter rout before it. Peak after peak started out of the clouds, glowered on us a moment, and then muffled his enormous head in fleecy vapor. The clouds seemed thronged with monstrous apparitions, struggling fiercely with the gale, which in pure wantonness tore aside the magic drapery that rendered them invisible, scattering its tattered rags far and wide over the valley.

Now the sun entered upon the work begun by the wind. Quicker than thought, a ray of liquid flame transfixed the vapors, flashed upon the vale, and, flying from summit to summit, kindled them with newborn splendor. One would have said a flaming javelin, hurled from high heaven, had just cleft its dazzling way to earth. The mists slunk away and hid themselves. The valley was inundated with golden light. Even the dark faces of the cliffs brightened and beamed upon the vale, where the bronzed foliage fluttered, and the river leaped for joy. In a little time nothing was left but scattered clouds winging their way toward the lowlands.

Near Glen Station is one of those curiosities – a transported boulder – which was undoubtedly left while on its travels through the mountains, poised upon four smaller ones, in the position seen in the engraving.

Three miles below the village of Bartlett we stopped before a farm-house, with the gable-end toward the road, to inquire the distance to the next tavern, where we meant to pass the night. A gruff voice from the inside growled something by way of reply; but as its owner, whoever he might be, did not take the trouble to open his door, the answer was unintelligible.

"The churl!" muttered the colonel. "I have a great mind to teach him to open when a gentleman knocks."

"And I advise you not to try it," said the voice from the inside.

The one thing a Kentuckian never shrinks from is a challenge. He only said, "Wait a minute," while putting his broad shoulder against the door; but now George and I interfered. Neither of us had any desire to signalize our entry into the village by a brawl, and after some trouble we succeeded in pacifying our fire-eater with the promise to stop at this house on our way back.

"I shall know it again," said the colonel, looking back, and nibbling his long mustache with suppressed wrath; "something has been spilled on the threshold – something like blood."

We laughed heartily. The blood, we concluded, was in the colonel's eyes.

Some time after nightfall we arrived in the village, having put thirteen miles of road behind us without fatigue. Our host

received us with a blazing fire – what fires they do have in the mountains, to be sure! – a pitcher of cider, and the remark, "Don't be afraid of it, gentlemen."

All three hastened to reassure him on this point. The colonel began with a loud smack, and George finished the jug with a deep sigh.

"Don't be afraid of it," repeated the landlord, returning presently with a fresh pitcher. "There are five barrels more like it in the cellar."

"Landlord," quoth George, "let one of your boys take a mattress, two blankets, and a pillow to the cellar. I intend to pass the night there."

"I only wish your well was full of it," said the colonel, taking a second pull at the jug, and making a second explosion with his lips.

"Gentlemen," said I, "we have surely entered a land of milk and honey."

"You shall have as much of both as you desire," said our host, very affably. "Supper is ready, gentlemen."

After supper a man came in for whom I felt, upon the instant, one of those secret antipathies which are natural to me. The man was an utter stranger. No matter: the repugnance seized me all the same.

After a tour of the tap-room, and some words with our landlord in an undertone, the stranger went out with the look of a man who had asked for something and had been refused.

"Where have I heard that man's voice?" said the colonel, thoughtfully.

Our landlord is one of the most genial to be found among the mountains. While sitting over the fire during the evening, the conversation turned upon the primitive simplicity of manners remarked among mountaineers in general; and our host illustrated it with this incident:

"You noticed, perhaps, a man who left here a few moments ago?" he began.

We replied affirmatively. It was my antipathy.

"Well, that man killed a traveller a few years back."

We instinctively recoiled. The air seemed tainted with the murderer's presence.

"Yes; dead as a mutton," continued the landlord, punching the logs reflectively, and filling the chimney with sparks. "The man came to his house one dark and stormy night, and asked to be admitted. The man of the house flatly refused. The stranger pleaded hard, but the fellow ordered him away with threats. Finding entreaties useless, the traveller began to grow angry, and attempted to push open the door, which was only fastened by a button, as the custom is. The man of the house said nothing, but took his gun from a corner, and when the intruder crossed the threshold he put three slugs through him. The wounded man expired on the threshold, covering it with his blood."

"Murdered him, and for that? Come, come, you are joking!" ejaculated George, with a half smile of incredulity.

"Blowed him right through, just as I tell you," reiterated the narrator, without heeding the doubt George's question implied.

"That sounds a little like Old Kentuck," observed the colonel, coolly.

"Yes; but listen to the sequel, gentlemen," resumed the landlord. "The murderer took the dead body in his arms, finding, to his horror, that it was an acquaintance with whom he had been drinking the day before; he took up the body, as I was saying, laid it out upon a table, and then went quietly to bed. In the morning he very honestly exhibited the corpse to all who passed his door, and told his story as I tell it to you. I had it from his own lips."

"That beats Kentucky," asseverated the colonel. For my own part, I believed the landlord was amusing himself at our expense.

"I don't know about Kentucky," observed the landlord; "I was never there in my life; but I do know that, when the dead man was buried, the man who killed him went to the funeral like any curious or indifferent spectator."

This was too much. George rose from his chair, and began to be interested in a placard on the wall. "And you say this happened near here?" he slowly inquired; "perhaps, now, you could show us the very house?" he finished, dryly.

"Nothing easier. It's only three miles back on the road you came. The blood-stain is plain, or was, on the threshold."

We exchanged glances. This was the house where we halted to inquire our way. The colonel's eyes dilated, but he said nothing.

"But was there no trial?" I asked.

"Trial? oh yes. After several days had run by, somebody thought of that; so one morning the slayer saddled his horse and rode over to the county-seat to inquire about it. He was tried at the next sessions, and acquitted. The judge charged justifiable homicide; that a man's house is his fort; the jury did not leave their benches. By-the-bye, gentlemen, that is some of the man's cider you are drinking."

I felt decided symptoms of revolt in my stomach; George made a grimace, and the colonel threw his unfinished glass in the fire. During the remainder of the evening he rallied us a good deal on the subject of New England hospitality, but said no more about going back to chastise the man of the red house.[5]

The sun rose clear over the right shoulder of Kearsarge. After breakfast the landlord took us out and introduced us to his neighbors, the mountains. While he was making the presentation in due form, I jotted down the following, which has, at least, the merit of conciseness:

Upper Bartlett: an ellipse of fertile land; three Lombardy poplars; a river murmuring unseen; a wall of mountains, with Kearsarge looking up, and Carrigain looking down the intervale. *Item*: the cider is excellent.

We had before us the range extending between Swift River

[5] The sequel to this strange but true story is in keeping with the rest of its horrible details. Perpetually haunted by the ghost of his victim, the murderer became a prey to remorse. Life became insupportable. He felt that he was both shunned and abhorred. Gradually he fell into a decline, and within a few years from the time the deed was committed he died.

and the Saco, over which I looked from the summit of Chocorua straight to Mount Washington. To the east this range is joined with the out-works of Moat. Then come Table, Bear, Silver Spring (Bartlett Haystack), and Tremont, in the order named. Then comes the valley of Sawyer's River, with Carrigain rising between its walls; then, crossing to the north side of the Saco, the most conspicuous object is the bold Hart's Ledge, between which and Sawyer's Rock, on the opposite bank, the river is crowded into a narrow channel. The mountain behind the hotel is Mount Langdon, with Crawford more distant. Observe closely the curious configuration of this peak. Whether we go up or down, it nods familiarly to us from every point of approach.

But Kearsarge and Carrigain are the grand features here. One gives his adieu, the other his welcome. One is the perfection of symmetry, of grace; the other simply demands our homage. His snowy crown, dazzling white against the pure blue, was the badge of an incontestable superiority. These two mountains are the presiding genii of this charming intervale. You look first at the massive lineaments of one, then at the flowing lines of the other, as at celebrated men, whose features you would strongly impress upon the memory.

From the village street we saw the sun go down behind Mount Carrigain, and touch with his glittering sceptre the crest of Hancock. We looked up the valley dominated by the giant of the Pemigewasset wilderness with feelings of high respect for this illustrious hermit, who only deigns to show himself from

this single point, and whose peak long yielded only to the most persevering and determined climbers.

Two days were formerly required for the ascent of this mountain, but a long day will now suffice, thanks to the path constructed under the direction of the Appalachian Club. The mountain is four thousand six hundred and twenty-five feet above the sea, and is wooded to its summit. The valley of Sawyer's River drains the deep basin between Carrigain and Hancock, entering the Saco near the railroad station called Livermore. The lumbermen have now penetrated this valley to the foot of the mountain, with their rude logging roads, offering a way soon, it is hoped, to be made plainer for future climbers than it was our lot to find it.

Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the mountains, we now regarded distances with disdain, and fatigue with indifference. We had learned to make our toilets in the stream, and our beds in the fragrant groves. Truly, the bronzed faces that peered at us as we bent over some solemn, pine-shaded pool were not those we had been accustomed to seeing at home; but having solved the problem of man's true existence, we only laughed at each other's tawny countenances while shouldering our packs and tightening our belts for the day's march.

Leaving Bartlett at an early hour, we turned aside from the highway a little beyond the bridge which spans Sawyer's River, and were soon following a rough and stony cart-way ascending the banks of this stream, which thundered along its rocky bed,

making the woods echo with its roar. The road grew rapidly worse, the river wilder, the forest gloomier, until, at the end of two miles, coming suddenly out into the sun, we entered a rude street of unpainted cabins, terminating at some saw-mills. This hamlet, which to the artistic eye so disadvantageously replaces the original forest, is the only settlement in the large township of Livermore. Its mission is to ravage and lay waste the adjacent mountains. Notwithstanding the occupation is legitimate, one instinctively rebels at the waste around him, where the splendid natural forest, literally hewed and hacked in pieces, exposes rudely all the deformities of the mountains. But this lost hamlet is the first in which a genuine emotion of any kind awaits the traveller. Ten to one it is like nothing he ever dreamed of; his surprise is, therefore, extreme. The men were rough, hardy-looking fellows; the women appeared contented, but as if hard work had destroyed their good looks prematurely. Both announced, by their looks and their manner, that the life they led was no child's play; the men spoke only when addressed; the women stole furtive glances at us; the half-dressed children stopped their play to stare at the strangers. Here was neither spire nor bell. One cow furnished all the milk for the commonalty. The mills being shut, there was no sound except the river plashing over the rocks far down in the gorge below; and had I encountered such a place on the sea-coast or the frontier, I should at once have said I had stumbled upon the secret hold of outlaws and smugglers, into which signs, grips, and passwords were necessary

to procure admission. To me, therefore, the hamlet of Livermore was a wholly new experience.

From this hamlet to the foot of the mountain is a long and uninteresting tramp of five miles through the woods. We found the walking good, and strode rapidly on, coming first to a wood-cutter's camp pitched on the banks of Carrigain Brook, and next to the clearing they had made at the mountain's foot. Here the actual work of the ascent began in earnest.

Carrigain is solid, compact, massive. It is covered from head to foot with forest. No incident of the way diverts the attention for a single moment from the severe exertion required to overcome its steeply inclined side; no breathing levels, no restful outlooks, no gorges, no precipices, no cascades break the monotony of the escalade. We conquer, as Napoleon's grenadiers did, by our legs. It is the most inexorable of mountains, and the most exasperating. From base to summit you cannot obtain a cup of water to slake your thirst.

Two hours of this brought us out upon the bare summit of the great northern spur, beyond which the true peak rose a few hundred feet higher. Carrigain, at once the desire and the bugbear of climbers, was beneath our feet.

We have already examined, from the rocks of Chocorua, the situation of this peak. We then entitled it the Hub of the White Mountains. It reveals all the magnitude, unfolds the topography of the woody wilderness stretching between the Saco and the Pemigewasset valleys. As nearly as possible, it exhibits the same

amazing profusion of unbroken forest, here and there darkly streaked by hidden watercourses, as when the daring foot of the first climber pressed the unviolated crest of the august peak of Washington. In all its length and breadth there is not one object that suggests, even remotely, the presence of man. We saw not even the smoke of a hunter's camp. All was just as created; an absolute, savage, unkempt wilderness.

Heavens, what a bristling array of dark and shaggy mountains! Now and then, where water gleamed out of their hideous depths, a great brilliant eye seemed watching us from afar. We knew that we had only to look up to see a dazzling circlet of lofty peaks drawn around the horizon, chains set with glittering stones, clusters sparkling with antique crests; still we could not withdraw our eyes from the profound abysses sunk deep in the bowels of the land, typical of the uncovered bed of the primeval ocean, sad and terrible, from which that ocean seemed only to have just receded.

But who shall describe all this solitary, this oppressive grandeur? and what language portray the awfulness of these untrodden mountains? Now and then, high up their bleak summits, a patch of forest had been plucked up by the roots, or shaken from its hold in the throes of the mountain, laid bare a long and glittering scar, red as a half-closed wound. Such is the appearance of Mount Lowell, on the other side of the gap dividing Carrigain from the Notch mountains. We saw where the dark slope of Mount Willey gives birth to the infant Merrimack.

We saw the confluent waters of this stream, so light of foot, speeding through the gloomy defiles, as if fear had given them wings. We saw the huge mass of Mount Hancock force itself slowly upward out of the press. Unutterable lawlessness stamped the whole region as its own.

That I have thus dwelt upon its most extraordinary feature, instead of examining the landscape in detail, must suffice for the intelligent reader. I have not the temerity to coolly put the dissecting-knife into its heart. To science the things which belong to science. Besides, to the man of feeling all this is but secondary. We are not here to make a chart.

After a visit to the high summit, where some work was done in the interest of future climbers, we set out at four in the afternoon, on our return down the mountain. A second time we halted on the spur to glance upward at the heap of summits over which Mount Washington lifts a regular dome. The long line of peaks, ascending from Crawford's, seems approaching it by a succession of huge steps. It was after dark when we saw the lights of the village before us, and were again warmly welcomed by the rousing fire and smoking viands of mine host.

VII.
VALLEY OF THE SACO

With our faint heart the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the Druid wood
Waits with its benedicte. *Sir Launfal.*

AT eight o'clock in the morning we resumed our march, with the intention of reaching Crawford's the same evening. The day was cold, raw, and windy, so we walked briskly – sharp air and cutting wind acting like whip and spur.

I retain a vivid recollection of this morning. Autumn had passed her cool hand over the fevered earth. Soft as three-piled velvet, the green turf left no trace of our tread. The sky was of a dazzling blue, and frescoed with light clouds, transparent as gauze, pure as the snow glistening on the high summits. On both sides of us audacious mountains braced their feet in the valley; while others mounted over their brawny shoulders, as if to scale the heavens.

But what shall I say of the grand harlequinade of nature which the valley presented to our view? I cannot employ Victor Hugo's odd simile of a peacock's tail; that is more of a witticism than a description. The death of the year seemed to prefigure the glorious and surprising changes of color in a dying dolphin –

putting on unparalleled beauty at the moment of dissolution, and so going out in a blaze of glory.

From the meagre summits enfiladed by the north wind, and where a solitary pine or cedar intensified the desolation, to the upper forests, the mountains bristled with a scanty growth of dead or dying trees. Those scattered birches, high up the mountain side, looked like quills on a porcupine's back; that group, glistening in the morning sun, like the pipes of an immense organ. From this line of death, which vegetation crossed at its peril, the eye dropped down over a limitless forest of dark evergreen spotted with bright yellow. The effect of the sunlight on this foliage was magical. Myriad flambeaux illuminated the deep gloom, doubling the intensity of the sun, emitting rays, glowing, resplendent. This splendid light, which the heavy masses of orange seemed to absorb, gave a velvety softness to the lower ridges and spurs, covering their hard, angular lines with a magnificent drapery. The lower forests, the valley, were one vast sea of color. Here the bewildering melange of green and gold, orange and crimson, purple and russet, produced the effect of an immense Turkish rug – the colors being soft and rich, rather than vivid or brilliant. This quality, the blending of a thousand tints, the dreamy grace, the sumptuous profusion, the inexpressible tenderness, intoxicated the senses. Earth seemed no longer earth. We had entered a garden of the gods.

From time to time a scarlet maple flamed up in the midst of

the forest, and its red foliage, scattered at our feet by the wind, glowed like flakes of fire beaten from an anvil. A tangled maze of color changed the road into an avenue bordered with rare and variegated plants. Autumn's bright sceptre, the golden-rod, pointed the way. Blue and white daisies strewed the greensward.

After passing Sawyer's River, the road turned abruptly to the north, skirting the base of the Nancy range. We were at the door of the second chamber in this remarkable gallery of nature.

Before crossing the threshold it is expedient to allude to the incident which has given a name not only to the mountain, but to the torrent we see tearing its impetuous way down from the upper forests. The story of Nancy's Brook is as follows:

In the latter part of the last century, a maiden, whose Christian name of Nancy is all that comes down to us, was living in the little hamlet of Jefferson. She loved, and was betrothed to a young man of the farm. The wedding-day was fixed, and the young couple were on the eve of setting out for Portsmouth, where their happiness was to be consummated at the altar. In the trustfulness of love, the young girl confided the small sum which constituted all her marriage-portion to her lover. This man repaid her simple faith with the basest treachery. Seizing his opportunity, he left the hamlet without a word of explanation or of adieu. The deserted maiden was one of those natures which cannot quietly sit down under calamity. Urged on by the intensity of her feelings, she resolved to pursue her recreant lover. He could not resist her prayers, her entreaties, her tears! She was

young, vigorous, intrepid. With her to decide and to act were the same thing. In vain the family attempted to dissuade her from her purpose. At nightfall she set out.

A hundred years ago the route taken by this brave girl was not, as to-day, a thoroughfare which one may follow with his eyes shut. It was only an obscure path, little travelled by day, deserted by night. For thirty miles, from Colonel Whipple's, in Jefferson, to Bartlett, there was not a human habitation. The forests were filled with wild beasts. The rigor of the season – it was December – added its own perils. But nothing could daunt the heroic spirit of Nancy; she had found man more cruel than all besides.

The girl's hope was to overtake her lover before dawn at the place where she expected he would have camped for the night. She found the camp deserted, and the embers extinguished. Spurred on by hope or despair, she pushed on down the tremendous defile of the Notch, fording the turbulent and frozen Saco, and toiling through deep snows and over rocks and fallen trees, until, feeling her strength fail, she sunk exhausted on the margin of the brook which seems perpetually bemoaning her sad fate. Here, cold and rigid as marble, under a canopy of evergreen which the snow tenderly drooped above, they found her. She was wrapped in her cloak, and in the same attitude of repose as when she fell asleep on her nuptial couch of snow-crusted moss.

The story goes that the faithless lover became a hopeless maniac on learning the fate of his victim, dying in horrible paroxysms not long after. Tradition adds that for many years,

on every anniversary of her death, the mountains resounded with ravings, shrieks, and agonized cries, which the superstitious attributed to the unhappy ghost of the maniac lover.[6]

It was not quite noon when we entered the beautiful and romantic glen under the shadow of Mount Crawford. Upon our left, a little in advance, a solidly-built English country-house, with gables, stood on a terrace well above the valley. At our right, and below, was the old Mount Crawford tavern, one of the most ancient of mountain hostelries. Upon the opposite side of the vale rose the enormous mass of Mount Crawford; and near where we stood, a humble mound, overgrown with bushes, enclosed the mortal remains of the hardy pioneer whose monument is the mountain.

We had an excusable curiosity to see a man who, in the prime of life, had forsaken the city, its pleasures, its opportunities, and had come to pass the rest of his life among these mountains; one, too, whose enormous possessions procured for him the title of Lord of the Valley. We heard with astonishment that our day's journey, of which we had completed the half only, was wholly over his tract – I ought to say his dominions – that is, over thirteen miles of field, forest, and mountain. This being equal to a small principality, it seemed quite natural and proper to approach the proprietor with some degree of ceremony.

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[6] Dr. Jeremy Belknap relates that, on his journey through this region in 1784, he was besought by the superstitious villagers to lay the spirits which were still believed to haunt the fastnesses of the mountains.

A servant took our cards at the door, and returned with an invitation to enter. The apartment into which we were conducted was the most singular I have ever seen; certainly it has no counterpart in this world, unless the famous hut of Robinson Crusoe has escaped the ravages of time. It was literally crammed with antique furniture, among which was a high-backed chair used in dentistry; squat little bottles, containing chemicals; and a bench, on which was a spirit-lamp; a turning-lathe, a small portable furnace, and a variety of instruments or tools of which we did not know the use. A few prints and oil-paintings adorned the walls. A cheerful fire burnt on the hearth.

"Were we in the sixteenth century," said George, "I should say this was the laboratory of some famous alchemist."

Further investigation was cut short by the entrance of our host, who was a venerable-looking man, turned of eighty, with a silver beard falling upon his breast, and a general expression of benignity. He stooped a little, but seemed hale and hearty, notwithstanding the weight of his fourscore years.

Doctor Bemis received us graciously. For an hour he entertained us with the story of his life among the mountains, "to which," said he, "I credit the last forty-five years – for I at first came here in pursuit of health." After he had satisfied our curiosity concerning himself, which he did with perfect *bonhomie*, I asked him to describe Abel Crawford, the veteran guide of the White Hills.

"Abel," said the doctor, "was six feet four; Erastus, the eldest

son, was six feet six, or taller than Washington; and Ethan was still taller, being nearly seven feet. In fact, not one of the sons was less than six feet; so you may imagine what sort of family group it was when 'his boys,' as Abel loved to call them, were all at home. Ah, well!" continued the doctor, with a sigh, "that kind of timber does not flourish in the mountains now. Why, the very sight of one of those giants inspired the timid with confidence. Ethan, called in his day the Giant of the Hills, was a man of iron frame and will. Fear and he were strangers. He would take up an exhausted traveller in his sinewy arms and carry him as you would a baby, until his strength or courage returned. The first bridle-path up the mountain was opened by him in – let me see – ah! I have it, it was in 1821. Ethan, with the help of his father, also built the Notch House above.[7]

"Abel was long-armed, lean, and sinewy. Doctor Dwight, whose 'Travels in New England' you have doubtless read, stopped with Crawford, on his way down the Notch, in 1797. His nearest neighbor then, on the north, was Captain Rosebrook, who lived on or near the site of the present Fabyan House. Crawford's life of hardship had made little impression on a constitution of iron. At seventy-five he rode the first horse that reached the summit of Mount Washington. At eighty he often walked to his son's (Thomas J. Crawford), at the entrance of the Notch,

[7] This house stood just within the entrance to the Notch, from the north, or Fabyan side. It was for some time kept by Thomas J., one of the famous Crawfords. Travellers who are a good deal puzzled by the frequent recurrence of the name "Crawford's" will recollect that the present hotel is now the only one in this valley bearing the name.

before breakfast. I recollect him perfectly at this time, and his appearance was peculiarly impressive. He was erect and vigorous as one of those pines on yonder mountain. His long white hair fell down upon his shoulders, and his fresh, ruddy face was always expressive of good-humor.

"The destructive freshet of 1826," continued the doctor, "swept everything before it, flooding the intervale, and threatening the old house down there with instant demolition. During that terrible night, when the Willey family perished, Mrs. Crawford was alone with her young children in the house. The water rose with such rapidity that she was driven to the upper story for safety. While here, the thud of floating trees, driven by the current against the house, awakened new terrors. At every concussion the house trembled. Wooden walls could not long stand that terrible pounding. The heroic woman, alive to the danger, seized a stout pole, and, going to the nearest window, kept the side of the house exposed to the flood free from the mass of wreck-stuff collected against it. She held her post thus throughout the night, until the danger had passed. When the flood subsided, Crawford found several fine trout alive in his cellar."

"When do the great freshets usually occur?" I asked.

"In the autumn," replied our host. "It is not the melting snows, but the sudden rainfalls that we fear."

"Yes," resumed he, reflectively, "the Crawfords were a family of athletes. With them the race of guides became extinct. Soon

after settling here, Abel went with his wife to Bartlett on some occasion, leaving their two boys in the care of a hired man. When they had gone, this man took what he could find of value and decamped. When Abel returned, which he did on the following day, he immediately set out in pursuit of the thief, overtook him thirty miles from here, in the Franconia forests, flogged him within an inch of his life, and let him go."

"Sixty miles on foot, and alone, to recover a few stolen goods, and punish a thief!" cried the astonished colonel; "that beats Daniel Boone."

"Yes; and what is more, the boys were brought up to face hunger, cold, fatigue, with Indian stoicism, and even to encounter bears, lynxes, and wolves with no other weapons than those provided by nature. There, now, was Ethan, for example," said the doctor, smiling at the recollection. "One day he took it into his head to have a tame bear for the diversion of his guests. Well, he caught a young one, half grown, and remarkably vicious, in a trap. But how to get him home! At length Ethan tied his fore and hind paws together so he couldn't scratch, and put a muzzle of withes over his nose so he couldn't bite. Then, shouldering his prize as he would a bag of meal, the guide started for home, in great glee at the success of his clever expedient. He had not gone far, however, before Bruin managed to get one paw wholly and his muzzle partly free, and began to scratch and struggle and snap at his captor savagely. Ethan wanted to get the bear home terribly; but, after having his clothing nearly torn off his back,

he grew angry, and threw the beast upon the ground with such force as to kill him instantly."

"Report," said I, "credits you with naming most of the mountains which overlook the intervale."

"Yes," replied the doctor, "Resolution, over there" – indicating the mountain allied to Crawford, and to the ridge which forms one of the buttresses of Mount Washington – "I named in recognition of the perseverance of Mr. Davis, who became discouraged while making a path to Mount Washington in 1845."

"Is the route practicable?" I asked.

"Practicable, yes; but nearly obliterated, and seldom ascended. Have you seen Frankenstein?" demanded the doctor, in his turn.

We replied in the negative.

"It will repay a visit. I named it for a young German artist who passed some time with me, and who was fascinated by its rugged picturesqueness. Here is some of his work," pointing to the paintings which, apparently, formed the foundation of the collection on the walls.

Our host accompanied us to the door with a second injunction not to forget Frankenstein.

"You have something there good for the eyes," I observed, indicating the green carpet of the vale beneath us.

"True; but you should have seen it when the deer boldly came down the mountain and browsed quietly among the cattle. That was a pretty sight, and one of frequent occurrence when I first knew the place. At that time," he continued, "the stage passed up

every other day. Sometimes there were one or two, but seldom three passengers."

Proceeding on our way, we now had a fine view of the Giant's Stairs, which we had already seen from Mount Carrigain, but less boldly outlined than they appear from the valley, where they really look like two enormous steps cut on the very summit of the opposite ridge. No name could be more appropriate, though each of the degrees of this colossal staircase demands a giant not of our days; for they are respectively three hundred and fifty, and four hundred and fifty feet in height. It was over those steps that the Davis path ascended.

A mile or a mile and a half above the Crawford Glen, we emerged from behind a projecting spur of the mountain which hid the upper valley, when, by a common impulse, we stopped, fairly stupefied with admiration and surprise.

Thrust out before us, athwart the pass, a black and castellated pile of precipices shot upward to a dizzy height, and broke off abruptly against the sky. Its bulging sides and regular outlines resembled the clustered towers and frowning battlements of some antique fortress built to command the pass. Gashed, splintered, defaced, it seemed to have withstood for ages the artillery of heaven and the assaults of time. With what solitary grandeur it lifted its mailed front above the forest, and seemed even to regard the mountains with disdain! Silent, gloomy, impregnable, it wanted nothing to recall those dark abodes of the Thousand and One Nights, in which malignant genii are

imprisoned for thousands of years.

This was Frankenstein. We at once accord it a place as the most suggestive of cliffs. From the other side of the valley the resemblance to a mediæval castle is still more striking. It has a black gorge for a moat, so deep that the head swims when crossing it; and to-day, as we crept over the cat's-cradle of a bridge thrown across for the passage of the railway, and listened to the growling of the torrent far down beneath, the whole frail structure seemed trembling under us.

But what a contrast! what a singular freak of nature! At the foot of this grisly precipice, clothing it with almost superhuman beauty, was a plantation of maples and birches, all resplendent in crimson and gold. Never have I seen such masses of color laid on such a background. Below all was light and splendor; above, all darkness and gloom. Here the eye fairly revelled in beauty, there it recoiled in terror. The cliff was like a naked and swarthy Ethiopian up to his knees in roses.

We walked slowly, with our eyes fixed on these cliffs, until another turn of the road – we were now on the railway embankment – opened a vista deserving to be remembered as one of the marvels of this glorious picture-gallery.

The perfection and magnificence of this truly regal picture, the gigantic scale on which it is presented, without the least blemish to mar its harmony or disturb the impression of one grand, unique whole, is a revelation to the least susceptible nature in the world.

Frankenstein was now a little withdrawn, on our left. Upon the right, fluttering its golden foliage as if to attract our attention, a plantation of tall, satin-stemmed birches stretched for some distance along the railway. Between the long buttress of the cliff and this forest lay open the valley of Mount Washington River, which is driven deep into the heart of the great range. There, through this valley, cutting the sapphire sky with their silver silhouette, were the giant mountains, surmounted by the splendid dome of Washington himself.

Passing beyond, we had a fine retrospect of Crawford, with his curved horn; and upon the dizzy iron bridge thrown across the gorge beneath Frankenstein, striking views are obtained of the mountains below. They seemed loftier and grander, and more imposing than ever.

VIII.
THROUGH THE NOTCH

Around his waist are forests braced,
The avalanche in his hand. – Byron.

THE valley, which had continually contracted since leaving Bartlett, now appeared fast shut between these two mountains; but on turning the tremendous support which Mount Willey flings down, we were in presence of the amazing defile cloven through the midst, and giving entrance to the heart of the White Hills.

These gigantic mountains divided to the right and left, like the Red Sea before the Israelites. Through the immense trough, over which their crests hung suspended in mid-air, the highway creeps and the river steals away. The road is only seen at intervals through the forest; a low murmur, like the hum of bees, announces the river.

I have no conception of the man who can approach this stupendous chasm without a sensation of fear. The idea of imminent annihilation is everywhere overwhelming. The mind refuses to reason, or rather to fix itself, except on a single point. What if the same power that commanded these awful mountains to remove should hurl them back to ever-during

fixedness? Should, do I say? The gulf seemed contracting under our very eyes – the great mountains toppling to their fall. With an eagerness excited by high expectation, we had pressed forward; but now we hesitated.

This emotion, which many of my readers have doubtless partaken, was our tribute to the dumb but eloquent expression of power too vast for our feeble intellects to measure. It was the triumph of matter over mind; of the finite over the infinite.

Below, it was all admiration and surprise; here, all amazement and fear. The more the mountains exalted themselves, the more we were abased. Trusting, nevertheless, in our insignificance, we moved on, looking with all our eyes, absorbed, silent, and almost worshipping.

The wide split of the Notch, which we had now entered, had on one side Mount Willey, drawn up to his full height; and on the other Mount Webster, striped with dull red on clingy yellow, like an old tiger's skin. Willey is the highest; Webster the most remarkable. Willey has a conical spire; Webster a long, irregular battlement. Willey is a mountain; Webster a huge block of granite.

For two miles the gorge winds between these mountains to where it is apparently sealed up by a sheer mass of purple precipices lodged full in its throat. This is Mount Willard. The vast chasm glowed with the gorgeous colors of the foliage, even when a passing cloud obscured the sun. These general observations made, we cast our eyes down into the vale reposing

at our feet. We had chosen for our point of view that to which Abel Crawford conducted Sir Charles Lyell in 1845. The scientist has made the avalanche bear witness to the glacier, precisely as one criminal is made to convict another under our laws.

Five hundred feet below us was a little clearing, containing a hamlet of two or three houses. From this hamlet to the storm-crushed crags glistening on the summit of Mount Willey the track of an old avalanche was still distinguishable, though the birches and alders rooted among the débris threatened to obliterate it at no distant day.

We descended by this still plain path to the houses at the foot of the mountain. One and the other are associated with the most tragic event connected with the history of the great Notch.

We found two houses, a larger and smaller, fronting the road, neither of which merits a description; although evidence that it was visited by multitudes of curious pilgrims abounded on the walls of the unoccupied building.

Since quite early in the century, this house was kept as an inn; and for a long time it was the only stopping-place between Abel Crawford's below and Captain Rosebrook's above – a distance of thirteen miles. Its situation, at the entrance of the great Notch, was advantageous to the public and to the landlord, but attended with a danger which seems not to have been sufficiently regarded, if indeed it caused successive inmates particular concern. This fatal security had a lamentable sequel.

In 1826 this house was occupied by Samuel Willey, his wife, five children, and two hired men. During the summer a drought of unusual severity dried the streams, and parched the thin soil of the neighboring mountains. On the evening of the 26th of June, the family heard a heavy, rumbling noise, apparently proceeding from the mountain behind them. In terror and amazement they ran out of the house. They saw the mountain in motion. They saw an immense mass of earth and rock detach itself and move toward the valley, at first slowly, then with gathered and irresistible momentum. Rocks, trees, earth, were swooping down upon them from the heights in three destroying streams. The spectators stood rooted to the spot. Before they could recover their presence of mind the avalanche was upon them. One torrent crossed the road only ten rods from the house; another a little distance beyond; while the third and largest portion took a different direction. With great labor a way was made over the mass of rubbish for the road. The avalanche had shivered the largest trees, and borne rocks weighing many tons almost to the door of the lonely habitation.

This awful warning passed unheeded. On the 28th of August, at dusk, a storm burst upon the mountains, and raged with indescribable fury throughout the night. The rain fell in sheets. Innumerable torrents suddenly broke forth on all sides, deluging the narrow valley, and bearing with them forests that had covered the mountains for ages. The swollen and turbid Saco rose over its banks, flooding the Intervales, and spreading destruction in

its course.

Two days afterward a traveller succeeded in forcing his way through the Notch. He found the Willey House standing uninjured in the midst of woful desolation. A second avalanche, descended from Mount Willey during the storm, had buried the little vale beneath its ruins. The traveller, affrighted by the scene around him, pushed open the door. As he did so, a half-famished dog, sole inmate of the house, disputed his entrance with a mournful howl. He entered. The interior was silent and deserted. A candle burnt to the socket, the clothing of the inmates lying by their bedsides, testified to the haste with which this devoted family had fled. The death-like hush pervading the lonely cabin – these evidences of the horrible and untimely fate of the family – the appalling scene of wreck all around, froze the solitary intruder's blood. In terror he, too, fled from the doomed dwelling.

On arriving at Bartlett, the traveller reported what he had seen. Assistance was despatched to the scene of disaster. The rescuers came too late to render aid to the living, but they found, and buried on the spot, the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Willey, and the two hired men. The remaining children were never found.

It was easily conjectured that the terrified family, alive at last to the appalling danger that menaced them, and feeling the solid earth tremble in the throes of the mountain, sought safety in flight. They only rushed to their doom. The discovery of the bodies showed but too plainly the manner of their death. They

had been instantly swallowed up by the avalanche, which, in the inexplicable order of things visible in great calamities, divided behind the house, leaving the frail structure unharmed, while its inmates were hurried into eternity.[8]

For some time after the disaster a curse seemed to rest upon the old Notch House. No one would occupy it. Travellers shunned it. It remained untenanted, though open to all who might be driven to seek its inhospitable shelter, until the deep impression of horror which the fate of the Willey family inspired had, in a measure, effaced itself.

The effects of the cataclysm were everywhere. For twenty-one miles, almost its entire length, the turnpike was demolished. Twenty-one of the twenty-three bridges were swept away. In some places the meadows were buried to the depth of several feet beneath sand, earth, and rocks; in others, heaps of great trees, which the torrent had torn up by the roots, barricaded the route. The mountains presented a ghastly spectacle. One single night sufficed to obliterate the work of centuries, to strip their summits bare of verdure, and to leave them with shreds of forest and patches of shrubbery hanging to their stark and naked sides. Thus their whole aspect was altered to an extent hardly to be realized to-day, though remarked with mingled wonder and dread long after the period of the convulsion.

From the house our eyes naturally wandered to the mountain,

[8] A portion of the slide touching the house, even moved it a little from its foundations before being stopped by the resistance it opposed to the progress of the débris.

where quarrymen were pecking at its side like yellow-hammers at a dead sycamore. All at once a tremendous explosion was heard, and a stream of loosened earth and bowlders came rattling down the mountain. So unexpected was the sound, so startling its multiplied echo, it seemed as if the mountain had uttered a roar of rage and pain, which was taken up and repeated by the other mountains until the uproar became deafening. When the reverberation died away in the distance, we again heard the metallic click of the miners' hammers chipping away at the gaunt ribs of Mount Willey.

How does it happen that this catastrophe is still able to awaken the liveliest interest for the fate of the Willey family? Why is it that the oft-repeated tale seems ever new in the ears of sympathetic listeners? Our age is crowded with horrors, to which this seems trifling indeed. May we not attribute it to the influence which the actual scene exerts on the imagination? One must stand on the spot to comprehend; must feel the mysterious terror to which all who come within the influence of the gorge submit. Here the annihilation of a family is but the legitimate expression of that feeling. It seems altogether natural to the place. The ravine might well be the sepulchre of a million human beings, instead of the grave of a single obscure family.

We reached the public-house, at the side of the Willey house, with appetites whetted by our long walk. The mercury had only risen to thirty-eight degrees by the thermometer nailed to the door-post. We went in.

In general, the mountain publicans are not only very obliging, but equal to even the most unexpected demands. The colonel, who never brags, had boasted for the last half-hour what he was going to do at this repast. In point of fact, we were famishing.

A man was standing with his back to the fire, his hands thrust underneath his coat-tails, and a pipe in his mouth. Either the pipe illuminated his nose, or his nose the pipe. He also had a nervous contraction of the muscles of his face, causing an involuntary twitching of the eyebrows, and at the same time of his ears, up and down. This habit, taken in connection with the perfect immobility of the figure, made on us the impression of a statue winking. We therefore hesitated to address it – I mean *him*– until a moment's puzzled scrutiny satisfied us that it – I mean the strange object – was alive. He merely turned his head when we entered the room, wagged his ears playfully, winked furiously, and then resumed his first attitude. In all probability he was some stranger like ourselves.

I accosted him. "Sir," said I, "can you tell us if it is possible to procure a dinner here?"

The man took the pipe from his mouth, shook out the ashes very deliberately, and, without looking at me, tranquilly observed,

"You would like dinner, then?"

"Would we like dinner? We breakfasted at Bartlett, and have passed six hours fasting."

"And eleven miles. You see, a long way between meals,"

interjected George, with decision.

"It's after the regular dinner," drawled the apathetic smoker, using his thumb for a stopper, and stooping for a brand with which to relight his pipe.

"In that case we are willing to pay for any additional trouble," I hastened to say.

The man seemed reflecting. We *were* hungry; that was incontestable; but we were also shivering, and he maintained his position astride the hearth-stone, like the fabled Colossus of old.

"A cold day," said the colonel, threshing himself.

"I did not notice it," returned the stranger, indifferently.

"Only thirty-eight at the door," said George, stamping his feet with unnecessary vehemence.

"Indeed!" observed our man, with more interest.

"Yes," George asserted; "and if the fireplace were only larger, or the screen smaller."

The man hastily stepped aside, knocking over, as he did so, a blazing brand, which he kicked viciously back into the fire.

Having carried the outworks, we approached the citadel. "Perhaps, sir," I ventured, "you can inform us where the landlord may be found?"

"You wanted dinner, I believe?" The tone in which this question was put gave me goose-flesh. I could not speak, George dropped into a chair. The colonel propped himself against the chimney-piece. I shrugged my shoulders, and nodded expressively to my companions, who returned two glances of

eloquent dismay. Evidently nothing was to be got out of this fellow.

"Dinner for one?" continued the eternal smoker.

"For three!" I exclaimed, out of all patience.

"For four; I shall eat double," added the colonel.

"Six!" shouted George, seizing the dinner-bell on the mantelpiece.

"Stop," said the man, betraying a little excitement; "don't ring that bell."

"Why not?" demanded George; "we want to see the landlord; and, by Jove," brandishing the bell aloft, "see him we will!"

"He stands before you, gentlemen; and if you will have a little patience I will see what can be done." So saying, he put his pipe on the chimney-piece, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and went out, muttering, as he did so. "The world was not made in a day."

In three-quarters of an hour we sat down to a funereal repast, the bare recollection of which makes me ill, but which was enlivened by the following conversation:

"How many inhabitants are in your tract?" I asked of the man who waited on us.

"Do you mean inhabitants?"

"Certainly, I mean inhabitants."

"Well, that's not an easy one."

"How so?"

"Because the same question not only puzzled the State

Legislature, but made the attorney-general sick."

We became attentive.

"Explain that, if you please," said I.

"Why, just look at it: with only eight legal voters in the tract" (he called it track), "we cast five hundred ballots at the State election."

"Five hundred ballots! then your voters must have sprung from the ground or from the rocks."

"Pretty nearly so."

"Actual men?"

"Actual men."

"You are jesting."

My man looked at me as if I had offered him an affront. The supposition was plainly inadmissible. He was completely innocent of the charge.

"You hear those men pounding away up the hill?" he demanded, jerking his thumb in the direction indicated.

"Yes."

"Well, those are the five hundred voters. On election morning they came to the polling-place with a ballot in one hand, and a pick, a sledge, or a drill in the other. Our supervisor is a very honest, blunt sort of man: he refused their ballots on the spot."

"Well?"

"Well, one of them had a can of nitro-glycerine and a coil of wire. He deposited his can in a corner, hitched on the wire, and was going out with his comrades, when the supervisor, feeling

nervous, said,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.